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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 1 May 2007

Mardi 1^{er} mai 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 1 May 2007

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 1^{er} mai 2007

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS**

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I rise today to draw attention to the questionable spending of taxpayer dollars by the McGuinty government in their apparent rush to dish out millions of dollars in undocumented and unconditional year-end spending.

In addition to the lack of clear process and apparent absence of accountability in the distribution of these large year-end grants by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, many of the successful organizations appear to have close ties with the Liberal Party.

It's unfortunately not surprising that in an effort to defend against this latest scandal, the Premier himself has suggested that questioning by the members on this side of the House is motivated by racism.

It is not our integrity that is in question. What's questionable here is the Liberal government's apparent disregard for accountability to Ontario's taxpayers. With the minister refusing to produce the documentation to support the government's choice of recipients, we are left to assume that there is no process here and that the only criteria that must be met for an organization to receive a grant are to have Liberal Party ties or to provide some sort of benefit for the upcoming election.

Whatever the political criteria, it's apparent that the objective is to buy votes rather than ensure that a transparent system is in place. The money appears to be going to marginal ridings that Liberals think they can win or are worried about losing in the next election. No money is going to groups in Parry Sound–Muskoka. These organizations simply do not provide enough of a political benefit to warrant receiving one of the Liberal slush fund grants.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise today to speak about a very unique musical play about schoolyard bullying, titled *Recess*, which I saw this past weekend. I was so impressed by these young people, ages seven

to 15, as they participated in this creative venture about a topic faced daily in our schools.

I know the McGuinty government has worked hard to create safe school environments and incorporate anti-bullying legislation. It's an important message that will keep our children safe and give them opportunities to grow and flourish without having to face discrimination.

Recess was written, produced and directed by Hamilton's own Colin Leversidge. The play sheds light on the situations kids deal with on a daily basis and has been compared to a social studies lesson. The musical production embraces diversity, multiculturalism, individuality, community and friendship, all taught through monologues, comedy, song and dance.

Our applause goes to Grace Grafham, Emma Grafham, Halle Leversidge, Melissa Halliwell, Peter Vardy and Julia Bobiak, who all were soloists in the production. The performance was a fundraiser put on by the Rotary Club, and also featured a performance by the Hamilton All Star Junior Jazz Band. These two groups came together through the Downtown Cultural Arts Centre, one of Hamilton's treasures. It is bringing new life to our downtown core and provides new opportunities for our local artists.

When three extraordinary organizations such as the Rotary Club, the children's aid society, which was the beneficiary of this fine fundraiser, and the Downtown Cultural Arts Centre collaborate on such an important topic as bullying, I'm sure the message will be heard all across Hamilton.

**MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS**

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I rise today to talk about the regrettable state of gutter politics that Dalton McGuinty fully endorses. He and his slush fund Minister of Citizenship have sunk so low as to accuse members of both opposition parties of being racists in an attempt to cover up their own lack of accountability. He should apologize, but we won't hold our breath. As the old saying goes, garbage rolls downhill, so it's no wonder that his ministers and members are following along.

The member from Nipissing and her colleagues put forward a non-committal motion last week that directly targets the recipients of the minister's slush fund. Dalton McGuinty endorsed vicious and personal attacks during the Parkdale–High Park by-election by Minister Pupa-

tello. Minister Bartolucci peered out of the gutter just long enough in this very place to utter something that I refuse to repeat—gutter politics, and the hits just keep on coming.

Last night, it reached a new low. Minister Watson, who knows full well that a dear relative of my colleague from Nepean–Carleton has been a recent patient at the Regional Cancer Centre in Ottawa, sank to a new low in personal attacks and gutter politics when he suggested that my colleague from Nepean–Carleton has anything but full support for the amazing work of the Regional Cancer Centre there. Will the minister apologize? We won't hold our breath, but he should.

The hard-working people of Ontario know that Dalton McGuinty will resort to any tactic. When it comes to John Tory's credibility, honesty, accountability and true leadership in Ontario or Dalton McGuinty's gutter politics—

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

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Colon cancer patients at Queen's Park today denounced the McGuinty Liberal government for failing to pay for the cancer treatment they need: Avastin, a drug approved by Health Canada and recommended by Cancer Care Ontario.

Joaquim Teotonio has already paid \$40,000 for injections at a private clinic in Toronto. He says, "It should be plain for all to see.... It's bad enough to have this terrible disease without having to worry about drug accessibility."

John Colacci has been told by the Trillium Health Centre that the hospital will provide Avastin to him at a cost of \$36,000. He says, "I expect more from this Ontario government, not just for me but for every other Ontarian who could encounter this problem."

Wendy Mundell paid \$18,000 up front for Avastin last year and was lucky to receive some financial assistance afterwards from a third-party benefit package. She asks, "Why doesn't this government agree that my life is worth \$18,000?"

Roman Gawur has just begun treatment and will be forced to pay \$32,000 to receive Avastin at the Trillium Health Centre. He says, "This is two-tier health.... I am paying a hospital for the injection of a medically necessary drug."

It's time this government paid for cancer treatments recommended by Cancer Care Ontario. It is unacceptable that the McGuinty Liberals are forcing Ontarians to pay for treatment themselves or go without. No one in Ontario should ever have to face this choice; no one should. It's time this government paid for these treatments.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's my privilege to request recognition of a number of young people from across Ontario who are with us in the House today. These

young people represent 14 different communities that have been designated as youth-friendly by Play Works. Play Works is a group of provincial organizations whose goal is to see that adolescent youth have more opportunities to participate in affordable, accessible play activities such as the arts, volunteerism, sports, drama, leadership, dance and youth activism. These 14 communities have worked very hard to make their youth feel valued, respected and worthy of play opportunities that help them with their social and personal development. I'm particularly pleased to introduce these young people, as my constituency is one of 14 to be recognized.

1340

In Peterborough we've worked especially hard to invite our young people to be engaged in what goes on in our community. We have the KAOS radio station, which has a specified youth focus, a youth volunteer of the year award, and an incredible youth council that offers some great programs such as the youth art show and sale.

I could go on, as I'm so proud, as should all the 14 communities be that are being recognized today. Since Play Works started recognizing youth-friendly communities in 2005, 22 communities in Ontario have been designated youth-friendly. I would encourage my colleagues to work with their groups and local government so that Ontario can continue to grow as a youth-friendly province.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My comments are related to the McGuinty government's multi-million dollar political slush fund.

Today I want to put on the record the opposition's growing concerns about the way in which the government has closed off all avenues that would allow the public to know what happened to their hard-earned tax dollars shovelled out the door to Liberal-friendly organizations.

For the past week and a half, this slush fund scandal has dominated question period. The efforts of both opposition parties to elicit answers to legitimate questions have been met with obfuscation and scurrilous attempts to smear questioners and their parties. The attempt by opposition parties to have the public accounts committee call in the auditor to review these grants and the processes used to determine who qualified for under-the-table monies was also rebuffed by the Liberal majority.

Yesterday, an opposition motion providing details of the scandal and calling on the government to bring in the auditor was voted down by Liberal members, and once again Liberal members participating in the debate resorted to gutter politics, which is increasingly symptomatic of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

If this obstructionist approach continues, Mr. Speaker, I put you and government members on notice that we will utilize all tools available to respond to this blatant

attempt by the McGuinty government to keep the truth hidden from the people of Ontario.

RAILWAY ASSOCIATION ASSOCIATION FERROVIAIRE

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): First, I would like to welcome the Canadian railway association, Ontario chapter, who are joining us today.

Today we are fortunate to have with us Ontario's representatives from the Railway Association of Canada to recognize and celebrate Ontario's railway ties. The railway association's 23 Ontario-based members own and operate close to 12,000 kilometres of track and move more than 90 million revenue tonne kilometres of freight, bringing more than 40% of Ontario goods to market. Short-line railways link Ontario communities of all sizes to the world's markets. Furthermore, the Railway Association of Canada's Ontario members create close to 10,000 direct jobs and indirectly support tens of thousands more.

Rail not only plays an important role in Ontario's economy, but is also an important part of the solution for reducing GHG emissions and ensuring a vibrant and healthy environment for all Ontarians.

J'encourage tous mes collègues et leurs employés à saisir l'occasion de célébrer les liens importants que la voie ferrée maintient avec notre superbe province, en venant à la réception de l'Association des chemins de fer du Canada ce soir dans la salle 230, entre 17 h 30 et 19 h 30.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I rise today to discuss how our government's hospital renewal program, which is the largest in Ontario's history, is benefiting our local communities. The previous government left us with an enormous infrastructure deficit regarding our hospitals that left local communities desperate for help. This government has listened and we are delivering ambitious infrastructure projects that will revitalize a system under strain.

The McGuinty Liberals are working to overturn years of neglect. We have a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan that includes more than \$5 billion in health care infrastructure projects. Our government has already approved more than 65 major hospital projects, and today I would like to highlight some of them.

In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, we are delivering a redeveloped St. Joseph's Complex Continuing Care Centre, and the early works project of the Cornwall Community Hospital is under way. Plans are progressing for the redevelopment of the Winchester District Memorial Hospital in North Dundas.

Things are looking up. In the good city of Barrie, the expansion of the hospital around the new cancer centre is

expected to add more than 50 hospital beds. Our government recently communicated that Barrie will also receive approval for 101 new beds. This means better care for Barrie families. People will be able to get health care with more dignity and respect.

The Tories sat by for years and ignored the calls from the Royal Victoria Hospital and the local community that further hospital expansion was needed to accommodate a growing population in Barrie.

The McGuinty Liberals are there for the good people of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh and Barrie. My friend Aileen Carroll knows the work that we have done for her community—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise in the House today to speak about the wonderful accomplishments that have occurred in our Barrie area schools as a result of this government's investments and the hard work of our local teachers, school boards, parents, trustees and students.

By working together, the good people of Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford have achieved some great results. For the first time in 16 years, students applying to college and university got their education without having to experience lost learning days as a result of labour action.

Obviously, that is something the Tories can't speak to. Under their government, schools crumbled, students were left out of the classroom and kids had to go without textbooks. The Tories' top-down, slash-and-burn approach to education left our public schools struggling.

Since the McGuinty Liberals came to office, we have invested almost \$1,800 per student in the Simcoe County District School Board. That's a 25% increase in funding for our children. Similar investments have also been made in the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board.

While the Tories let our schools crumble, we have provided \$820,000 for the Bradford District High School to replace their roofs. This is just one example of how we are making their learning experience better.

Class sizes are smaller, there are more teachers, and test scores are up more than 10%. Parents and children are now reaping the benefits of a government dedicated to the education of children. The people of Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford deserve nothing less.

VISITORS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The Ontario members of the Railway Association of Canada are visiting Queen's Park today to celebrate Ontario's railway ties.

I would like to introduce you to Mr. Cliff Mackay, president and CEO of the Railway Association of Canada. He is up in this area. He is accompanied by many representatives of member companies in the RAC. I

would like to welcome them all to Queen's Park, especially Mr. James Allen, general manager of the Ottawa Central Railway, who is up there.

I would also like to encourage all of the members in this Legislature to attend their reception this evening in committee room 230, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm delighted to welcome into the gallery my mother and father, Frances and Bev Watson, and an aunt and uncle from Toronto, Marlene and Ron Masleck as well today.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I ask for unanimous consent to put forth a motion without notice regarding the membership of certain committees.

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

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I move that the following change, effective immediately, be made to the membership of the following committee: On the standing committee on general government, Mr. Racco replaces Mr. Peterson.

The Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list of private members' public business:

Mr. Milloy and Ms. Mossop exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Milloy assumes ballot item 16 and Ms. Mossop assumes ballot item 7; Mr. Gravelle and Mr. Mauro exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Gravelle assumes ballot item 68 and Mr. Mauro assumes ballot item 14; Mr. Ferreira and Ms. Martel exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Ferreira assumes ballot item 9 and Ms. Martel assumes ballot item 74; and that, pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 8.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): 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, May 1, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Duncan has moved government notice of motion number 336. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All 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 1352 to 1357.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Parsons, Ernie
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qadri, Shafiq
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	Marsales, Judy	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mossop, Jennifer F.	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Murdoch, Bill
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Witmer, Elizabeth
Ferreira, Paul	Martel, Shelley	Yakubuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	
Horwath, Andrea	Miller, Norm	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 22.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would bring the attention of the House to guests in the Speaker's gallery. We have the former mayor of Espanola, Marcel Rancourt, and his wife, Evelyn.

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome a fine school from Hamilton, Hillfield Strathallen College. They are in the visitors' gallery right now with their teachers Mr. Dalton, Ms. Miller, Mr. Vedelago and Mr. Levy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome in the members' gallery east the former federal minister of

international trade and the former federal member for Barrie and future MPP for Barrie, Aileen Carroll.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

ÉDUCATION RELATIVE À L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education):

This morning, I had the opportunity to visit Earl Haig Secondary School in Willowdale with my colleague Laurel Broten, Minister of the Environment. This school is a great example of the difference students and teachers can make to improve our environment. This certified ecoschool has developed an efficient and well-run recycling program that students have embraced. Last year, they launched Operation Litterbug to encourage students to reduce the amount of school waste. And they're planning to plant four trees on the west side of the school that will help cool several classrooms on hot summer days with shade instead of air-conditioning.

I have no doubt that teachers at this school will continue to inspire and educate students for decades about the environment, and today's Earl Haig students will become tomorrow's leaders and innovators on climate change.

But our government wants to go further. We want to help teachers and students build on the knowledge and leadership already shown on climate change issues.

Nous souhaitons diffuser les exemples d'efforts valables déployés par des écoles comme Earl Haig dans toute la province.

The McGuinty government is committed to reaching every student with an environmental education that inspires them to take positive action. We will do this by building better links between the education system and environmental organizations and leaders.

This morning, I was very pleased to make an announcement with Geoff Cape, executive director of Evergreen. Evergreen is a wonderful, non-profit environmental organization committed to creating and sustaining healthy, dynamic outdoor spaces. Evergreen is thrilled to be administering a \$500,000 grant from the Ministry of Education to support the growth and expansion of the Ontario EcoSchools program. Ontario EcoSchools is an environmental education program that addresses both how the schools are run and what students learn. It's been designed by school boards to incorporate environmental education as well as environmentally responsible action into the school setting. Evergreen has been a partner in the EcoSchools program since its inception and has been responsible for the development of its school ground greening component. The overall goal of EcoSchools is student success in both academics and positive contributions to society. There are currently 107 certified

EcoSchools at six boards in Ontario, and they've made a positive impact on thousands of students.

I'm very pleased that the EcoSchools program will continue to expand with the help of community partners like Evergreen. This morning, my colleague Minister of the Environment Laurel Broten announced the launch of two youth-focused websites: www.obviously.ca for secondary students, and www.ontario.ca/ezone for elementary students. They were created to explain the challenges facing our planet and inspire students to take actions that protect the environment, all within an interactive media experience that includes music clips and videos. The websites are all about encouraging and mobilizing young people. We're sending the message to youth that by taking collective action to conserve energy and reduce their environmental footprint, they can make a difference in combating climate change. This is another way that Ontario is educating, engaging and inspiring Ontario's next generation of environmental leaders.

We also recently launched a working group on environmental education led by Dr. Roberta Bondar, and Catherine Mahler, EcoSchools' project coordinator, is part of that group that Roberta Bondar is leading.

We asked Dr. Bondar and her group to look at our curriculum and provide advice to our curriculum council on how the environment and conservation are being taught in elementary and secondary schools and how we can strengthen both of those. We recognize that it's important for our students—our future leaders—to learn about and have a strong understanding of the environment, climate change and the importance of conservation.

Evergreen, EcoSchools, the Ministry of the Environment and the curriculum council: We're working with all of them to help ensure that students get the best environmental education possible. Together, we're ensuring that students receive a high-quality education that's relevant to a rapidly changing world.

