



No. 51

N° 51

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 2 June 2008

Lundi 2 juin 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 June 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 juin 2008

*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding the division of time for debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 77: That the time available to 10:45 a.m. this morning be divided equally among the recognized parties for debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes, following which the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion for second reading of Bill 77 without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The House is familiar with the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES SERVICES
AUX PERSONNES AYANT
UNE DÉFICIENCE INTELLECTUELLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 26, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes / *Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, à abroger la Loi sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et à modifier d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I would have thought maybe the government would want to take the lead, it being a government bill. I'm surprised—are you not going to speak on it?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: We did.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: But are we not having 35 minutes each today?

Mr. Michael Prue: If you want it.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Oh, so some of them don't want it then. It seems like it's become a banana republic around here. From what I'm hearing about who will be in attendance here this afternoon, the number of cabinet ministers who will be absent, and no one wanting to speak on legislation, you'd think we were somewhere down around Costa Rica or something. This is pathetic, I'm telling you. I cannot imagine—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Speak through the Chair, please.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, I simply cannot imagine, in a Legislature that has an official opposition and a government, that we would actually have a caucus meeting held outside of this House, in another province, during a period when the House was sitting and there was a question period actually on. That is very disappointing to me, as a member of this Legislature, and I hope that a lot of Ontarians will realize that when they get the press releases and see it in the local media.

I'm pleased to speak to Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes. The short title of this bill is the Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008. This bill is as a result of the closure of the regional centres; there's no question that that's why it was brought forward.

I want to say a few words on this this morning because we had a regional centre in the city of Orillia that was established over 100 years ago. Recently, it had up to 700 employees and provided a service to people with developmental disabilities in this province, particularly, in the last decade or so, people with very severe disabilities. We've lost that in the city of Orillia, as I said, and with that, we've lost 700 jobs, a \$29-million payroll to the city of Orillia. The then-Minister of Community and Social Services just said it was a fact of life that it was going to happen, and there was no compensation towards it whatsoever. We're just out of those jobs, and we're down to about 40 people left at the regional centre.

I can tell you that there are a lot of sad stories around it, particularly when the initial announcement was made, I believe it was September 9, 2004, when the minister came and mentioned to all the different mayors etc. that there would be a lot of consultation taking place as we closed the facilities. That was the part: it was the lack of

consultation that actually took place. It has been fast-tracked, and if there was ever a sad thing that happened to the most vulnerable people in our society, it was that the consultations with family members and friends who really loved and cared for these people—they were ignored. They were told, “You’re going to go there.” There was no choice.

Let me tell you what the regional centres offered. They offered the best of care of any facilities in our country, and that meant things like physiotherapy, swimming pools for exercise, dental care. The very, very best was offered in these facilities, and we tried to point that out to the minister. This is not to say that there’s anything wrong with the community living organizations; they provide a great service across our province as well. But these 1,000 people who remained in the three regional centres were probably the most vulnerable people we’d seen in the province, and it will cost much, much more to house them in facilities across our country.

The big thing about it, the thing that I’m most concerned about, is the final safety net in case something happens to one of these people. In a lot of cases, people with developmental disabilities get very violent at times, and one of the things that would happen is that it would sometimes take five or six employees to grab hold of the individual and to calm them down. Those types of services are no longer there. So what will happen, and what has already happened in a number of cases, is that some of those folks end up in jail or they end up in a mental institution. Better still, they end up in long-term-care facilities, which is the most disappointing, because there’s already a shortage of long-term-care facilities because this government has basically put the stop on the building of new facilities. It’s disappointing.

I can tell you that up around Orillia, when you go by the Huronia Regional Centre now—and they’re down to only 40 people left in it—it’s like a graveyard. At the time, we asked the government, “Is there any chance that the city of Orillia could be compensated, because we had a satellite university from Lakehead that was wanting to build in Orillia?” and we were completely ignored; absolutely ignored. They wanted nothing to do with a university on that site. It was a beautiful piece of property on the side of Lake Simcoe, and the government completely ignored the fact that when you take 700 jobs out of a community, maybe they should be compensated somehow. Of course, they weren’t.

0910

There are always these wish lists that the municipal councils have ahead of them. They don’t want to disturb the government too much, alarm them or set off any bells that would indicate that there was a problem with the way they govern. So they get away with it. They got away with it in the Rideau Regional Centre and the South West Regional Centre as well, in spite of the fact that we had professionals and people from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, all kinds of doctors and dentists, all kinds of professionals, and people from the fa-

milies of clients at the regional centres. They were ignored. It was very disappointing.