Ensemble, nous appuyons chaque élève.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I rise today to inform members that northerners have seized the opportunities offered under the government's northern prosperity plan with gratifying results.

Yesterday, I, along with my colleagues, had the pleasure of releasing our government's first progress report on the northern prosperity plan. It has been nearly three years since we launched the plan, which weaves together a range of provincial initiatives for the north and for Ontario's mineral sector.

The plan was and continues to be an ambitious one, given that our region is more than 800,000 square kilometres in size. Moreover, our programs and initiatives under the plan are aimed at dealing head-on with issues that have challenged our northern communities for years.

There are encouraging signs of progress. With the help and hard work of northerners and mineral sector partners, significant results are being achieved.

Support for the private sector is creating new and sustainable jobs. Indicators of diversity and new business opportunities are appearing. Since March 2006, northern Ontario has gained 18,400 net new jobs.

Young entrepreneurs and students are finding new opportunities to build careers and expand their experiences. We're seeing the lowest youth unemployment in seven years. We're also seeing the tide of youth out-migration start to turn, and some northern communities are seeing population growth for the first time in a long time.

The northern Ontario heritage fund has created or sustained over 7,700 jobs through more than 1,000 projects since October 2003. Record infrastructure investments, including more than \$1.3 billion for northern highways since 2003, are improving transportation corridors, providing clean drinking water and enhancing broadband and telecommunications connectivity.

A three-year, \$15-million geological mapping initiative and cluster development are driving innovation and exploration in a thriving minerals sector.

Through the GO North investor program in 2006-07, \$5 million was budgeted for international marketing efforts that are promoting northern investment opportunities to the world.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is educating a new generation of doctors, driving research opportunities and breaking new ground in telemedicine and distance education. Students who began their medical training in 2005 when the school opened are about to begin the year-long community placement component of their education, working and living in the northern communities it is hoped many will return to when they begin their careers.

Yesterday, in releasing the progress report, four of my northern caucus colleagues and I had the pleasure of connecting with community, business and educational leaders in six communities across the north by video-conference. This event belonged not to us but to northern partners who have told us how the northern prosperity plan was working for them.

1410

In North Bay, we heard from Mr. Ken Perrin from Rotacan, a manufacturer of rotary drill bits for the mining industry that has expanded with the help of the northern Ontario heritage fund.

In Thunder Bay, Janet Northan, director of cancer research innovation and planning from the Northwestern Ontario Regional Cancer Centre, spoke of the emerging health services and research synergies occurring in the region. Mr. Tom Meilleur, chief operating officer of NAC Air, gave us an overview of the successful expansion they have undertaken with the province's help.

In Sault Ste Marie, Mr. Mike Rosso, plant manger of Flakeboard, outlined his melamine lamination plant's latest innovations.

Mr. Mark Jensen, director of development services for the city of Timmins, spoke about some of the city's infrastructure projects, all supported by important provincial initiatives.

From Sudbury, we heard from Mr. Brian Beaton, services coordinator for K-Net First Nations Telehealth, based in Sioux Lookout, as well as Laurentian University's president, Dr. Judith Woodsworth, whose institution plays an ever-growing role in mining research and excellence.

I would like to once again thank yesterday's guests, as well as those who attended the videoconference. I would especially like to thank Mrs. Sylvia Barnard, president of Cambrian College in Sudbury, who hosted the event.

The testimonials from across the north represent the hundreds and hundreds of partnerships struck through the northern prosperity plan over the past three years. We thank all of our partners for doing their part to strengthen the north and Ontario's mineral sector. Their contributions put a face to northern progress and reminded all of us that the north's most precious resource is its people. They eloquently demonstrated that northerners are collaborating as never before across industry, academia and all levels of government to achieve shared goals. My northern caucus colleagues and I are proud that our government's plan for building prosperity in the north has been a catalyst for new initiatives in community and economic development projects across northern Ontario and in the province's mineral sector.

There is one more group of people I'd like to thank. The day-to-day work of developing and managing the programs under the northern prosperity plan is carried out by public service staff from my ministry, often in coordination with other ministries across government. Staff from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines are truly dedicated individuals. Their knowledge and experience of the north and their passion for its success are invaluable. Our government appreciates their work very much.

Yes, issues will continue to be a challenge, and, yes, there is still much work to do. We acknowledge that. But northerners are hard-working people and they have set their sights on a brighter, more prosperous future for their families and for their communities. Our government will continue to work alongside them every step of the way.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

L'hon. Christopher Bentley (ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités): C'est avec plaisir que je prends la parole aujourd'hui devant l'Assemblée législative afin de parler de l'investissement du gouvernement McGuinty visant à offrir davantage de possibilités innovatrices aux étudiants et étudiantes postsecondaires d'art et de design en Ontario.

Établi depuis plus de 100 ans, l'Ontario College of Art and Design, également appelé OCAD, est devenu le plus grand établissement d'enseignement postsecondaire du Canada spécialisé en art et design. Il offre à ses quelque 3 000 étudiants et étudiantes un cadre d'apprentissage unique qui associe un enseignement expérientiel en studio à l'étude des arts libéraux.

I'm pleased to tell the House today about the McGuinty government's investment to create more innovative opportunities for post-secondary art and design students in Ontario. Established more than 100 years ago, the Ontario College of Art and Design, also known as OCAD, has grown to become Canada's largest post-secondary institution specializing in art and design. Today, OCAD has more than 3,000 students, and they enjoy a one-of-a-kind learning environment that combines an experiential, studio-based education with liberal studies.

As a result of this long, successful history, more and more students are turning to the institution to pursue their post-secondary art and design studies. A record number of students have found opportunity at OCAD and in all of our colleges and universities; in fact, 86,000 more students than when we started, and now we are opening doors to previously unimagined opportunities for Ontario students.

Case in point: Earlier today, I attended a celebration at OCAD to announce a new annual investment by the McGuinty government in the new digital futures initiative. Starting with a \$1-million investment last year, rising to \$2 million this year and carrying on in all subsequent years, this new program builds on OCAD's leadership in art and design education by giving students the opportunity to create new interactive services and products using innovative design methods in digital media technology. This funding will help OCAD develop curriculum and hire new faculty, as well as purchase the necessary technology and digital learning resources needed to make the initiative a success.

The digital futures initiative is being guided by an advisory board that brings together private sector partners as well as other colleges and universities. Partner post-secondary institutions will facilitate the entry of students from other programs and develop joint courses, graduate studies and research. Industry partners, such as software, graphic design and interactive game companies, will ensure the curriculum leads industry needs as well as providing students with work-study experiences. Through partnerships, the initiative will develop applications for industry in the communications, new media, advertising, technology, finance, health care, tourism, entertainment and service sectors.

Students, for example, will develop tourism-based information that is linked to global positioning systems. This technology, which was recently implemented in Banff National Park, allows visitors to the park to retrieve natural history information through their cell-phones or other electronic devices.

By supporting the digital futures initiative, we will not only provide more higher education opportunities for our students but also produce the highly innovative knowledge workers who will ensure that Ontario remains a leading design and cultural industry centre in North America.

The McGuinty government understands the value of investing in the creative potential of Ontarians. That's

why we've increased OCAD's budget by 28% since 2004-05. We know that our \$18-million investment in OCAD this year will not only help OCAD students get a better education but will underpin the future prosperity of our economy by introducing new design and technology into many aspects of everyday life. This funding builds on our government's \$4.2-billion investment in new faculty, library acquisitions and student services at all colleges and universities.

Under the \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan, funding to colleges and universities is increasing by 35% over five years. The results are in: Reaching Higher has been a huge success. As a result of the plan, the people of Ontario are not only seeing improved access—86,000 more students than when we started—but also higher quality in the province's post-secondary education system.

Our government is investing three new dollars for every \$1 students are asked to contribute to their education. In comparison, annual government funding for post-secondary education went down from 1991 to 2003, while tuition went up. That's why we established the new arm's-length Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to monitor quality in the sector and encourage greater accountability at colleges and universities.

We've also established three-year agreements with colleges and universities to not only give the institutions the stability they need to plan for the future but also set individual targets to improve student access to education as well as the quality of the student experience.

You can be sure that the record number of students accessing Ontario's colleges and universities are getting a higher-quality education compared to the system this government inherited.

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But more than that, in either of our official languages, we've made sure that education is more affordable for students who were squeezed by a frozen and neglected student aid system. We're doubling our investment in student aid to help more families with the cost of higher education by ensuring that the most aid goes to the students who need it the most. Students are now eligible for \$2,550 more in assistance, a 27% increase, for a total of \$11,900 in maximum annual assistance—after an 11-year freeze.

We're providing three times as many non-repayable grants to 120,000 students this year compared to 2003-04, and we've limited student debt for 80,000 students who are eligible for loans of more than \$7,000 a year but only have to repay that amount. We're also providing 60,000 up-front tuition grants for low- to middle-income students this year. These grants were reintroduced by the government in 2005-06.

Our goal from the start has been to encourage all Ontarians to pursue higher education and enhance skills so they're prepared for the jobs of the future. Our province's economic strength depends upon access to high-quality post-secondary education and training, which is why we're helping students, through opportunities like the

digital futures initiative at OCAD, to gain the skills that will last a lifetime.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On behalf of John Tory, the leader of the official opposition, and the PC caucus, I want to affirm our support for environmental education as an integral part of the curriculum of our education system in Ontario and our support for the ongoing effort to increase environmental awareness in our students. But we see this announcement for what it is: a valiant effort at damage control following the release of the offensive environmental campaign launched last week by her colleague the Minister of the Environment.

The education minister can rest assured that it will take more than a couple of new websites to make Ontarians forget the insulting affront to community standards represented by her colleague's Flick Off campaign. In fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. The Minister of Labour will come to order. The member for Halton will come to order. I need to be able to hear the member make his response. The member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: In fact, we want the Minister of Education to tell us what she thinks of that highly offensive ad campaign that targets students as young as 13 years of age. Parents, teachers and principals would also like to know why the Minister of Education has been so silent in the face of the Flick Off campaign that has caused consternation in our schools in communities across this province.

What message does the McGuinty Liberal government send to our students when our government resorts to the basest of means to make a point and throws public standards of decency out the window? How does this square with character education, I ask the minister? Where was the Minister of Education when the Flick Off ad campaign was being pushed through cabinet? Why didn't the Minister of Education veto that outrageously offensive attempt to reach our youth? Why didn't she stand up for students, teachers and parents, and common decency, as a member of cabinet and protest what the vast majority of Ontarians consider an all-time low for the McGuinty government?

Teachers and parents are telling me that the McGuinty Liberal Flick Off ad campaign belongs in the gutter or at the very least should be confined to the Liberal Cabinet Office. It's offensive to the broader community and the entire environmental movement and the cause of environmental education.

Parents and teachers want and deserve an apology from the Premier, from his environment minister and also from this education minister, who should have learned in grade 12 literature class, in the play by Robert Bolt, *A Man For All Seasons*, that silence gives consent.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Quite frankly, I'm surprised he's doing his statement on northern prosperity today, when the first newspaper I picked up on the weekend, the Sault Star, Saturday April 28, talks about another mill, Boniferro Mill Works Inc., a four-year, Sault-based hardwood mill operator, shutting down. The news is always bad, it seems, out of the north, and a lot of it is brought about by this government.

I was at a reception just recently when the Minister of Northern Development and Mines surprised the people from De Beers. I read some press releases from De Beers. Here we have a quote: "The diamond royalty, as proposed in yesterday's Ontario provincial budget, has not previously been covered in any dialogue between the industry and the Ontario government.... We are concerned about these apparently arbitrary changes to the tax structure so close to the start of production at Victor." It goes on and on. I know the minister was there at the Meet the Miners reception, and he very much surprised De Beers that day by saying they had been consulted with, and of course, he didn't consult with them at all about this new tax which is very much going to hurt the De Beers mining project so that this may be the last diamond mine that ever opens in Ontario.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We support the \$2 million in funding that the government is extending to the Ontario College of Art and Design for their digital futures program. But government must also address the concern of many in the cultural industries that cultural workers will not be able to find jobs in Ontario when they do graduate. The film industry in Ontario is particularly concerned that Ontario is losing its competitive advantage. This government clearly has no cultural strategy to make Ontario into a centre of excellence for the film, television and new technologies—

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

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Northern Development at trying to spin what is a northern prosperity plan in northern Ontario. I find it somewhat interesting that the minister, yesterday in northern Ontario, tried to spin that all the news is well in northern Ontario. He talks about places like Thunder Bay, where recently we know that the Smurfit-Stone containerboard mill was shut down. We know that Abitibi Consolidated-Stone, Cascades paper—and now that we know that Great West Timber sawmill is going to be

down, it's four mills that are going down in Thunder Bay alone. The list is: Kenora, Fort Frances, Terrace Bay, White River, Opasatika, Chapleau, Kirkland Lake, Timmins—the list goes on, Mr. Minister. They're not creating jobs in northern Ontario. We're losing jobs in northern Ontario when it comes to the forest industry.

Now the government gets up and says, "Look at the wonderful job we're doing in mining." Thank God for gold prices and thank God for base metal prices, because if it weren't for that, we'd be in another fiasco like you created in forestry.

But they couldn't leave well enough alone. My colleague the critic from the Conservative Party talked about the De Beers diamond mining project. This government, by way of this budget, has introduced a measure that will do more to scare investment out of Ontario when it comes to mining investment in this province than we've seen in the last 25 years. We know that as a result of this measure, if accepted—and I'm hoping, and I say to you, Minister, tell the members on your committee that you're going to defeat it, and support our amendments in the Legislature defeating your proposal to change the royalty structure for De Beers, because that in the end is going to do more to scare investment out of Ontario and not allow the good-paying jobs that could be created, because of this government's action.

Northern prosperity plan? We don't need more of it in northern Ontario. What we need is a change of government.

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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I rise to speak to the issue of ecoschools. The first thing I want to do is praise the boards and the students who have done so much work to develop the EcoSchools program.

Secondly, I want to quote the environment minister: "Climate change is the challenge of our generation." It's one thing to say something like that; the other thing is to act.

Three ministers of education ago, \$275 million was promised to be spent by this government to leverage \$4 billion in school renovation. To date, only \$25 million has been spent, and the schools are still crumbling. Where are the investments in energy efficiency? Where are the investments in renewable power? Where are the investments in water efficiency?

In my riding, ecoschools invest in green roofs by holding bake sales and raising money. They aren't getting support from the board; they're not getting support from the province. Where are the programs to not only teach students but also protect them and their future from climate change? This is a government that is signalling it will do a John Baird: announce half measures on climate change and declare them a Kyoto-compliant plan, if this was 1997. Our children need to learn a lot about climate change, because this government is going to give them a lot of it.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I want to quote Minister Bentley when he said, "The results are in." He's right: The results are in. Students are getting whacked this year with a 5% tuition increase, and they are going to get whacked—should they be re-elected, God forbid—with another 5% increase next year, and then another 5% increase after that, and then another 5% increase after that. The results are in: Debts now, on average, are \$25,000 for students going into a regular program. If you happen to be in law or medicine, your tuition fees alone are anywhere from \$14,000, \$15,000 to \$17,000, \$18,000 per year and the debts for those students are anywhere from \$70,000 to \$150,000. That's how they get whacked. It's true: The results are in. Ninety percent of students have no access to grants and they're going to have to go to the banks and get money right away. We are number 10 in terms of funding, or maybe number nine. That's how great we are. The wealthiest province in Canada and we are number nine in terms of funding. The results are in, Minister.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for this House's assistance and participation in the 2007 Daisy of Hope campaign, the public awareness campaign and education targeting domestic violence. The campaign is to happen during the month of May. The Daisy of Hope campaign was initiated by Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services in Brantford in 1999.

I ask for unanimous consent that the daisy be worn for the month of May.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Levac has asked that the daisy be worn for the month of May. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm also seeking unanimous consent. Sudbury is electrified with excitement and percolating with pride, because the Sudbury Wolves are in the Ontario Hockey League final. This is the first time in many years that there is an international component. The Sudbury Wolves are playing the Plymouth Whalers from Michigan. So today, I ask for unanimous consent for everyone in this House to wear our "Go, Wolves, Go" button for the entire playoffs.