So now we’ve got this bill ahead of us that’s going to tidy up the mess and take away the safety net once and for all. That’s what this bill is really all about in the end; it’s about making the closures final. Whatever happens to these folks in the future, God only knows. But I can tell you that the regional centres have served this province well. They’ve done a great job; they’ve looked after a lot of very vulnerable people. As we move forward, I’m not so sure if that same kind of compassion will be there.

When I speak about compassion, I’d like to mention the employees. Until you really get involved and talk one-on-one to different employees from different organizations, you don’t realize how committed a lot of people are to their jobs. This is the one thing—when this closure started, I actually couldn’t believe it. All along, I thought they’d back off on it. I thought, “Well, surely they won’t take away the only remaining safety nets,” even if they left one of them open in the province, just so we’ve got one facility. In other provinces, they’re building them. Manitoba is building them; Nova Scotia is planning on building them. There have been mistakes made in some of those other provinces and now we’re moving forward in a different direction. But we’re not listening to that.

I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if, in the future, we see some government move forward with a centre of excellence for people with developmental disabilities. I think we may see that in the future, because if you look at the history and what we’ve seen happen—the care that’s been taken for those 1,000 remaining folks who have been kicked out of their homes—when we look forward to that, we may see that such a facility will be required.

I guess all I’m saying is that it’s a disappointing day to talk about a very disappointing bill. First of all, I want to go back to the fact that it’s a day when a government that brags about transparency takes 15 cabinet ministers out of the House so that they don’t have to answer any questions, so that the Premier can take them to Quebec City for a photo op. It’s almost like the Minister of Economic and Development and Trade—I’m assuming she’s there as well. She’s getting a lot of photo ops lately.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stick to the bill, please.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The reason I mention the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is because she’s the one who made the announcement to close these facilities. I want to say that she’s not a very popular person in that particular community right now, and not a very popular person in any community that had a regional centre or factory in it, because they’re all closing. It’s not a great day.

On the economy: It ties into this. We’ve lost a \$29-million payroll in the city of Orillia and area. It is amazing. When you’re out there today, I hope people are listening to what their constituents are saying. I don’t think things are too pretty right now, as far as job creation and the economy. I can tell you that the tourism industry is having a terrible time. So if the Minister of Tourism is in

the House today, maybe he'll be prepared to answer a few questions on that.

I want to leave some time for my colleague from Lanark, who will be speaking on this bill as well. In the end, I want to say that Bill 77 has come forward as a result of a movement by a former minister. She has decided to close these regional centres, and this is kind of a house-keeping bill that will allow her to do so and still fund them somehow. But you can be sure of one thing: I don't think there will ever be facilities built like, or that the people who are living in the facilities today or have moved out will ever have the care and treatment they received in, the three regional centres that we had here in the province of Ontario.

I thank you for your time today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I understand this legislation is going to go to committee this summer. I support that very much—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's my understanding that you have spoken to this bill, and you have moved—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We need consent of the House for the honourable member to speak. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Thank you very much for consenting to my speaking to this wrap-up of this bill, Mr. Speaker.

Our caucus supports this legislation; it supports the thrust of the legislation. We are, however, concerned about some of the matters with regard to the treatment of our most vulnerable adults in some of the residences which my friend and colleague has just mentioned here in the Legislature.

I guess one of the challenges as we go forward with this piece of legislation is going to be drawing the line between family responsibility and state responsibility for disabled adults who are in the care of their parents. We have found that under the present programs the government has for this kind of legislation, very, very small amounts of resources are going to the actual need that is out there; that is, helping families take care of their disabled adults in their own home.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the Rideau Regional Centre, which at one time was a residence for over 1,000 disabled adults. As time went on, the number of adults in that particular residence decreased; it has decreased quite dramatically from a time when I think there were 1,500 adults in that particular residence.

I think a lot of people have the wrong attitude as to what these residences were and did for the people who were there. They are, as I have witnessed personally on a number of occasions, fairly happy places in terms of the involvement and the activity of the residents on a day-to-day basis. They have programs for them. That is one of the problems that we are hearing from the parents of these severely disabled people: that they have been promised programs when they have been put into the community and those programs are not there. What we see

happening when they're put out to the community is that they're not getting the same level of service as they were getting in Huronia Regional Centre and Rideau Regional Centre.