The Speaker: Mr. Bartolucci has asked for unanimous consent to wear the "Go, Wolves, Go" button. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Mr. Speaker, I just want to support the honourable minister across the way for the Sudbury Wolves, but what we need is to keep the Liberal wolves away from northern Ontario jobs.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

SEXUAL ASSAULT
PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Duncan has asked for unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes on Sexual Assault Prevention Month. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): I would like to bring to the attention of the Legislature an important initiative called the Daisy of Hope campaign. The Daisy of Hope campaign was started by Brantford's Nova Vita women's services in 1999 to promote violence-free living for all women and children and support women's shelters' efforts in ending domestic violence. The representative from Brantford, MPP Dave Levac, has been a long-time supporter of these agencies in his hometown. We're very impressed that that campaign has become province-wide. Special congratulations to him.

All across Ontario, citizens will be wearing this pin to acknowledge the important work of women's shelters. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to wear the daisy of hope pin throughout the month of May to recognize the contributions of women's shelters and to show our joint commitment in ending all forms of violence against women.

May is also Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. This is a time to renew our shared commitment to ending sexual violence against women. Sexual assault can be devastating. Less than 10% of all sexual assaults are actually reported to the police. More than one third of Canadian women report having had at least one experience of sexual assault since the age of 16. That's why it's so important that we remain committed to this issue. It's why the McGuinty government continues to be committed to preventing violence before it starts and helping victims when violence does occur. We increased the annual funding for sexual assault centres by 8%, the first increase in 13 years. We also added nearly \$1 million to expand services for women in Ontario's francophone communities, something that we all knew was vital. This is in addition to improved access to French-language telephone crisis support by annualized funding for regional French crisis lines and creating a toll-free number to act as a single point of access.

Last year, we provided \$1.3 million in one-time funding to sexual assault agencies across Ontario for public education, training and facility improvements. In May 2006, we announced that the government is providing \$1.6 million from the victims' justice fund to 18 community-based agencies to provide programs and services to victims of sexual assault and sexual violence. Let me take a moment to say thank you to the Attorney General, who works hand in hand with these organ-

izations to make it happen on the ground, for the great support we've had. This is in addition to the \$3.1 million from the victims' justice fund provided in 2005 to community-based agencies across Ontario to support victims of crime, including victims of sexual assault.

I applaud the work of the sexual assault centres and sexual assault domestic violence treatment centres, which are often the first stop for women who've been the victims of sexual assault. They work collaboratively with other community agencies to provide a continuum of care and counselling to victims. Many of us have gone to our own local centres in our own hometowns. I urge all of us to do so. Say thank you for the tremendous work that they do in very difficult times for these victims. Along with other community front-line workers, they promote public awareness about sexual assault and work towards preventing all types of violence against women. They teach the community that sexual assault is a violent crime that is rooted in power and control and, most importantly, that sexual assault is not the fault of the victim.

Our government is doing its part by raising public awareness. We've committed almost \$5 million over four years for a public education campaign to promote healthy, equal relationships, changing attitudes that perpetuate violence against women. We also understand that, in order to end violence against women, we have to have an integrated approach. We continue to prevent violence against women through better community supports, a strengthened justice system response, public education and increasing access to those services. We know that there is more work to do, and we're working with this every day. Let's hope we have the support of all of this House on such an important issue.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize May as Sexual Assault Prevention Month in the province of Ontario, a month to shine light on and bring focus to a topic that unfortunately remains severely stigmatized in our society even after years of attempts to bring its subject matter to the fore. I'm sure that those who first marked this month as 31 days of action against, and awareness related to, sexual violence back in 1988 would not have hoped, nor predicted, that on the horizon of its 20th anniversary, our society would still be plagued by the effects of the tragic reality of sexual assault.

Sexual assault is not a partisan issue, nor does it discriminate between young and old, male or female. This month gives us an opportunity to come together in this House as legislators, and beyond these walls as Ontarians, to discuss and debate real and substantive ways to further awareness of, and take action on, this issue. To date we have clearly not done enough.

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I'm aware that often we have the tendency to simplify issues by considering them according to their statistical significance, but I have to tell you, upon reading through the figures associated with this particular set of crimes, this issue emerges as anything but simple. I recognize

that statistics resonate with some as mere numbers, but I truly would be remiss not to mention any of the most current and shocking figures associated with incidents of sexual assault. For example, when we hear statistics such as the fact that only one in 10 incidents of sexual assault are reported to police, not only should we be alarmed, but we are provided with a clear picture of where there is work to be done.

This month being Sexual Assault Prevention Month, it is evident that to tackle this problem, we must successfully equip the public, starting with our young people, with the awareness of support that exists for victims who report to police. Through aggressive education efforts, we can start to remove some of the stigma currently paralyzing those unable to come forward.

It is also known that in 86% of cases reported to the police, the victim and the accused are acquaintances. Furthermore, the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women found that 38% of sexually assaulted women are assaulted by their husbands, their common-law partners or their boyfriends. Astoundingly, one in four women will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime, and—perhaps the most disturbing figure that I came across—83% of disabled women will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime. I think we all agree that we have to do better.

I have focused much of my time today on sexual assaults that occur against women, perhaps rightfully so, given the fact that well over 80% of these crimes occur against women under the age of 25. But I would also like to remind Ontarians of the men and children who also suffer sexual assault each and every day. I would suspect that perhaps these two demographics report at an even lower rate than the already low 10% rate overall. We know that child sexual assault is a largely hidden crime, and it is reported that among adult Canadians, 53% of women and 31% of men were sexually abused when they were children. Among those, the most vulnerable are children with physical and mental disabilities.

Incidents of sexual assault are detrimental to the self-esteem and development of our young people and erode confidence in the workplace and at home with respect to those affected as adults. This is an epidemic that undercuts the very fabric of the fundamental values of freedom and equality that we are so proud to hold here in Ontario.

I commend the many groups that work tirelessly to spread awareness and remove the stigma associated with sexual assault, and I wish them all the best as they move forward with their campaigns throughout the month of May.

Specifically, I would like to recognize the Daisy of Hope campaign, a public awareness and education program targeting the issues of domestic violence, initiated by Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services in Brantford in 1999. I would ask that all members of the House join our caucus in recognizing this campaign by wearing the daisy pin for the month of May.

I would finally like to take this opportunity to issue a challenge to the government, and in fact to all members

of this House, to commit to ensuring that on this day next year, as we recognize the 20th anniversary of Sexual Assault Prevention Month, we are able to report a marked improvement on this file, and not let the paralyzing stigma associated with these unspeakable crimes continue any longer.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Three items were reported on last night's news alone that involved sexual assault on girls and women. May is the month that we devote to raising awareness about the need to prevent sexual violence and its devastating consequences.

I want to applaud the work of all women's groups and sexual assault centres across Ontario, and I know my NDP caucus colleagues would agree that that work is so extremely important. These agencies are on the front line and they're fighters in a battle that we have yet to win in this province. They help heal the psychological and physical wounds caused by sexual assault.

Sexual assault can include anything from unwanted sexual touching to rape and sexual exploitation. Sexual assault almost always injures the victim and can be life-threatening.

I become concerned when I hear of programs and services that deal with these issues being cut back or closing due to a lack of funding in this province. For example, Scarborough's Sexual Assault Care Centre lost its doctors recently. My Sister's Place in London is on very fragile footing because the Ontario government doesn't fund it and doesn't look like it's prepared to. In Oshawa, a women's emergency shelter just closed.

Sexual violence is not a thing of the past. I wish it was, but wishing is not going to make it so. Since sexual violence is still very much with us, then the programs designed to help women in crisis must continue to exist and be bolstered with adequate public funding.

Education is part of the solution, and both the minister and the critic for the Conservatives mentioned that in their remarks as well. It is part of the solution to eradicating sexual violence and sexual assault. Part of that is that young boys need role models. I want to commend, for example, efforts like the White Ribbon Campaign, spearheaded in part by our federal NDP leader, Jack Layton, where men take a strong public stand against violence against women. The Miss G_ Project is another example. We've heard so much from these young university women who want to bring women's studies into the secondary school curriculum. Issues like sexual assault prevention should be covered in every school as part of what young people learn about life.

We need legislation such as the bill that I proposed, Bill 45, where workplace harassment, including sexual harassment, would become part of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and defined as a workplace hazard.

Here are some important facts to consider, and some of them have already been raised: Some 7% of Ontario women living in common-law or marital relationships experienced physical or sexual assault by a spousal partner at least once during the period of 1999 to 2004;

every second a woman somewhere in Canada experiences some form of sexual violence; over 86% of all criminal sexual assaults in Canada are against women; 51% of women in Canada have experienced at least one incidence of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16; there have been approximately 25 female victims of spousal homicide each year in Ontario from 1975 to 2004; 11% of Ontario women reported experiencing stalking during the period of 1999 to 2004, and we know with cyber-stalking, this is increasing; less than 10% of sexual assaults are reported to police.

Girls and young women are at the highest risk of being sexually assaulted. If they are sexually assaulted, it will most likely be by a boy or a man who is a friend, family member or someone else she knows, probably not by a stranger. This is, in fact, part of the reason why nine out of 10 sexual assaults are not reported. Unfortunately, the victim carries a heavy burden of humiliation, embarrassment and self-blame for the crime that was committed upon them. No victim is ever to blame.

This year's theme for Sexual Assault Prevention Month is "Step It Up." There are 10 specific demands for action from the government that have come forward in this campaign:

- (1) Understand that violence against women is an equality rights issue.
- (2) Recognize that male power is upheld by rape and sexual harassment.
- (3) Stop racism and oppression; make Ontario accessible.
- (4) End poverty now.
- (5) Create and maintain housing, non-profit child care, training—now.
- (6) Provide fair access to justice for women.
- (7) Hold violent men accountable for their actions.
- (8) Stop criminalizing and psychiatrizing women.
- (9) Demand secure funding for women's organizations.
- (10) Listen to survivors and women's advocates, because they are the experts.

I am sharing these points with the House again this year because Ontario still has a long way to go when measured against these 10 pillars, the supports that the women's community has identified as the urgent steps needed for reducing sexual assault and sexual violence and, dare we dream, to actually eradicate it from our society.

Today is about this Legislature re-committing to making sure that we increase the interest and the attention we pay to this most serious issue. It's our children, it's our daughters, it's our nieces and it's our nephews and our sons whom this issue affects every single day in our communities, in our schools, in our workplaces, at our community dances and in places where young people gather.

We know that women's groups have long called for more action. We know that coroners' juries have long called for more action. Let's step up the action and end sexual violence and sexual assault in Ontario once and for all.

VISITORS

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to acknowledge someone I just spotted in the public gallery, a councillor for the city of Thunder Bay and also the children's advocate for the city of Thunder Bay, Councillor Joe Virdiramo. Welcome, Joe.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I too would like to ask my colleagues to please join me in welcoming Dennis Mock, the president of Nipissing University of North Bay; Barb Taylor, the president of Canadore College; and Jason Corbett, who does yeoman service in my constituency office in North Bay, who are all here in the members' gallery.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I have a question for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration concerning his political slush fund. Yesterday we heard further details about this slush fund: the Toronto Star reporting that Liberal MPPs were told to look for projects that were in need of money because funds were available. The story in the Cornwall Standard-Freeholder reported the member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh confirmed that he was told that slush fund money was available to Liberal MPPs, and reconfirmed in the paper today. Liberal MPPs say they knew about it, you say they didn't know about it, so I say to the minister, who is telling the truth? The member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh or the minister? Who's telling the truth?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): On October 26, 2006, the Minister of Finance, in his fall economic update, announced that there would be funding for capital infrastructure projects across the province, especially in areas, like Cornwall, that were suffering from high unemployment, and that the fall economic statement was going to make investments to help those areas in job creation and help people suffering in areas such as Cornwall.

Mr. Hudak: I guess another day, another bizarre answer from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I wonder if the Minister of Finance at the time announced that there was no application process for this slush fund. I wonder if the Minister of Finance at that time announced that there would be no review of these projects. I wonder if the Minister of Finance announced at the time that if you had a Liberal Party president or a Liberal candidate in your association, you had a much better chance of receiving the funding.

Another MPP, the member for Mississauga West, also must have had advance notice of your secret slush fund. I think the minister knows that his common-law spouse is

the executive director of Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services. My question for the minister is this: When the minister discussed this project with the member for Mississauga West, did the member inform the minister that his common-law spouse was the executive director, and what did the minister do to protect himself in this obvious conflict of interest?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, the Legislature was informed on October 26 that there would be capital funding investments across the province in this time of need, in places like Windsor, the Niagara Peninsula and Cornwall. Later in December, it said there would be \$190 million available to assist Ontario families who were affected by the downturn in some areas. The matter the member referred to also—all of our funding partners who are NSP agencies were given an opportunity to access sectoral improvement funds, and the one that he mentioned is a long-standing organization, along with the other 82 that receive funding to help improve their facilities. They did it along with the other 82.

Mr. Hudak: I'd point out that the minister studiously avoided the question of conflict of interest. The minister knows that the member for Mississauga West read in 19 petitions to the House on behalf of the ICNSS, where his common-law spouse is employed as the executive director. We have since learned that the Mississauga West provincial Liberal association is a documented registrant for the ICNSS website and we know that the MPP for Mississauga West himself is the technical contact for the website.

I say to the minister, combine this with a secret fund available to only Liberal MPPs and the lack of any kind of review process for these projects, and it casts a pall on this entire process. Will the minister not agree that it's time for him to stand up to Don Guy and the backroom Liberal campaign advisers and call in the Auditor General to get to the bottom of these projects?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This agency that the member alludes to is the same agency that his government funded when he was in cabinet. There are over 80 agencies that we're proud to partner with. These are agencies like AWIC, the Brampton Multicultural Community Centre, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture. These are agencies that are community-based—some have been operating for over 25 years—that are helping newcomers learn English: Job Connect, settlement workers and school programs. They are doing this great work, and we helped them improve some of their facilities because the funding was available. All of them applied for it and received some of this funding.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is also for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and it regards your slush fund. We now know that there were secret meetings held with only Liberal MPPs, who were asked to provide lists of groups that could benefit from the slush fund money. We know that you said that this slush fund money had to go through the Liberal Party campaign chair. But what

direction did you get from the Liberal campaign chair when it came to shipping out this slush fund money that you said you received direction from him about?

Hon. Mr. Colle: My ministry has been supporting agencies across this province that for many years have been ignored—agencies that provide essential services for newcomers, agencies that are volunteer-based, agencies that provide everything from Meals on Wheels to counselling services for battered women. Those are the agencies we consulted with, those are the agencies we partner with, and those are the agencies that need that funding, and we're proud to provide them with that funding.

Mrs. Witmer: To the minister again: This has nothing to do with who the money went to; it has everything to do with the lack of a process, the lack of a proposal, the lack of criteria. We have been questioning you for days and you have refused to answer. There are many, many groups in this province who are shocked that they had no opportunity to apply for this slush money.

You are quoted in the Toronto Star on April 20 of this year as saying that this money “has to go through the other ministers”—the Minister of Finance, who is the Liberal Party campaign chair, and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal—“and ultimately, I guess, by cabinet.” Those are your words, Minister.

Will you tell us today what direction you received from the Liberal Party campaign chair as to who to give this money to?

The Speaker: Before the minister answers, I would just remind the members that they need to place their questions through the Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Throughout this province, there are organizations that are long-standing, like Frontier College, which we partnered with, which asked for funding for teaching literacy skills to First Nations children. We partnered with the Maytree Foundation, which provides a wide range of newcomer services. We partnered with associations big and small that have been asking for government attention for years. We provided these investments because these investments—whether they be in seniors' organizations, whether they be in heritage preservation organizations, or whether they be in newcomer services—are long overdue, and we made them to make Ontario better for newcomers, for seniors and for all Ontarians. That's what we did.

Mrs. Witmer: When there's a secret fund that only Liberals can access, it becomes really questionable, especially when there's no opportunity to apply, there's no criteria—there's absolutely nothing. In fact, nobody knows about it except your own caucus.

I want you, Mr. Minister, to recognize that at the present time, newspapers across this province support our call for the Auditor General to come in and clean up what smells a little bit like Adscam. Will you stand up today, do the right thing and call in the Auditor General so that we can eliminate that foul odour that's in this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Colle: You know, the organizations that we partnered with—London Cross Cultural Learner Centre,

the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario, the Multiculturalism Council of Windsor and Essex County, New Experiences for Refugee Women—these are centres that have been working with us in partnership, with governments of all parties. They've been funded by all governments for the most part. They are investments we made with them to increase their capacities. They're investments that we made with community organizations to reach out to more newcomers and to reach out to more service areas. That's what we did. We made those investments after many years of neglect, and these were very needed investments.

1500

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

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): The question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. On Friday, in answer to a journalist's question, the Premier implied that opposition members were racist because they were asking questions about the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund. Later—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Later on Friday, the Premier was forced to issue a statement saying that the answer to the journalist's question was no. Clearly, Minister, you didn't get the message, because you have continued to cast the same thinly veiled aspersions that got your Premier into trouble on Friday. When will you start treating the people of Ontario with some respect, stop casting your thinly veiled aspersions of racism and ask the Auditor General to immediately investigate and report on the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund?

The Speaker: Before the minister answers, I would like to remind the leader of the third party that questions need to come through me.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Premier was quite clear in what he said on Friday, and he stands by that statement that he made Friday night. I've said in this House, and I've said outside when asked by the newspapers or in scrums, that the root of the problem here is that, for many years, our newcomers who have been welcomed to Ontario have not been given the attention and the investments they need to succeed. I've said this is the result of parties of all stripes. I've said it's the result of different levels of government who have welcomed newcomers into this country and not given them the resources to succeed. That's what I said has been the essence of the problem, and that is what we're trying to deal with: to get rid of the neglect that has been shown many of our newcomers, who are too poor, suffer from too high levels of unemployment and have been ignored for too long. I said that's what the problem is.

Mr. Hampton: Clearly, Minister, you haven't been listening to the Premier and you weren't listening to some of your own government backbenchers, because

during the opposition day motion yesterday, numerous Liberal backbenchers, rather than demanding accountability from the Premier, rather than demanding transparency on how this slush fund was spent, continued to stand and cast aspersions of racism against other members of this Legislature.

The question is this, Minister: When will the McGuinty government do the right thing, call in the Auditor General to immediately investigate and report on the McGuinty government year-end slush fund, and when will you stop casting aspersions of racism simply because opposition members—

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Here's the same leader of the third party who had the gall to call these incredible, hard-working settlement agencies that have been serving this province for decades without any government support, on a volunteer basis—he had the gall to call these agencies serving newcomers “fly-by-nights.” That's what he did. What we've done here, all the members on this side, and I say the same thing with members on the other side: We are all working harder to ensure that the government of Ontario—we all are doing this together, I hope—pays proper attention to newcomers who come here with great hopes. That's why we're partnering with the same agencies he calls fly-by-nights, to allow newcomers to finally reach their dreams in this country.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: When an organization has no connection with the Iranian community but the head of the organization is a good friend of the Liberal campaign chairman, and the organization is an animal charity that has nothing to do with servicing newcomers and they suddenly get \$200,000, that looks to me like fly-by-night.

When another organization in Beaches–East York that has no connection to the Bengali community suddenly gets \$250,000 on the say-so of the Liberal MP, that sounds to people like fly-by-night.

I say again: When are members of the McGuinty government going to stop casting aspersions of racism because opposition members are asking for accountability and transparency, and when are you going to call in the Auditor General—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the member opposite is very easy to condemn organizations. What we are trying to do is partner with the organizations. Some are very established—have been here for many years, doing incredibly good work—like SISO in Hamilton, COSTI in the greater Toronto area or the Catholic Immigration Centre in Ottawa. We are also partnering with some smaller organizations to try to meet the needs of newcomers and these other service areas. We're trying to work with them. They are not all huge organizations; some are very volunteer-based, trying to do their best. We are trying to partner with them and give them a helping hand.

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

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of Citizenship: Yesterday, during opposition day debate, the Liberal member

for Brampton West–Mississauga said, “We’ve funded the Royal Ontario Museum, the National Ballet of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario. Why hasn’t the opposition asked about that? I wonder, when it comes to small grants of \$50,000 to the food bank or the seniors’ centre in my riding or the gurdwaras—suddenly the opposition is up in arms.”

Minister, our point is this: There were literally dozens of gurdwaras that never had notice of this money; there were literally hundreds of food banks across the province that were not told about this money; there were literally dozens of seniors’ centres across this province that were not told about this money. We want to know, why weren’t there equal opportunities? Why were only people who somehow were connected to Liberal backbenchers or the Liberal campaign chair told about this? When are you going to stop casting aspersions? Bring in the Auditor General—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Colle: You can’t have it both ways. Certainly, long-established cultural organizations were questioned in the House yesterday about why grants were given to them.

What we’re saying is, whether it’s the AGO, the ROM or the Afghan women’s centre, there are many needs—diverse needs—across this province, whether they’re cultural, whether they’re for seniors’ groups. We, in all our ministries, are trying to meet those needs. We can’t meet all of them. We are trying to do that, and that’s why we said we are even now setting up a process for more capital investments with a direct-line application, because for 20 years nothing was done in this area. We’re trying to make the process better so we can help more groups in the future.

Mr. Hampton: We are certainly aware that there was no process. The Hindu Samaj Temple in Hamilton, which was the victim of a hate crime and had their temple burned down, came to your government four times and said, “We want to rebuild our temple,” and they were answered, “No. There is no money.” But other organizations that were connected to the chair of the Liberal campaign, who have no history of serving the community, had no trouble getting a quarter of a million dollars.

The Liberal member for London North Centre said, “I am not going to impute any motives to anyone, because I think that is dangerous.” I ask members of the McGuinty government: Why do you continue to cast aspersions when we simply ask for an auditor’s investigation? Why do you continue to say that simply asking for an auditor’s—

1510

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There is a wide range of organizations of all different sizes and of all different service deliveries that we have partnered with. From the Korean Canadian Women’s Association to organizations like New Experiences for Refugee Women, all kinds of grass-roots organizations, the Rexdale Women’s Centre, the

Riverdale Immigrant Women’s Centre, Settlement and Integration Services Organization—these are the organizations we’re trying to fund. We understand that the opposition is asking questions—that’s their job. We also want the opposition, especially the leader of the third party, to stop painting everybody with a brush. He said emphatically in this House that these organizations that were being funded were “fly-by-night.” There are exceptional organizations that have been funded by his party and the other party, and continue to be funded, which do not deserve to be painted with that brush, as the leader of the third party has done.

Mr. Hampton: To hear members of the McGuinty government try to lecture someone about painting people with a brush—let me tell you what I find offensive about that, Minister. There are 55 First Nations in my constituency that are amongst the poorest communities in this province. Every one of them needs a food bank. Every one of them needs a seniors’ centre. Every one of them needs help with caring for children. I checked with those First Nations, and not one of them got any notice—no application form, no notice whatsoever—about this year-end \$30 million of money. Yet, when we ask questions about how they could be neglected and left out, Liberal backbenchers cast aspersions of racism. I ask again: When are members of the McGuinty government going to stop the aspersions of racism against members like me and answer the question—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women’s issues): You’re outrageous.

Mr. Hampton: You’re corrupt.

Hon. Mr. Colle: As Minister of Citizenship and Immigration—

The Speaker: The member of the third party will withdraw.

Mr. Hampton: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member has withdrawn.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have two separate points. First of all, I want to understand why you called my leader under order when the Minister of Economic Development and Trade called him a racist and you didn’t call her under order.

Second—

Interjections.

The Speaker: If the minister made that comment—which I didn’t hear—but if she did, she can withdraw. What’s your second point of order, then?

Mr. Bisson: I would just tell the Speaker that I’ve been watching the timing, and you’re very good at cutting the time off from the questions of the opposition and not the government.

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Hudak: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I’d like your judgment on the Minister of Health’s use of the

word “slimeball” to describe members of the opposition. Is that parliamentary?

The Speaker: If the minister made that comment, which I did not hear, I’m sure he would withdraw.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I did not make the comment alleged by the honourable member. But if I made any comment that anyone found offensive, then I’m happy to withdraw it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Colle: As Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I have a mandate to help our newcomers on the immigration side of my portfolio. I also have the mandate to ensure strong citizenship participation. That’s why, for the first time as a ministry, we have partnered with Frontier College and the Lieutenant Governor in investing \$814,000 in providing literacy camps all across First Nations areas of northern Ontario, as part of our mandate not only to help our newcomers but also to help citizens throughout Ontario who may need help. I think helping with Frontier College and literacy camps for First Nations is a proud investment we’ve made with our First Nations youth. That is a program we funded under this program, and we’re proud of that investment.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Speaker, through you to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the same minister who’s been caught red-handed doling out funds indiscriminately: I have it on reliable authority that at this very moment, the executive director and a group of volunteers who have worked at a not-for-profit organization in Richmond Hill since 2001, a settlement services organization, are right now packing up files and furniture because they don’t have the resources to keep their doors open. These are the services that were being delivered through this organization until today: settlement assistance to refugees and immigrants; education and skills training; helping immigrants and newcomers to settle and integrate.

These services have been provided through this organization since 2001 and have stopped today. The executive director and the volunteers want to know why this minister’s slush fund could not support that organization.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Energy.

Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Colle: I wish the member opposite would name the organization, which he hasn’t done. But one thing I will tell him is that because of the hard-fought battle to receive equal funding like Quebec from the federal government, agencies and settlement workers across this province are seeing increases in program funding like they haven’t seen in 20 years: 30% to 50% increases in settlement services, in the host program, in job training programs. So there are agencies getting more money and hiring more people, and that’s a good story.

And I’d like to know the name of the agency in question, please.

Mr. Klees: I’m pleased to provide that name. It’s My Canada Integration and Settlement Services, in Richmond Hill.

The executive director and the volunteer board would like to know why this minister dumped \$200,000 into the bank account of the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre only three weeks after it was formed, an organization that is not known in the community, that has no track record of providing services, that now has \$200,000 sitting in a bank account. All that My Canada wanted was \$36,000 to stay in business.

This minister is shutting the door on My Canada We want an explanation as to why there was no money—\$36,000—and why he was prepared to dump \$200,000 into an organization no one knows anything about.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I’m interested in hearing the minister respond.

Minister.

1520

Hon. Mr. Colle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite, in context, was part of a government—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): What a piece of work.

The Speaker: The member for Halton, you’ll need to withdraw that.

Mr. Chudleigh: I withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: That former minister was in a government that, if you look through Hansard in their nine years in power, see where they even mention the word “newcomers” or “immigration.” It was totally ignored. Funding was flatlined. They never fought for money from the federal government. We have gotten money from the federal government for those agencies.

From time to time there are a number of agencies that are seeking help. There is one in Guelph right now that we’re helping, along with the federal government, that has gone through a bit of financial difficulty. That does occur, and we try to help stabilize them. We’re doing that all the time. Plus, there are all kinds of agencies, as I said, that year after year have gotten no attention, no investment from any level of government. If you go through all of the settlement sector and ask these agencies, they are finally getting—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Yesterday, leaders of the Hindu Samaj Temple in Hamilton were here to make their case for a grant from the McGuinty Liberal government. Their members were raising millions and millions of dollars not once, but in fact twice, to build and then rebuild the regional temple and multicultural centre after it was destroyed by arson on September 15, 2001, in Ontario’s worst post-September 11 hate crime.

Everyone except the Ontario government has contributed to the Hindu Samaj rebuilding campaign since then: the federal government, the city of Hamilton and the broader Hamilton community. In fact, schoolchildren donated their lunch money. Hamilton police held barbecues for charity to try to raise the money to help them rebuild.

My question is this: Why did the McGuinty government repeatedly refuse to contribute to the Hindu Samaj Temple rebuilding campaign or even tell the group that Liberals had funding available for this exact purpose?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said yesterday, the tragedy that occurred in September 2001 by an arsonist was despicable. I think everybody across the country was in empathy with this horrific situation and tried to ensure that this would never happen again.

I know the members of this very worthy community, the Hindu Samaj Temple, have been working and discussing ways of getting help with all levels of government. I know there has been a little bit of resources given to them. I know they've gotten a little bit of Trillium money. It's not enough. That's why I said to them yesterday, and I'll say it again: This is a perfect example of why—for so many years, these very needy organizations, these very important cultural, religious, charitable organizations, have been asking for help—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Horwath: I appreciate that the minister feels their pain, but the bottom line is that they need funding and they need it now. I think I would feel much better, and I know they would, if they knew when the time was right that they could have applied for that funding and been in a fair process to be able to obtain it. Instead, the community members have been forced to take out personal bank loans to fill the void left by the McGuinty government's refusal to help them rebuild over the past three years.

I ask the minister this, through you, Mr. Speaker: To ease the unfair financial burden that has been placed on them, to make up for not informing this group about the availability of funding, to have Ontario take a visible and important stand against this racist hate crime, will the minister commit to meeting with the Hindu Samaj representatives and myself as soon as possible about applying for, and hopefully receiving, the funding assistance that they deserve?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I've said it repeatedly: There are incredible needs in many community organizations across this province. That's why we're tried to help these organizations that have never been helped before. We're not saying that the needs have been met for all of the worthy organizations. That's why we said we've got to do a better job and that's why we've set up a direct application form for capital projects, which never existed before by any government.

We're starting to do better, we need to do better, and I would be more than happy to sit down with the member and the members of the organization, at her convenience. That is something I will do if she wishes.

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, under the previous government, my riding of Perth–Middlesex suffered deep cuts to health care. During the first few years of power, over \$3 million was cut by the Tories from my community hospitals in Stratford, St. Marys and Listowel.

During the last three years, it's been a decidedly different story. I have witnessed a health care renaissance in my riding that began with new substantial investments in primary care and community hospitals. Four family health teams are taking shape in Perth county, giving over 3,400 previously orphaned patients access to a regular family doctor. The hospitals in my riding have seen their combined funding increase by almost \$24 million since we took office.

This story is not unique to my riding. Where else in the province are we seeing this kind of redevelopment in health care?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): One of the communities where we're particularly proud of the investment pattern we've been able to make is the fast-growing community of Barrie, Ontario. I'm pleased to acknowledge the presence of the Honourable Aileen Carroll, who served that community with tremendous distinction.

In the first year of government under the Conservatives, they cut the hospital budget at Royal Victoria by \$1.5 million. Now, through the term of our government to date, we've increased funding at Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie by \$25.1 million. We're building one of the largest family health teams, which is providing care to 100,000 patients. Already, 14,100 patients in Barrie who did not previously have a doctor are now connected to the family health team. As part of a much-necessary redevelopment of the Royal Victoria Hospital, our Premier was recently in Barrie where he made the announcement that we're adding 32 beds, for a total of 101 new beds in the long-awaited redevelopment of the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie, Ontario.

Mr. Wilkinson: My constituents often say that access to a family doctor is their biggest concern when it comes to health care. I know, after speaking to my brother Stephen, who lives in the great city of Barrie, that that is a concern there as well.

But primary health care is only one aspect of the health care system. Statistics Canada recently released new information which suggests that cancer may soon become Canada's number one killer. Our government has made major investments in new cancer centres and surgeries, and I am proud to say that the wait times for cancer surgery have dropped at the Stratford General Hospital, in my riding.

I ask the minister, what initiatives are you developing to help improve access to cancer services for other communities as well?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Barrie stands as a primary example of our message in health care—that the best health care you can find is the health care that you find as close to home as possible.