Basically, what seems to be happening with the residents is that most of them have been put into community living. But as we get down to the final strokes, the remaining 100-plus residents of Rideau Regional Centre are severely, severely disabled. They not only have disability problems in terms of their cognitive ability, but they have severe health problems as well, and therefore they require a lot of care on a daily basis. As I said last week, what's happening now is that an increasing number of them are not going into community living. They are going into nursing homes or long-term-care centres, because their needs are so high that a group home cannot attend to the combination of their disabilities, including their severe health disabilities.

0920

To date, somewhere between 20 and 30 former residents are already in long-term-care centres. As some newspaper stories have pointed out, for some of the younger ones—those in their 30s, 40s and 50s—it is quite a different community that they're being put into when being put into a long-term-care centre, where the majority of the residents are in their 80s and 90s. So it is somewhat of a misplacement in terms of the physical capabilities of some of these people, notwithstanding their health disabilities. Therefore, as we go forward, an increasing number of these residents from Rideau Regional Centre are going to be placed in long-term-care homes, of this 100 remaining.

You don't want to characterize all of them as the same, but some of the remaining residents are incapable of taking care of themselves, unfortunately. They have to be fed. They're incontinent. They have problems taking care of themselves so that they don't harm themselves. Therefore, it is very, very specialized need.

One of the things that the employees of the Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls suggested to the ministry was, why not create a specialized long-term-care home on the existing 350-acre site of Rideau Regional Centre to take care of the last 100—or whatever the particular number is—of these very high-need individuals? They have the staff there that are experienced, they still have a cadre of health care professionals who would volunteer to take care of these particular individuals, and they have such facilities as a modern laundry to deal with the mountains of laundry that are required in order to take care of these kinds of needy people. Unfortunately, the government has made a decision not to retain even a semblance of a long-term-care facility at Rideau Regional Centre.

As I mentioned earlier, part of the concern of some of the parents of these particular disabled adults is that by putting them into the community setting, they're in fact limiting the freedom of these individuals. That sounds kind of odd, but the fact of the matter is that many of these group homes that they are put into in terms of

community living are on very busy arterial streets in our urban areas, our cities. The fear of the parents is that for those who are unable to recognize that it's dangerous to walk out onto a street, they're concerned that their children might be hurt by wandering onto the streets at an unsupervised time. The beauty of Rideau Regional Centre is that it's set back from the road significantly; I think it's set back about 1,000 or 2,000 feet from the road. Therefore, the residents have had and do have quite an opportunity to walk around the grounds without any real fear of anything happening to them. They also have a swimming pool at the residence, which they share with the community, so the community comes in and there's some mix with the community in terms of Smiths Falls. They have arts and crafts. They have all those kinds of things. So I think that the public has the idea that when they go out into the community, this is going to be a much easier way for them to get along with the community, whereas at Rideau Regional Centre a lot of them had a very happy existence in life and they were properly cared for.

One of the other things that bothers one a little bit with regard to taking them out of a setting like Rideau Regional Centre is that, at Rideau Regional Centre, the Ministry of Community and Social Services was responsible for their care. In other words, they were ultimately responsible if something bad happened and therefore the impetus to provide the proper care for them was there. When they're put out into community living or into a nursing home or long-term-care centre, the Ministry of Community and Social Services treats them as ODSP clients—Ontario disability clients—and they are no different than other ODSP clients.

Evidently, I'm told and know that after three months, they do an assessment of the placement. After three months or approximately 90 days, the Ministry of Community and Social Services washes their hands of that particular individual. Therefore, the responsibility for seeing that that particular individual has proper care and the proper supports they need falls to the family, friends or the official guardian. The line of responsibility for these severely disabled children—or adults now—really falls apart.

I guess the other part of this debate that has, I think, been unfairly reported on by the minister and put forward by the government is, "Your government was doing this, so we're just following your lead." In 2003, there were close to 400 residents at Rideau Regional Centre. The previous government had said, through their actions, that they were going to allow most of these individuals to continue living their lives at Rideau Regional Centre and try to encourage parents and families and friends of the residents to put them into the community, and that was the way it was being done. Now we have placement officers in these particular residences who have quotas to get the people out. Placement officers have quotas and they have to meet those quotas, and therefore it's a very much more forced system in terms of getting them out into the community, often without family support. The

families are frightened. They're frightened to complain to the new long-term-care centre that the resident might land in, they're frightened to complain to community living, which is charged with taking care of their adult child going forward. There is really very little accountability in the whole process.