Very soon we'll build a new regional cancer centre in Barrie, and today it's my privilege to be able to announce a \$4.5-million investment in the Barrie community. We'll be delivering, this fall, a new mobile radiation unit at Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie. It will begin operation this fall. It will serve 400 patients closer to home, saving them a drive to Toronto, and, importantly, this new cancer bunker—a new mobile radiation cancer bunker—will allow the community of Barrie and the Royal Victoria Hospital to begin to develop the staff skill set that they need so that cancer services can begin to be provided in the Barrie community in the fall of 2007.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Culture. On Friday, the Premier said you were running a slush fund. He said that tens of millions of dollars went to their—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The Minister of Energy will come to order. I will not warn the Minister of Energy again. The member for York North.

1530

Mrs. Munro: He said that tens of millions of dollars went to various cultural groups with “no formal application process. We were just lobbied intensely by a number of very important, powerful people. The money goes out the door just like that.” But yesterday in question period, the minister contradicted the Premier, saying that there was a process, there were applications, there were accounting documents.

All we are after here is a simple answer to a simple question: Which version is accurate? They can't both be. Will the minister tell us who is right, she or the Premier?

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I want to say how proud I am of the investments we have made in our libraries, our museums and other major agencies in arts and culture.

It's smart to invest in our arts and culture, because this sector as a whole contributes over \$17 billion to Ontario's economy, and I'm proud of the commitment and support we have provided. These are agencies of my ministry. They are subject to annual audits and have boards of directors. They also have significant private sector support.

Ontario, during the Conservative years, was too long in the backwater when it came to arts and culture, and we're going to be changing that.

Mrs. Munro: It doesn't require a long answer. On Friday, the Premier said the money “goes out the door just like that.” The minister said yesterday, and says again today, that there was a process, there was an application. All we want her to confirm for us is which

version of events is accurate, hers or the Premier's? Whom should we believe?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: Libraries that received \$5 million are libraries in communities that are under 20,000 people. The libraries were cut by half overnight when the Conservatives were in power. Our libraries are also funded by municipalities. Our arts and cultural agencies in this province—again I say that these are smart investments that we're making across the board, because they have a great impact on our economy and our quality of life. That's the reason we make those investments, and these agencies have proved over and over again that they're internationally renowned in the work—

The Speaker: New question.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question, again, is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The Auditor General's website states—I want to be accurate, so I'll put my glasses on—“In assessing whether the government is doing a good job managing the public purse, members of Ontario's Legislature must have objective, appropriate and timely information.”

For weeks, members of this assembly, members of editorial boards of the major newspapers in Ontario, multicultural agencies and ordinary Ontarians have demanded answers on the McGuinty Liberals' mismanagement of the public purse and the grant process.

There's one chance left, Mr. Minister, and my question through the Speaker is, why don't you do the right thing and let the Auditor General examine the grants?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The grants that were given to long-standing organizations like the United Jewish Appeal, the Canadian Museum of Hindu Civilization and the Ireland Park Foundation are all there on the public record. These are organizations that have provided great service or are going to create something that's very important in commemorating, for instance, the arrival of victims of the Irish famine. The office of the auditor has the power within its mandate to look at any ministry when it wants.

Mr. Prue: Yes, it has, but the word is “timely”; that is, being able to do it before the next audit year. The Auditor General wrote to Saeed Soltanpour from the Iranian community, the one who told you that this was all bad, what you were doing. I quote the Auditor General: “The mandate of the Auditor General is to audit the government and grant recipients on behalf of the Legislative Assembly.”

Minister, \$200,000 went to an animal welfare group formerly headed by the president of the Liberal riding association. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars went to an unknown Bangladeshi group with known Liberal ties to your mentor, Maria Minna. Even you in press scrums admitted that it looked really bad. My question, through the Speaker: What do you fear with the Auditor General examining your books and your process?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We've made investments in organizations all across the province that have provided incredibly good services, organizations that have laudatory goals of trying to help newcomers or help seniors or teach literacy skills to First Nations. Those are the partners that we have made investments with. Those are partnerships that are much needed, and we've made those investments because for too long these organizations have told us that their needs were not being met. We are trying to do the best we can to ensure they can meet those needs of many deserving people across this province.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, the McGuinty government has made progress in improving our highway infrastructure and promoting transit across our province. In my riding of Thornhill, we have seen results. We have benefited from the \$670 million allocated for the subway extension into my riding, in addition to \$308.6 million for transportation and highway infrastructure in York region, which will be of great benefit to my constituents. I know that those successes are not limited to my riding but are being realized across the province. How has the McGuinty government's commitment to making up for years of neglect from the Tories and the NDP benefited those in Simcoe county, in particular the city of Barrie?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the member for Thornhill for his question. We have, in fact, invested \$6.3 billion in our highways and our infrastructure since 2003. We've also made a \$3.6-billion investment in public transit, \$1.8 billion alone into GO—desperately needed in what I call a “decade of neglect” by two previous governments who couldn't fix potholes, much less get the GO trains going. I think, as a matter of fact, they sold it, downloaded and then uploaded.

But there's no question that a good example of how we've invested is in Simcoe county: \$9.2 million alone in public transit, with Barrie receiving \$7 million itself. In addition to that, we are moving forward with the completion of Highway 400 and Highway 26, projects desperately needed in the region. So there's no question: We cover all of Ontario, not just some of Ontario.

Mr. Racco: Those investments are impressive and demonstrate the progress that we have made in less than four short years. Minister, I know that the people of Barrie have long needed and waited for better public transit services. Although they have received a large portion of Simcoe county's share of investments in the area, I know that there is special interest in seeing GO Transit extended to that community. Will the minister tell this honourable House what is being done to move this forward for the people of Barrie?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Again I thank the member for the question. We're working very closely with the city of Barrie on the planned GO expansion. We're in the process of finalizing that agreement. The agreement will

allow GO Transit to purchase and upgrade the rail corridor. It will build a new station parking lot and a layover facility. The project is scheduled for completion by late 2007. We're working with the city of Barrie for better service, for more choices for the Barrie transit riders, and we're making a real difference.

1540

This project is part of the Canada strategic infrastructure fund and is consistent with all the approaches we're making with all of the municipalities—the city of Barrie is just a really good example—and approximately \$30 million worth of total project costs, including construction and property.

The question is, “What are we doing?” The answer is, “Everything we possibly can for all of the people of Ontario, not some of them.”

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration responsible for the Liberal Party slush fund. My colleagues have been asking this question for days now, hoping that somehow we might get an answer from you. You're quoted in the Toronto Star on April 20, 2007, as saying this money “has to go through other ministers”—the Minister of Finance who, incidentally, is the Liberal Party campaign chair, and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal—“and ultimately, I guess, by cabinet.” Those are your words, Minister.

Minister, will you please tell us what direction you have received from the Liberal Party campaign chair on how you dole out this Liberal slush money?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I again would like to remind members that they need to place their question through the Speaker.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The one thing that the member opposite still does not understand is that, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I'm out in the community every night. Last night I was at the Coptic church in Mississauga. The Coptic church in Mississauga has a child care centre. They have a senior's centre. They take care of young people with disabilities. It's all volunteer-run. The mayor in Mississauga calls it the jewel of Mississauga.

The other day I was at the Afghan women's centre at Don Mills and Eglinton—when you hear the pleas for help from them. I visit the Korean women's association up here on Bloor, where they've been working, helping Korean Canadians for years. These are the organizations, big and small, that keep on asking for more government support, more government acknowledgment.

Mr. Yakabuski: The minister needs to answer this question if he has any interest in transparency and accountability. It's a shadowy process that stinks like Adscam.

Earlier today the minister made reference to an announcement of funding made by the Minister of Finance

back in the fall. The minister said the payment to the Lost Villages group referenced here yesterday came out of that fund, but it was announced by him, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh says there was no application process. In fact, he heard about it in the caucus room when they asked for Liberal MPPs to come up with some names and numbers. So now we want to know again from the minister, how did it work? Did the Liberal Party campaign chair call you and tell you how to dole out that slush money? Please tell us or bring in the—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, I've been to Cornwall; I've seen the pain in the eyes of the mayor, the councillors, the new immigrants from Pakistan that are going to Cornwall. I've seen the need to help Cornwall, as did the fall economic statement that said that this government was going to make investments in parts of Ontario that were not doing as well as other parts. That investment we made in Cornwall to help Stuart House was in a building that was built in 1810 by United Empire Loyalists. There are hard-working volunteers who have been working to save that building for a number of years. We were proud to be partners with the volunteers who have rebuilt the basement and the first floor so that can be a continuing shrine to the incredible contributions made by our first immigrants, the United Empire Loyalists.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is again to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The Auditor General's website also states, "Under the Auditor General Act, the Auditor General may also be asked to undertake special assignments to perform value-for-money audits as requested by the standing committee on public accounts, or a minister of the crown."

It's quite clear that the standing committee was shut down by your Liberal colleagues. It's quite clear that the question put before this House yesterday was shut down by your Liberal colleagues. The question, through you, Mr. Speaker, that I have is: Will you, as the minister of the crown who has the authority to do so, ask the Auditor General to undertake—

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: These investments are now on our website. The names of the organizations and the amounts they got are on our website. We've said that we are going to make the process better by also having a full-time, direct application process for capital projects because for too many years these capital projects, needed in many diverse communities, were being totally ignored. We've been investing more in the operating side, and we've been trying to ensure that the gaps on the capital side are finally being listened to. That's what we've tried to do with our partners across the province.

Mr. Prue: Again back to the minister—

The Speaker: There seems to be some confusion. If the question is placed through the Speaker, then it's fine.

When you say the word "you," that means it isn't being placed through the Speaker.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you're skirting around the issue. Ontarians deserve a full explanation and a proper accounting of your grants and how you gave out the money. Your party voted this down in the public accounts committee. Your party and your caucus voted it down yesterday in this House. Through the Speaker: Mr. Minister, will you do the right thing and ask the Auditor General, as a minister of the crown, to examine the grants, yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member opposite was quite ready on his feet last week to condemn an organization that was funded by his former colleagues, funded by the other government. He condemned that community-based organization. Those are the community-based organizations that we have partnered with, that we have funded, and they provide much-needed services. The office of the auditor has the power to look at any ministry. We know that. I'm also going to be appearing before the estimates committee. There are questions being asked, and we are trying to do the best we can to answer those questions.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I'd like to ask a question on behalf of the good people of Barrie, and my question is directed to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. As members of this Legislature know, the greater Golden Horseshoe is the fastest-growing region in Canada and one of the fastest in North America. Over the next 25 years, we're expecting an additional 3.7 million people and 1.8 million new jobs in the area.

According to the 2006 Canada census, the Barrie–Innisfil–Springwater township area has experienced substantial growth in the past five years, growing to 177,000 people from 148,000 people. I am aware that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal released the final growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe on June 16, 2006, that's now in effect. In this plan, downtown Barrie has been identified—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to thank all the members opposite for telling us what a great job Joe Tascona is doing up in Barrie—

The Speaker: Minister?

1550

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for the question. When we came to office, we certainly realized that a plan was needed to curb urban sprawl in Ontario. The growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe focuses growth in urban centres and major corridors—and downtown Barrie has been identified in the growth plan as an urban growth centre—which will help focus investment and redevelopment on downtowns and

on waterfront revitalization. The growth plan's coordinated approach to growth across the area, including Simcoe county, will help strengthen Barrie as a regional centre that will accommodate additional people and jobs, and become a focal point for cultural facilities, public institutions, major services—

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Milloy: I want to thank the minister for recognizing that the revitalization of urban growth centres is particularly important. I know the designation of downtown Kitchener and uptown Waterloo as urban growth centres in my community will ensure that they have the potential to become more vibrant, mixed-use, transit-supportive communities.

Having a growth plan is the first step, but certainly there's still more that needs to be done. These urban growth centres—downtown Barrie, for example—are not all at the same stage of development. Some are the downtowns of older cities while others are newly planned suburban centres. Would the minister tell us what else has to be done or if he has a plan to deal with the next steps?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I want to commend the member from Kitchener Centre for bringing these matters to this chamber, because we don't hear from the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford about Barrie—not one question. Not one time has he stood up for the great community of Barrie, and I want the member from Kitchener Centre to know that this government does.

We've anticipated growth and proactively planned for it through an historic growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe with clear standards for growth and development, while giving local governments the flexibility they need to maintain their unique characteristics.

Along with the growth plan, we've developed ReNew Ontario, a \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan to modernize public infrastructure right across the greater Golden Horseshoe, including extending GO service right up—

The Speaker: Thank you.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Under standing order 36, dealing with oral questions, there's a concern—and I only refer to a number of questions laterally in question period, but I know a number of other colleagues were getting strong indications that there's a significant disparity in terms of timing for questions on the opposition side and responses and questions on the government side. I would ask you to carefully consider that concern.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I of course will do that.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: My point of order relates to standing order 20(b). I'd like to read it: "When a member is speaking, no other member shall interrupt such member, except on a question of order." It also arises out of a point of privi-

lege. I'd like to refer to standing order 21(a), which relates to privileges as being "the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom." I'm specifically referring to an issue that arises out of these proceedings.

Speaker, I'm appealing to you to give consideration to what I'm about to tell you. For the last number of days in this House, I've observed that when ministers are making their statement, we can hear those statements, and in large part the opposition parties are taking the time to listen to the statements that are being made. What is happening is that the minute the opposition is called upon for responses, there is an overt attempt by the government side, as though orchestrated—and I'm appealing to you to please, in future, be observant of that, because it is grossly unfair and I suggest to you that it's an affront of my privileges here that, when it's our turn to respond to ministers' statements, there's an overt attempt by the government benches, through their heckling, to drown out the response of the opposition parties. It's inappropriate; it's inconsistent with the rules under which we are to conduct our business here. I would ask you to do so.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Listening to the member's point of order to take seriously that in the standing orders there are rules that govern our behaviour in this place, he has quoted the appropriate order that indicates that we're not supposed to be speaking when another member is speaking. I would support him on his request for that particular issue that he has raised. But I would also suggest very respectfully, as chief government whip, that no overt or covert activity has ever taken place by this office and by the members of this side to do anything untoward to the opposition. I would suggest respectfully again that the Speaker makes the decision on the order of this place, and he has done a good job.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I was interrupted by one point of order. I'm back to the point of order by the honourable House leader.

The Speaker: We were discussing the member for Oak Ridges's point of order, if I could deal with that one.

Mr. Bisson: You didn't give me a chance to get back to the first one.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: If you do choose to take this under advisement and report back to the House, perhaps you could also speak to the behaviour last week by the official opposition during question period, to use the words of the member for Oak Ridges, to determine whether or not there was some overt effort in order to in some way interfere with the operation of question period. If you're going to look at the decorum of the House, which I would encourage you to do, I hope that you will look at the language that's being used by the official opposition and the third party and the tactics of last week during question period. If we are going to start going

down this path, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, I look very much forward to a comprehensive look at the subject of the new civility.

The Speaker: I appreciate the member from Oak Ridges's point and the member for Brant and the Attorney General providing me with some advice. I am someone who has a firm belief and am very proud to be the Speaker in an institution that follows the Westminster practices of parliamentary democracy. It is an important tenet of that democracy that self-regulation of the body is the key to making this system work. Civility, maturity and self-regulation are what make Parliaments work. The Speaker, I would observe, as I did last fall, is becoming increasingly the enforcer of first resort rather than the enforcer of last resort of what is the responsibility collectively of all of us.

So I take your point, member for Oak Ridges, under consideration. I believe you make a good point, but not just about responses or ministers' statements; I think it is a wise and interesting point in general.

Mr. Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Not to rain on your parade, but this is a two-way street. Quite frankly, in this last question period you have overtly cut off the time of the opposition in asking questions and extended the time of the government. I'm asking you, further on from question period, to please—

The Speaker: I take your point seriously. That has not happened. What has happened is that members have asked questions. When they have asked the question, it has been put to the minister. That is what has happened. I repeat: I've been trying to get people to understand that in the tradition of Westminster, in the tradition of the House of Commons, in the tradition of all the Legislatures in this great country and across the Commonwealth, questions and responses must be made through the Speaker. That means you never speak of another member in the second person; it is always in the third. I think that is clear and needs to happen. That is something that I am going to as rigorously enforce as I possibly can. I'm sure I will get the assistance of every member of this Legislature in following that tradition.

PETITIONS

MULTIPLE LEGAL PARENTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): "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."

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 30(b), it being 4 p.m., I am now required to call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Mrs. Bountrogianni moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 218, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister responsible for democratic renewal to lead off.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I will be sharing my time this evening with my colleague Linda Jeffrey, the member from Brampton Centre. She is my parliamentary assistant for democratic renewal and I would like to thank her for all her hard work on this bill—

Applause.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Yes—and for her commitment. She has hurt her foot and yet she's here working all week, even though she's limping and in pain.

I'm pleased to rise in the House today to begin second reading debate on Bill 218, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2007. This legislation, if passed, would make it easier for Ontarians to vote and improve the security and integrity of the electoral process. This legislation would direct Elections Ontario to conduct a neutral public education campaign for the upcoming referendum on electoral reform. It will also make election activity more transparent to the people of Ontario.

The heart of Ontario's democracy is a system of regular elections that allow citizens to choose the people who will represent and govern them. When that system reflects the values of citizens, it produces a democracy that is rich, vital and strong. I'm sure all members on all sides of the House would like to see more Ontarians cast a ballot in every election. We are all working to make that happen.

En tant que ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique, je suis fière de ce projet de loi qui concerne l'un de nos droits les plus fondamentaux, le droit de vote. Cette loi, si elle est votée, facilitera l'exercice du droit de

vote des Ontariens et Ontariennes. Parallèlement, elle renforcera l'intégrité du processus électoral.

The changes we have proposed include practical, cost-efficient steps to modernize elections in Ontario. These are changes that will make a difference and, if passed, they will be in place for the October 10, 2007, election.

Our government's democratic renewal initiatives are designed to ensure that our electoral processes keep pace with the needs of Ontarians. This legislation will continue to enhance Ontario's electoral system.

We have set fixed-date elections: the first Thursday of October every four years, beginning in 2007. This ensures that the timing of elections is predictable and not used as a political tool by the government of the day.

We have banned partisan government advertising. Any advertising campaigns have to first be approved by the Provincial Auditor. This ensures the people of Ontario will just get the facts when the government sponsors an advertising campaign.

We also require that the Minister of Finance release a pre-election report about Ontario's finances to the Provincial Auditor for independent review before an election. This ensures that all Ontarians are aware of the state of Ontario's finances before an election. This report has just been tabled. We are making Ontario's finances more transparent to the people of Ontario.

D'autre part, les contributions politiques supérieures à 100 \$ sont désormais communiquées en temps réel aux partis et aux chefs en lice. Cette information est publiée sur Internet dans les 10 jours suivant le report de la contribution à Élections Ontario. Cela permet aux citoyens et citoyennes de l'Ontario de connaître, dès la validation en ligne, le nom des personnes donatrices, et d'identifier les intérêts en jeu.

Those improvements are making a difference, and this government is aware of the demands facing Ontarians. We are committed to providing public services that are easy to access, as well as improving our current democratic system using a number of initiatives such as those just mentioned.

This piece of legislation is another step forward. The changes proposed in this bill will make it easier than ever for all Ontarians to exercise their democratic right to vote by providing new, flexible voting options.

If passed, Bill 218 would make it easier for Ontarians to vote by adding seven additional days of advance polling in regularly scheduled general elections, increasing the number of advance polling days from six to 13 at returning offices. There would also be 10 days of advance polling at other locations. In by-elections and other general elections, there will continue to be six advance polling days.

Ontarians lead very busy lives. This legislation, if passed, would extend the polling day by one hour, to 9:00 p.m., so that people would have more time to vote on election day. Polls would close at 8:00 p.m. in part of northwestern Ontario due to the different time zones. To clarify any misunderstandings in this House, voters

everywhere in Ontario will receive an additional hour to vote.

It would also establish additional accessibility criteria for selecting polling locations. Criteria for selecting polling locations will include capacity, familiarity and lack of geographic barriers. The need for compliance with the Human Rights Code and applicable standards adopted under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, will be emphasized.

The increased number of advance poll days will make it easier for Ontarians with disabilities to vote by providing increased flexibility. The criteria to be enshrined, if this bill passes, would also ensure that Ontarians do not face any geographic barriers to get to a polling station. I will go into more detail later, but this legislation would also allow the Chief Electoral Officer to pilot new voting or vote counting technologies, some that could make it easier for Ontarians with disabilities to cast their votes.

Élections Ontario devrait continuer à pouvoir installer des bureaux de vote dans des immeubles résidentiels, des écoles, des immeubles municipaux et provinciaux.

Confusion at the ballot box could be reduced if this legislation is passed. Candidates' party affiliation would appear on the ballot if they are endorsed by a party. Candidates not endorsed by a party could be identified as independents at the candidates' request. This means that people who may want to vote for a particular policy belonging to a political party but who may not know the candidate's name, particularly if it's a new candidate, would now be able to do so because they could easily identify the party.

I'd like to thank my friend Richard Patten, the member from Ottawa Centre, for his work on this initiative. This will help voters make more informed choices at the ballot box.

Si cette loi est adoptée, elle devrait également permettre d'augmenter la participation électorale en Ontario. En donnant au directeur général des élections le pouvoir explicite d'entreprendre des campagnes de sensibilisation publique et de communication concernant les élections, la participation électorale serait encouragée.

Le directeur général des élections pourrait mieux faire connaître le processus électoral du public. Il pourrait également transmettre aux conseils scolaires de l'information destinée aux nouveaux votants ayant atteint l'âge de vote légal. Ces trousseaux de documentation permettraient aux étudiants et à leur famille de mieux comprendre notre processus électoral. Nous croyons que la participation des jeunes de l'Ontario est indispensable à la santé de notre démocratie.

As this Legislature knows, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform has been working diligently since last September to assess the current electoral system and other systems in order to recommend whether Ontario should keep its current system or adopt a new one. Never before in Ontario's history has a government delegated so much power to the people of this province to make a decision about an issue of fundamental importance. We did so because we believe that ordinary people working

together can accomplish extraordinary things. One Ontarian from every riding in the province was given the time and the resources to learn about, talk about and think about the issue of how we in this chamber should be elected. I had the privilege of meeting with the citizens' assembly members this past weekend to extend the government's gratitude for their contribution. I was impressed by the commitment and dedication to the important task that they accepted on behalf of their fellow Ontarians.

1610

One member of the citizens' assembly had just given birth, and brought her eight-day-old baby to the celebration and to the final meeting of the citizens' assembly on the weekend. Little Ulysses was present.

As we are all aware, the citizens' assembly voted on April 15 in favour of recommending a different electoral system to the people of Ontario. I look forward to receiving its final report and recommendations on May 15.

This bill amends the Election Act, which would now require the Chief Electoral Officer to conduct a neutral public education campaign to provide electors across Ontario with the following information for the referendum on electoral reform: the date of the referendum, the content of the choices in the referendum, the referendum process and the question electors will be asked to vote on.

Il est essentiel de sensibiliser très largement les Ontariens et les Ontariennes afin qu'ils disposent de l'information dont ils ont besoin pour faire leur choix lors d'un référendum concernant la réforme électorale. Cette information doit impérativement être neutre et impartiale, afin que nos citoyens et citoyennes puissent forger leurs propres convictions sur ce sujet d'importance.

This legislation also proposes a new security provision to ensure the integrity of the electoral process. We would improve security by requiring voters to present proof of identity and, in some cases, proof of residence in order to vote. Identification would also be required to change information on the voters' list or add a name to the voters' list on polling day.

We no longer live in a world where the poll captain or scrutineer knows everyone who shows up to vote by name. Identification is an appropriate safeguard in today's world. I don't think Ontarians will find it unreasonable to be asked for ID to do something as important as voting. Other provinces require electors to provide evidence of their identity by showing some form of ID. There would also be an alternative process for those who do not have ID. The CEO will prescribe the documents required for proof of identification and post information about what documents constitute appropriate identification on Elections Ontario's website. In this province, ID is required to rent a DVD but not to vote. Casting a vote is a serious act that deserves to have this new security provision.

Election integrity in all elections would also be improved by clarifying that eligible scrutineers may chal-

lenge the right to vote of an elector in their own or another electoral district during by-elections. This brings the rules surrounding scrutineers during by-elections in line with the rules during general elections.

This legislation would also improve the voters' list. We want to ensure that Ontarians who should be on the voters' list are on the voters' list. Elections Ontario would be required to update the permanent register of electors for Ontario through targeted registrations using any method deemed appropriate by the Chief Electoral Officer, including enumeration, to ensure it is current. Voters would also be able to confirm online that they are on the list.

I believe that targeted registrations could be even more effective than targeted enumerations. Enumerations require workers to go door to door, which is not necessarily the most effective way to reach electors. Targeted registrations build on existing information in the permanent register of electors and allow flexibility. The chief electoral officer can tailor his approach to communities that are less likely to be accurately included on the voters' list, using methods that actually connect with these voters, such as by e-mail or phone. Apartment buildings or any other communities with high tenancy turnovers can now be accounted for. We are trying to bring more Ontarians to the polls.

I'd like to also say on this topic that, in addition, the Chief Electoral Officer can still choose to use enumeration if he believes that it is the best method to accurately register any of the targeted communities or to update the permanent register of electors at any other time.

Nous désirons fournir des services publics d'un accès aisé. Avec cette loi, le droit démocratique des Ontariens et des Ontariennes à exercer leur droit de vote sera rendu plus facile que jamais grâce à de nouvelles solutions plus souples.

This legislation would allow the testing of new voting or voting-counting methods at a by-election at the Chief Electoral Officer's discretion. On this side of the House, we trust the chief election officer, an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, to move in a reasonable, prudent and thoughtful manner. This legislation proposes to remove the current requirement for party consent before the CEO can test alternative voting methods. More specifically, the CEO would be permitted to test alternative voting methods and equipment at by-elections without having to obtain the agreement of leaders of parties with 12 or more MPPs. At the same time, the CEO would be required to convene an advisory committee of all registered political parties to report on his findings.

If a person or group is going to advertise to influence the outcome of an election, the public has a right to know who is paying for it. This legislation includes new reporting and transparency requirements for third parties that undertake election advertising. Third party advertising would be regulated to enhance electoral transparency by ensuring the public knows who is paying for third party advertising during an election campaign.

If passed, those engaged in election advertising would be required to register with Elections Ontario as soon as their spending reaches \$500. Once a third party is registered, it will be required to submit a report within six months after polling day that describes advertising expenses and contributions. This will include the totals for each class of contributors, and information on all donors who contributed more than \$100. A third party that spends \$5,000 or more must appoint an auditor and submit an auditor's report.

This bill is about good government and updating the electoral process. One such change would be the elimination of the initial advertising blackout period for regularly scheduled general elections. Advertising blackout periods were established to ensure that a government did not have an unfair advantage over other parties with respect to election preparedness. There is no longer a need for this blackout period because the date is known in advance by all parties. The blackout period on polling day and the day before polling day would be maintained. In the event of unscheduled elections, and in by-elections, the initial advertising blackout would remain in place.

Another change would be to the titles of the Chief Election Officer and the Assistant Chief Election Officer. They would be changed to the Chief Electoral Officer and the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer. The titles would be changed for consistency with other jurisdictions and to reflect the scope of their responsibilities.

Cette loi constitue un premier pas calculé vers des changements à plus long terme dans la façon de tenir des élections. Plusieurs des améliorations mentionnées dans la loi ont été recommandées par le directeur général des élections.

These proposed amendments will enhance the integrity and accessibility of the electoral process without risking disruption to the October election.

Taken together with other key democratic renewal initiatives, including the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform and our recently passed referendum legislation, the provisions to modernize elections in Ontario will contribute significantly to our renewed vision of Ontario's democracy—a democracy which is inclusive, participatory, transparent and accountable.

I'm very proud to stand in support of this bill and urge all members of this Legislature to join me in doing the same.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm glad to join the conversation today as the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal. It is my pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 218, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2007.

The bill being debated today, if passed, would make a real difference by making it easier for Ontarians to vote and to enhance the integrity of the electoral process. The proposed legislation is as a result of a report authored by Chief Election Officer John Hollins, prepared after the 2003 election. In it, he worried about the decline in voter turnout that was caused by "barriers" in election laws.

This legislation will allow us to address some of those barriers and flaws, and that's why we've proposed to make the criteria for selecting polling locations clearer and make explicit that accessibility requirements should be considered.

We've included additional language that would prescribe criteria for selecting polling locations. As well, we have included additional criteria which ensures compliance with the Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This legislation, if passed, would make it clear that Elections Ontario must consider location capacity, familiarity and geographic barriers. Presently, polling locations need only be centralized and convenient. This legislation will make voting easier and more accessible for all Ontarians. We've also introduced amendments based on recommendations made by the Chief Election Officer that would allow us to reduce confusion at the ballot box by listing party affiliation beside each candidate's name. As well, this legislation, if passed, would require providing proof of identity before making your ballot mark, to help uphold the integrity of our electoral process.

1620

Another barrier to electoral participation is time, which is why we will be extending the deadline for voting from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. and increasing advance poll days to 13. This legislation will modernize elections and make it easier for all Ontarians to vote so that we can ideally increase voter turnout from 56.8%, which was 2003's outcome. We want to help Elections Ontario reach their realistic, reachable target of a 74% voter turnout.

One of the things we learned from the British Columbia referendum was that many people weren't quite sure what they were voting for in the referendum. We want to ensure that Ontarians understand what they're voting for at the polls, leading up to our province's first referendum since 1921. That's why this legislation will empower Chief Electoral Officer John Hollins with the freedom and the explicit authority to undertake a comprehensive, non-partisan public education and communications campaign. The chief elections officer will also be given the necessary funds to run a successful education program and campaign that will help the public understand the referendum question on the mixed member proportional voting system. Mr. Hollins will also have the power to explore modernized voting methods and launch pilot projects during by-elections to explore new technologies like online voting or voting at electronic kiosks, which currently are used in many municipal elections.

Bill 218 proposes that the Chief Electoral Officer be required to conduct a post-election survey to get feedback on the voting experience. These results would provide insight as to whether electors in a general election experience problems or barriers in voting. Additionally, the Chief Electoral Officer will be required to convene and consult with an advisory committee representing all of Ontario's registered political parties. The mandate would be to discuss administrative and

legislative issues of critical interest to Elections Ontario and registered political parties.

We believe that improving the voters list and ensuring that eligible voters are on this list is paramount. The accuracy of the permanent register of electors would be improved if this legislation is passed. Elections Ontario would be required to update the permanent register of electors, and the Chief Electoral Officer would be required to conduct targeted registration programs in the years in which regularly scheduled general elections are to be held. The chief Electoral Officer would also be required to provide new voter information to school boards for distribution to students approaching that critical voting age.

The permanent register of electors is clearly a list that is constantly in flux. Therefore, we've provided a number of criteria for targeting those efforts at the people most likely to be left off the register or improperly left on it. This would include capturing mobile populations, registering electors who are new citizens and young people who are voting for the very first time, and possibly removing those who are no longer able to vote. A number of techniques will be provided for carrying out a targeted registration program. Enumeration can be used for part or all of a riding as well as other methods that may be more effective and economical for target populations. The Chief Electoral Officer would have the freedom to decide which technique is more likely to be productive in achieving this goal.

Accountability of the electoral system would be strengthened by requiring the Chief Electoral Officer to provide an annual report to the Speaker of the Assembly. This would allow the CEO to make timely recommendations in his annual report with respect to enhancing accessibility for those who experience difficulties in voting. The investigative power of the chief elections officer would also be increased if this legislation was passed. It would contribute to enhancing security measures around the electoral process.

The McGuinty government continues to be a leader in advancing an ambitious democratic renewal agenda. Our government is committed to engaging more Ontarians in the electoral system. We're working to reduce voter cynicism and increase voter turnout. Encouraging meaningful participation in Ontario's democracy is the core of our government's democratic renewal agenda. Here are just a few of our government's accomplishments.

We established the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. For the first time in our province's history, we've given Ontarians the opportunity to participate in a full, open debate on the electoral system we inherited, and on May 15 the assembly will submit its final recommendation in a report to the Legislative Assembly.

As well, we established the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform, a parallel citizens' assembly process for Ontario's high school students.

Our government recently passed historic legislation that ensures that if a referendum on electoral reform is

chosen by Ontarians, we will have a legitimate process in place that will provide a clear outcome.

We've amended the province's election laws and set predictable scheduled election dates because we believe citizens prefer knowing when elections will be held. Provincial elections will be held every four years. Ontario's next provincial election is just around the corner and will be held on October 10, 2007.

We've improved the transparency of our political process by requiring real-time public disclosure of political contributions of \$100 and more to political parties and leadership candidates, retroactive to January 1, 2004. These actions have contributed to making Ontario a leader in transparency and accountability. Our real-time disclosure is the first of its kind in Canada and allows Ontarians quick and easy access by tracking contributions through the Internet. We believe that citizens should know how political parties are financed.

We've preserved 11 ridings in the north and increased the number of southern ridings from 92 to 96. As a result, Ontarians in the next provincial election will send 107 members of provincial Parliament to Queen's Park: 11 for the north and 96 for the south.

We believe that every region in Ontario is significant and has an important role to play in building a strong and prosperous province. We also believe that in order to do so, every region needs to be represented in this Legislature.

This legislation strikes a balance. It makes a real, tangible improvement in the process but it does not risk disrupting the upcoming election. I urge members of this House to support Bill 218.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to respond to the minister responsible for democratic renewal and the member from Brampton Centre on Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts.

I think actions speak greater than words. These days around the Legislature, what seems to be happening with just about every government bill is time allocation. That's where the government basically passes a motion that shuts down and is very specific about the amount of time to be debated on any given government bill. We see that with the referendum bill of all bills. It was time-allocated, and now recently we see that with Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act. On that one, the main message I was receiving as the critic was that there were many, many different groups out there that wanted to be able to come before a committee and get their views known on the bill, and preferably around the province. But the government passed the time allocation motion that basically gives two days in Toronto for public input on that bill. Then we see the water bill, Bill 198, which is, I believe, supported by all the parties here in the Legislature. That one has been time-allocated. And what are we doing tonight? Another time allocation motion this evening on Bill 212, an education bill.

1630

I guess the question to be asked is, why all these time allocation motions? I think the answer is that the government doesn't want to be staying around here at Queen's Park any longer than it has to, particularly with all the questions being asked about the Liberal slush fund and the processes involved in that Liberal slush fund. The government has decided to shut down Queen's Park, get these bills they need for their election passed, get out of here and start campaigning.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by the government, I have a number of concerns with respect to Bill 218, both the contents in the bill and about what isn't in the bill, especially after some of the promises the Liberals made in the last election around electoral reform. Let me focus on one of those in my response time. This is the section in Government That Works for You that's entitled "Reducing the Influence of Money in Politics." It says as follows:

"Under the Harris-Eves government, money has too much influence and you have too little. They raised donation limits to unprecedented levels and virtually eliminated spending restrictions on political parties. They spent more money on election campaigns and leadership contests than any party in Ontario history.

"Rules for political contributions and expenditures should not be set by those who can benefit. You will set limits on the role of money in politics."

It goes on: "The Harris-Eves government opened the door to big money in Ontario politics. They effectively eliminated spending limits. They increased contribution ceilings by nearly 80% and more than doubled the limit on tax-deductible corporate political donations....

"We"—this is the Liberals, apparently—"believe that public decisions must be made in the public interest, not in the interests of a few well-financed political supporters. That is why we will give you real power to decide what role money should play in the political process....

"Limits on raising and spending money should not be limited to the brief few weeks of an election campaign. In modern politics, much of the 'campaign' spending occurs before the election is even called.

"Citizens' juries will be authorized to establish spending and contribution limits to apply to both pre-election spending and party leadership contests."

The government does zero, zip, nada, nothing with respect to the promises it made around spending limits and contribution limits. My, my, what a difference from when they were in opposition and when they were in government and their response to spending money during election campaigns. I wonder why that is.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): First of all, it's a privilege to follow the Honourable Marie Bountrogianni and her parliamentary assistant, Linda Jeffrey, with regard to the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2007.

As you'll appreciate, democracy being one of the fundamental tenets of our society, it's worth strengthening, it's worth furthering, it's worth legislating for, and

in fact, as some brave Canadians have taught us, it's worth dying for.

So that's why it is our collective, and perhaps inherited, responsibility to move on issues such as the extension of democracy; for example, the idea of making it easier to vote, the idea of really extending the democratic choice to individuals by extending polling hours, by increasing the number of advance polls from six days to 13 days, and by establishing additional accessibility criteria for polling locations. This is just part and parcel and small examples, small measures, that will hopefully enhance the democratic participation rate and potential across Ontario.

The other thing that's not being particularly highlighted that I think should be is that once our citizens' assembly comes back and reports on its electoral reform mandate, the Chief Electoral Officer, as you know, will receive the mandate and the opportunity to actually engage in a voter information campaign across Ontario. I think together with the extension of the democratic ability, for example, the polling hours that I've just mentioned, part and parcel with the educational campaign and a number of the other measures that are contained within this particular package—for example, the updating of the permanent register of electors of Ontario, the voting lists, if you will—this is a very important law and another important step in the renewal of democracy in Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I had the opportunity to listen to the minister responsible for democratic renewal and her parliamentary assistant. I'm going to be speaking to this in more detail shortly, but I did want to say that my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka raised an interesting issue with regard to how it's always a bit rich when we have the minister responsible for democratic renewal speaking. It kind of speaks to how we treat the members in this House and how we treat the process in this Legislature. Of course, tonight for the umpteenth time we're going to be debating another—yes, that's right—another time allocation motion on the part of this government.

My friend from Nickel Belt talked about how the words of these people were so different when they were running for office in 2003 from what we're actually getting out of them today. It doesn't matter whether you're talking about election financing, democratic reform, how you treat members in this House, civility or all of those kinds of things. The same thing was applied to the issue of time allocation motions. You've heard in the past where we've read reams of quotes from current members of the Liberal cabinet speaking out against time allocation motions. But they can't move quickly enough now. They're coming in so fast and furious now, at the end of this legislative session, that we can hardly keep track of them. Time allocation motions are coming faster than new weather reports from the weather channel. It's just boom, boom, boom; continuous. I don't know what we're going to do about it.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Brampton Centre, who has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Etobicoke North and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their comments. I think every member in this House does want a high voter turnout when they're not worrying about the partisan piece we collectively get drawn into in this House when we're debating. We all ran, maybe for the first time in this House—I ran municipally four times. Getting voter turnout raised was always a challenge. Municipally, in my community of Brampton, it's been 23% when it's been a good election. That's when there's a mayoralty race.

You don't feel that you have the endorsement of your community without a high voter turnout. Although you sit here and you make decisions for them, it really does help to know that you have the encouragement and support of the majority of the residents in your riding. As most of us here represent in excess of 100,000 people, it really does help to have a number of people behind you and supportive of your constituency out there, voting on election day.

We believe that the measures we've taken in this legislation will be more helpful. It's tweaking the election process. It's not dramatic, but it's a significant group of little changes that will make a big difference to our commuting public. If you've ever been in a voting station, the majority of people come in after 5:30, so we know that about 75% of the voters are coming in after work. We're going to make it easier for them. We recognize that their time is valuable, but their vote is valuable. You need to spend some time on this. It hasn't been significantly tweaked in a long time. I think it takes courage to make a change.

I look forward to more comments in this House and I appreciate all the comments today.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Yakubuski: I believe we have unanimous consent for the lead to be stood down at this time?

The Acting Speaker: The member is seeking unanimous consent to stand down the lead from the official opposition. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

1640

Mr. Yakubuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 218 this afternoon. I'm going to get to it shortly, but I want to say that this is another one of these last-minute things on the part of this government, where they seem not to have had a very good plan. Suggestions for this legislation came out of a report that came out of the Chief Election Officer's office in 2004. I guess I would ask, what took you so long? Why have you waited until the 11th hour before the election to bring this before the House, which doesn't give us an opportunity to legitimately debate this and send it to proper consultations and committee—because you know the government's going to time-allocate this, as they've been doing everything else.

But I just want to leave that for a minute. I beg the indulgence of the House on this, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to bring the House's attention to the fact that the Pembroke Lumber Kings Junior A hockey team in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on the weekend were crowned the champions of the Fred Page Cup. Some 300 residents of Pembroke and area and supporters of the Lumber Kings made the trip to St. Jerome, Quebec, to support them through the tournament weekend. As I said, the Lumber Kings emerged victorious in the championship game, 5-2 over the St. Jerome Panthers.

As a result of winning the Fred Page Cup, the Lumber Kings are going out to Prince George, BC, to compete in the Royal Bank Cup, which is the top six tier-two Junior A teams across the country, which will crown a supreme champion for all of tier-two Junior A throughout the country. These are the eastern Canada champions now; we're looking forward to them being successful in all of Canada. I hope that all members of the House join me in supporting them. I want to congratulate the Lumber Kings and all of the members of their executive and coaching staff: Sheldon Keefe, head coach and general manager; assistant coaches Sean Peyton and Jeff Patterson; operations manager Mary Ann—better known as “MAT”—Taman.

I have to tell you: MAT has had me sing the national anthem at a number of Lumber Kings games over the last couple of years, particularly the ones this year that were singled out as Raging Red Fridays, when the troops of CFB Petawawa and, in fact, all our troops serving our country in various theatres but particularly in Afghanistan would be honoured at those games. It was an honour for me, as it is any time when I get a chance to sing the national anthem, but particularly when we're honouring our brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I wanted to list the names of the players on this team, because it is important to give you some indication of the valley connection. The ones that come from the valley, I will mention their home. Mavric Parks, Eganville, Ontario; Brent Mackie; Jeff Rodell; Matt Rhymer; Ryan Sullivan; Max Hovey; Keith Clarke, Pembroke; Ben Reinhardt, Arnprior; Brad Townsend; Sean Crozier, Renfrew; Anthony Ventura; Scott Campbell, Navan; Patrick Barney, Nepean; Eric Selleck; Chris Laganiere; Zach Wilson of Arnprior; Jeremi Lapierre; Tim Okicki; Brandon Richardson; Jeremy Gates; Matt Montgomery of Pembroke; Steve Omelko; Brad Wilson, Orleans; Owen Kelly; Brandon Jackson of Cobden; Adam Brace of Cobden; and Paul Beckwith.

Congratulations to all of these young men, and we wish them the very, very best in Prince George.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): Especially the Crozier.

Mr. Yakubuski: I see that the member from Essex was particularly taken by the reference to Sean Crozier from Renfrew. He's probably claiming a relation there somehow. I'm going to have to get on that hockey website to see whether the member from Essex had a hockey career before he came here.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): It's in the genes.

Mr. Yakabuski: It's in the genes. He looks like an athlete, I must say. He certainly has risen to his feet very quickly sometimes when he's been in the Speaker's chair and he may have thought that I might have been out of line. He's been very quick to rise, so he probably is an athlete of some renown.

But let's get back to the matter at hand. As I said, I'm very concerned that this government would take so long to bring this bill to the Legislature, when they were aware that it was suggested and needed over two and a half years ago, based on a report from the Chief Election Officer.

Substantively, we're in agreement with many things in this bill. I want to touch on a number of them.

The identification side of it: I think the minister is absolutely right. It's something that a lot of people have been asking for, including members of our party. If you look back to the previous federal election, a number of people, it was said, illegitimately voted in that election because nobody was checking IDs, nobody was doing anything. They just came and said, "I'm so-and-so," and "Here's your ballot, away you go," and Bob's your uncle—or maybe Bruce is your uncle; I don't know. So there was some real concern about voter fraud in that election.

I think it is absolutely reasonable to expect that if someone is going to exercise the privilege granted them to elect a member of Parliament or provincial Parliament, which would determine the makeup of the next government, we should take every measure possible to ensure that that person is a legitimate voter. We don't want to discourage people from voting; in fact, we want to encourage people to come out and vote. That's something that is very, very important. But an illegitimate vote is worse than no vote at all. So we have to make sure that we take the steps that are necessary to ensure that those people who are voting have the legitimate right to vote. I think that's something that this bill, to some degree, does address.

There are many things in this bill that we're going to have to get to committee, get some consultation on, get down past the veneer and into the meat of the matter here so that we can actually be sure of what—you know the old saying, "The devil is in the details"? We want to get to those because some of them we plainly don't understand at this point yet, but we're trying to get some of that information. That's where committee and public hearings are always very, very valuable.

The issue of polls being open that extra hour: I think that's a good move as well. There will be some adjustments.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): They may get stiffed in Kenora.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes. One of the concerns is about the length of time it takes to report those voting results after the polls close, and my friend from Niagara Centre very correctly pointed out, what about a riding like Kenora-Rainy River? Whoa, that's big. It's a challenge

at the best of times to get those results in in a timely fashion. If you're closing those polls at 9 o'clock, are we going to be able to have those results in in time to ensure that those will be available?

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: Oh, Kenora is closing earlier?

Interjection: It's a different time zone.

Mr. Yakabuski: Oh, that's right.

Mr. Kormos: That means they have a shorter time frame. They can't vote as late into their day—

Mr. Yakabuski: Good point. The member for Niagara Centre has pointed out—and I recall when I made a couple of visits up to Atikokan that you actually go into a different time zone when you get up there. So that is an additional concern and we'll have to see how that's going to be addressed.

The issue of third party advertising: I think that's a good one. If you recall, in the 2003 election, there was this really quite disgusting, unseemly campaign put out. They claimed to be the coalition of families, but as it turned out it was actually well-financed, high-powered union groups that came out with a campaign. It was a terrible caricature of the then Premier, Ernie Eves, and very insulting.

1650

The Liberals often refer to the ill-conceived advertising that went on in the 1993 federal election and how the then-challenger for the Prime Minister's position was portrayed by the Conservative Party. That, certainly, was something that was regrettable. However, they did something just as unseemly in 2003 by getting this union group calling themselves the coalition of families spending all of this money to try to make Ernie Eves look in the most unflattering light. This law—because, you see, they're the government now. As I was saying about the member for Nickel Belt saying, "It's amazing how they change when they're in government from when they were in opposition and when they were campaigning. It's the things they promise and the things they're going to do."

Mr. Crozier: It's amazing how they go from government to opposition.

Mr. Yakabuski: The member for Essex makes a reference to how they change when they go from opposition to government. I don't know. I've only sat in opposition, and I must say that this government now that was in opposition—boy oh boy, it's just amazing how time has switched them. They could be called the party of 180 degrees, because everything has turned around 180 degrees. But you see, now that we're coming into an election where they're the government and they're going to be answerable for their pitiful record, they want to make sure that there's nobody out there gunning for them. We're going to be, and I know that my friends from the NDP are going to be gunning for them. That's figuratively speaking, Mr. Speaker. I want to ensure that you understand that. But they want to ensure that there's no third party out there that could covertly target the Liberal government, and this bill should take care of that.

When they're in opposition after the election, I hope they don't come out and say, "We want this bill changed because now we're back in opposition and we want to get back into government so we're going to have to take another crack at this third party advertising thing." So I hope they don't do that. The payoff, of course, came after the election for those big-powered unions when the government changed the legislation with regard to the registration of unions and took out the time-tested democratic tradition of a secret ballot and brought in, "Just sign the card and you're going to be okay." That was a payoff. That was a payback from the Liberals for all of the help that they got during the campaign. This is going to make it a little more difficult for anyone to do that. I'll give them credit; that's a good thing. They got their election win and they're all happy and now they're changing the rules and that's good, because now these rules will fit for everybody. I think that the disclosure rules with regard to third parties and all of those kinds of things are certainly something that we can support.

The minister and the parliamentary assistant—the member for Brampton Centre, correct? Yes. I'm pretty good on those ridings, but I'm not 100% certain yet. The member was talking about Bill 155 and the referendum act and whatever we're going to do with the citizens' assembly that studied the possibility of electoral reform for some time and has now reported back and made a choice. The government is playing pretty coy with this, even though most of their members don't want anything to do with MMP. The Minister of Finance wouldn't touch it with a 20-foot pole. He has used all the 10-foot poles to try to keep them away from the Adscam mess they've got with regard to the Liberal slush funds. He now has 20-foot poles, and he won't touch this. He wouldn't want to touch this with a 20-foot pole, but that's the Minister of Finance.

It raises a number of interesting things, the recommendations from the citizens' assembly, with regard to mixed member proportional. It would mean that there would be now 90 elected members to this assembly. Not 103, as there are today, or 107, as there will be after the election of October 10, but there would be 90. There would be an additional 39 members chosen off a list presented by the party leaders. The folks in northern Ontario and rural Ontario know what that's going to mean to them: They ain't going to be on the list. Those folks won't be on the list, so how does their representation go? I could ask the member for Timmins–James Bay and the member for Nickel Belt and other members in the north: How is this going to affect the north? If you've got 11 members after this next election, you're not going to have 11 members in any new-configured Parliament. So if you're talking about representation from the north, I think you've got to take another look at this system.

The other principle that most of the people I represent hold very true is the fact that they actually get to pick the person who's going to represent them at Queen's Park. They want to directly elect that person. They don't

believe that members who are answerable to no constituents back home—not just one or two or three or four, but 39 members of this assembly. I'm not sure where we're going to put them. We're going to have to get smaller chairs, I guess, or all go on a diet. Thirty-nine members would be chosen off party lists. The people I represent in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke ask themselves, "Why would people be going to Parliament who are answerable to only one person, and that's the leader of the party who gave them the plum assignment to come?" You don't have to spend your weekends going to events and mingling with your constituents. It's something we like to do. That's how we keep in touch and understand the lives of the people we represent. Oh, no; we have 39 people who would spend their weekends flitting around the city here and enjoying the sights. And while the Legislature sits, they'd come back in here and collect their paycheque and wonder who they're representing. And that's an improvement over what we've got?

There's a lot of work to do to improve what we've got, and most of it should start right here. I'll tell you one place where the government could start. They could start by stopping. Hear that, Mr. Speaker? They could start by stopping the stonewalling that has been going on in this House with regard to the legitimate questions being posed to them by the opposition, both us and the members of the New Democratic Party. They could start by stopping that stonewalling. They could start by giving some answers. They could start by saying yes to the Auditor General so that we could get to the bottom of this mess that they have created because they decided that the partisan interests of their members are more important than the real interests of the people of the province of Ontario. That's another thing that people believe in. They believe that a government should be accountable, that a government should be willing to stand up and say, "This is what we did. This is why we did it. This is the process we use. There's our justification, and here are the results. We can say that program was right because we can measure the results." In this slush fund, a.k.a. sponsorship whatever, votes-buying scandal, Liberal Party membership drive—whatever you want to call it—they can't say yes to any of those questions. What they can say is yes. You know what? The people are saying, "Yes, the government is wrong; the opposition is right," and the people want answers.

Interjections.

Mr. Yakabuski: I hear the chuckling over there. The members think it's right to dole out money with no accountability. I'll tell you, the people in my riding who've had to apply for Trillium grants over the years would say, "Accountability is a good thing, but by God, there's a lot of work involved in that process." This government wants to skip those steps and just put the money into the pockets of Liberal-friendly organizations—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke had a number of things to say. Let me focus on

one where he and I are probably not in agreement. That has to do with the result of the deliberations by the citizens' assembly.

1700

I am a member, of course, who firmly believes that what the province desperately needs in terms of encouraging more people to vote is a system of proportional representation where every vote will count. Right now, with first past the post, far too many people don't participate in the process because they don't think their vote matters. I think a system of proportional representation would allow people certainly to vote for whoever is in their riding, if they like them particularly, but aren't so enamoured with the party policy, and also to cast a second ballot perhaps with the party of their choice. So they could be splitting their vote in that particular way.

What really concerns me about that is that while I'm very supportive of what the citizens' assembly came forward with, the fact of the matter is that the government has essentially ensured that it's not going to matter what work they did and what they came forward with. To have a referendum where a 60% majority has to vote in favour is setting us up for disaster. It's doomed to fail. We saw that very clearly in British Columbia, where a 60% majority was required, and of course that wasn't met—close, but it wasn't—and so there isn't a change in the voting system in the province.

Secondly, it was very clear in British Columbia that the question that was on the referendum was determined by the assembly, was voted on by the assembly, and we see here in Ontario that it's not going to be the assembly that votes on such an important question. No, it's going to be cabinet in the backroom that sets the question unilaterally and then has the Chief Electoral Officer put it onto the referendum itself. That is totally different, and certainly not very democratic by any stretch of the imagination, when one is contemplating such a major change to voting in the province.

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): It's a privilege and a pleasure to participate in Bill 218, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts. I commend the minister for bringing this bill forward.

I had the privilege of being a member of the select committee of the Legislature of this province which visited other jurisdictions about how to increase our voter turnout. This will, if passed, help this government to make an effort to increase voter turnout.

I want to focus on one area, which is about the advertising blackout period. If Bill 218 is passed, it will eliminate the initial advertising blackout period for regularly scheduled elections. As the election date, which is October 10, 2007, is known to all the parties in advance, the elimination of the initial advertising period for regularly scheduled elections would help us to eliminate the period. However, the blackout period on election day and the day before would be maintained as in the past.

I think it's a good bill and, if passed, would help people to go and vote and participate in the democratic process of this province.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I always listen with interest and a set of earplugs when the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is speaking. At the beginning, he was talking more about a hockey game, and this bill is all about An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and make related amendments to other Acts.

In fact, he did go on to cover a number of the issues, which I think is surprising. This is a government that was elected under the mandate of renewed democracy, if you will—democratic renewal, transparency, accountability—and in the last two weeks we've seen no such thing. It's a shame, quite frankly. It's an affront to the House, you might say.

I also recall that they've had about three bills—actually, I think this is the fourth bill—on election reform and election process reform. More recently—and I'm not surprised, but this bill may also be time-allocated—Bill 155 was all about the referendum and it was time-allocated. What a conundrum if you think about it: a bill on democratic renewal being time-allocated, which, for the viewer, means they've shut down the debate. It's a contradiction in the very debate that we're having.

This bill also has some troubling sections when you look at it. If you look at just the explanatory notes, you see that there's going to be an allowance for voting by use of other methods. This can be done without an agreement of the party leaders. This is an exception to the bill. There's also an understanding with respect to the identification of candidates on the ballot and their party affiliation. There's a bill that allows a new structure for a number of new parties, which is troubling as well.

Quite frankly, one part that gets me is that section 114.1 is also about the referendum and the role of the election returning officer, but also, section 37 is eliminating the blackout period for advertising—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): There's enough in this bill to allow any member to speak for fairly long periods of time. There's a couple of provisions—the one that I love is that they're going to be putting the name of the political parties on the ballot. I just wonder what would happen in Mr. Runciman's riding if there was a John Doe from the People's Choice Party and a George Smith from the Popular Communist Party and all of a sudden all those acronyms go at the end in order to confuse the voter. I wouldn't put it past certain people in political parties to make that happen. That's why I've always wondered that this is one of the things the government put in.

The other issue which I think is interesting is that we've been having a bit of a discussion about proportional representation. I will just say that I totally disagree with the comments made by my good friend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing in regard to his views on proportional representation.

I was just down in the standing committee and that tells me the need to change this place. We have an initiative in the finance committee now that is going to turn the tax system on mining on its ear. It's going to affect future investment in northern Ontario. Even the government members who know this is a bad idea aren't going to vote against it in committee. Why? Because they've been given marching orders by their minister and by the government to support the clause as is.

At least under proportional representation, the government wouldn't have a clear majority in that committee, as they wouldn't in the House, and we would at least be in a position where all members' voices counted. The government would not be in a clear majority and they would at least have to convince somebody in the opposition to support them. If that didn't happen, the initiative wouldn't pass. What's wrong with that? I call it democracy.

This is where I have a difference of opinion with my friend. Is this model as represented by the citizens' assembly the best? I might have done it differently, quite frankly, but I think it's certainly a step forward from what we've got now.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. I'll return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Yakubuski: I appreciate the comments of the members from Nickel Belt, Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale, Durham and Timmins–James Bay. I don't have time to touch on all of them, but I did want to touch on a couple of points.

The member for Durham talked about the party affiliation on the ballot. That is a situation that lends itself—and I do appreciate the member for Ottawa Centre who campaigned on that. I think he actually had a private member's bill at one time to deal with party affiliation being on the ballot. But it does open itself up to all kinds of mischievous things, as the member for Durham started to talk about but ran out of time, where people could play games with the—maybe that was the member for Timmins–James Bay who raised that—names on the ballot, where you would have party names that were very similar to established party names to cause some confusion on the part of the voter and/or maybe have someone run who has a similar surname. But if you had the two of them together, there could certainly be some confusion on the part of the voter, not that there isn't that today sometimes with similar surnames.

The other thing I wanted to talk about: The member for Timmins–James Bay talked about our differences on electoral reform and what the makeup of the assembly might be, but we are in absolute agreement, I believe, on the need to reform this chamber itself. His alluding to what's going on in committee is just another example of where this government uses its majority to crush the opposition, to crush any opposition to the shenanigans they're up to. The committee that had an opportunity to put this before the auditor voted it down because their party said to vote it down. That's not democracy.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I would ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead, as our critic is currently in committee.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins–James Bay is seeking unanimous consent of the House to stand down the leadoff speech. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Bisson: It's fitting that we're debating a bill that deals with the electoral system and generally with democracy on a day when yet again, in question period today, we were demanding answers from the Minister of Citizenship and other ministers of the government when it came to this whole slushgate fund. We have a situation, Speaker, as you know—you were here at question period; you've seen it—where the opposition, the media and the public are asking some pretty serious questions. How is it that groups across Ontario could have received money without application, have dollars shovelled out of the ministry door into the bank accounts of these organizations without ever having to make an application? And then finding out that the relationship between the applicants and the Liberal Party is very tight and close indeed.

We've been asking in this House, first at committee—we asked the government to support us at public accounts, giving the auditor the opportunity to take a look forthwith at those particular grant applications in order to find out what in fact happened so that we could make sure that doesn't happen again. Number two, we had an opposition day motion in this House yesterday that called on the government to get the auditor to do the same thing. Again, that was voted down by the majority. Today, we stood in the House and we asked the minister, because he has the authority as minister, to have the auditor come in, and the minister refused.

I just say—I think other members in this House would echo me—that there's something passing strange here, that we have a situation where monies were expended without any application whatsoever for the dollars. The dollars showed up in the bank accounts of these organizations. For some of them, the only connection they have to this place is by way of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

The government needs to reflect on that. It needs to think about why it is that it's important that we go to public accounts. For them to reflect better, I would ask at this point for adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins–James Bay has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1713 to 1743.

The Acting Speaker: Monsieur Bisson has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be counted by the table.

All those opposed will please rise and be counted by the table as well.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 10; the nays are 35.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

I will now return to the member for Timmins–James Bay, who still has the floor.

Mr. Bisson: That was so close; it was unbelievably close on the last vote. I've got to say I was encouraged.

I want members to understand why I moved that particular motion. Quite frankly, it's very simple. As I said earlier, there has been an incident where particular groups in the province of Ontario have received money without application. There was no basic process by which these people had to apply for money. Not only did the money show up in their bank accounts without having a fair application process, but in the end, we found out that some of these groups—and I don't know how many, but we know some—had very deep ties to the Liberal Party of Ontario. We in the opposition, the media and others have been asking questions to the minister responsible for immigration now for a period of two or three weeks. We've asked the Premier and we've asked other members to do the right thing, and that is to refer this matter to the Provincial Auditor so that the Provincial Auditor can take a look at what happened and report back to the Legislature, through the committee, so that we don't repeat it in the future.

Nobody argues that all of these groups aren't in need of help; that ain't the argument—at least, some of them; some of them we're not so sure of. But there has to be a clearer process of application, where everybody has an opportunity to apply fairly. Why not basically post and let people know that at the end of the day, these monies are available? Let there be an application process in place so that every organization has a fair chance to apply, there's a vetting of the applications at the end of the day, and the groups that are most in need would be the ones to get it.

We had a motion in the public accounts committee. The government used its majority to kill that. As a result, the auditor has not been given the mandate. Instead, we've got this motion that the Liberal Party has put through in public accounts that says, "We're going to

report after the next election." That's not good enough. The federal Liberals tried that in the last sponsorship scandal, and quite frankly that didn't work out very well either for the taxpayers of Ontario.

We tried yesterday. We had an opposition motion in this House where we called on the government to get the public accounts committee to get the auditor to do a review. The government used its majority yet again to shut that down. Today my colleague the member from Beaches–East York, my leader and other members from the Conservative opposition asked the minister to do the right thing, and that is to ask the auditor of Ontario to do a review of this issue forthwith and to report back to the House.

I'm just saying to the government, listen, at the end of the day all we're asking is that there's a proper vetting. Call the auditor in, and we will move on with other business in the House, but we need to get to the bottom of this.

I don't think the government properly thought through what the response was. Therefore, I would ask for adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Monsieur Bisson has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1818.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

All those opposed will please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 4; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being considerably past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until a quarter to 7 tonight.

The House adjourned at 1819.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerk-at-the-Table / Greffier parlementaire: Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Community Safety) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Sécurité communautaire)
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Boutrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	Speaker / Président
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Attorney General / procureur général
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L)	Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Correctional and Emergency Services) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Services correctionnels et situations d'urgence)
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice-Président, Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest–Mississauga	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L)	Sarnia–Lambton	Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Ajax	
Ferreira, Paul (ND)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Fonseca, Peter (L)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Erie–Lincoln	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and minister responsible for democratic renewal / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales et ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Klees, Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce et au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Environnement
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	Chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Marsales, Judy (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services and minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires et ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Transports
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Milloy, John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjointe parlementaire au ministre du Renouveau de l'infrastructure publique
Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture and minister responsible for francophone affairs / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture et ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / York-Nord	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and minister responsible for aboriginal affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles et ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services (Disabilities) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires (Personnes handicapées)
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjoint parlementaire au premier ministre
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Peterson, Tim (Ind.)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Racco, Mario G. (L)	Thornhill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph–Wellington	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	
Smith, Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Lanark–Carleton	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	
Tory, John (PC)	Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Agriculture and Food) / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Agriculture et Alimentation)
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Wilkinson, John (L)	Perth–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Deputy opposition House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mario G. Racco
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Shafiq Qadri, Mario G. Racco
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**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jeff Leal
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Andrea Horwath, Jeff Leal, Dave Levac,
Gerry Martiniuk, Bill Murdoch,
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
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Social Policy / Politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Parsons
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Ted Chudleigh, Peter Fonseca,
Kuldip Kular, Jeff Leal,
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro, John O'Toole,
Ernie Parsons, Khalil Ramal
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2007 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les élections, projet de loi 218, M^{me} Bountrogianni	
M ^{me} Bountrogianni	8532
Débat présumé ajourné	8543