I might also add that there has been tension for a long period of time between the community living people, the people who provide the group homes, and Rideau Regional Centre and Huronia and those other places, because—and one other place. It's St. Thomas, I believe.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: South West.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Yes, the southwestern centre. The community living people have felt that too many resources were going into these residences and that was denying them resources with regard to the services they were providing. There was considerable conflict between the two groups, so therefore it didn't surprise those of us who had represented the areas where these centres were that community living was all for the emptying out of these particular residences.

There are a number of things that fit together here, but I guess the other part that has bothered the parents and the friends of the people who are essentially being forced out of these residences is that the staff of the residences have been reluctant—I guess that's the best way to put it—to share information with regard to the associations that their severely disabled adults have had in the residences. In other words, because of the inability of the adult children to communicate, the parents don't know who their friends were in the residence, and so they've been asking the people who have cared for their children, as they are being moved out of the residence, "Who are their friends? Who have they had some kind of feeling towards in the residence?" And the staff who are in these residences have been told that, because of the privacy act, they can't give out that kind of information.

0930

What the families are concerned about is that their child will go out to a nursing home or a group home, and they have no record of who their friends are. So they can't take their adult child from one residence to another and have them meet and visit with each other. We feel that's a very wrong thing to do, notwithstanding the privacy act and all of the protections that it provides. I'm sure that the privacy commissioner would be more than willing to make a comment on this in terms of sharing information with people so that after they find themselves in a new setting, they would be able to visit with each other from time to time, if in fact they had this association before. So it's a very difficult situation for these parents.

I've also heard stories—and there have been some reported stories—of some of these individuals who have gone out to community homes and haven't been able to cope. We had one case in Smiths Falls where an individual went to a community home and then committed a crime—pulled a knife on several people, including the police—and there was really not a good way to deal with

that particular individual. They were able to deal with him in the Rideau Regional Centre, but they couldn't deal with him in a group home because of the violent nature of the behaviour of this particular individual. Unfortunately, some of them are quite large people and some of them have a lot of strength and cannot be dealt with in a community setting.

The other one that a lot of adults are having trouble with is what they call, in their colloquial language, runners. In other words, the individuals don't know to stay close to their home. Therefore, when they're put in a community home, unless there's a lock on their door or a wall around the community home or group home, these individuals will just take off. There's a lot of concern with regard to those individuals and whether or not they can be put into the community setting. In fact, in one instance in Ottawa, in a community home, as one family member came to visit a disabled adult, they found another disabled adult on the road, headed down the street, without any kind of supervision.

There has been a lot left to be desired with regard to caring for these individuals. I really think that this could have been done in a much more humane and kind way. I believe that all parties have the goal of trying to put as many disabled adults into the community as possible. If they can thrive and if they can enjoy life more, who wouldn't be for that kind of policy? But as my previous colleague mentioned, where is the fallback for this? What happens when that small number of violent individuals cannot be accommodated in a community home, or their freedom is so strictly controlled—or that they don't have freedom in these community homes just because of the nature of the community homes—versus a larger facility like Rideau Regional or Huronia, where they can in fact deal with these exceptional individuals?

It's with some sadness that these residences will close, because they have provided a tremendous opportunity for the most vulnerable people in our society to live in a somewhat normal way. They've got friends. They've had an unbelievable number of programs to participate in. They get physical activity, to the best of their ability. They have, in the case of Rideau Regional Centre, a large area that they can take advantage of on the outside of their buildings. They live in accommodation that is pretty good. In fact, the accommodation over the last 10 or 15 years has been improved dramatically for these individuals. They've rebuilt a lot of the space in Rideau Regional so that it very much resembles a residence. A lot of them have lived with the same individual for 30 or 40 years in the same room, and some of these individuals are now split into different accommodations, and therefore they've lost their lifelong friends and partners, in some cases.

We really believe that the government should have gone slower in terms of closing Rideau Regional Centre and Huronia, which would have been more in keeping with the needs of these people. They should have been more careful in terms of what they've done. I would really like to see, in two or three years, that we strike a

commission to look at where these individuals have gone and evaluate what the outcome of these evictions from long-term homes has been.

I believe that the Ministry of Community and Social Services shouldn't wipe their hands of the responsibility for care of these people, and I will always continue to work on behalf of the parents, the friends and the residents of these centres. It is really sad that the government has bungled this so badly. It could have been done with much more kindness and much more compassion than it has.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's my pleasure to rise today and continue speaking in second reading debate on legislation that deals with individuals with developmental disabilities.

This legislation updates legislation that goes back over 35 years. What it's really doing is trying to, in a comprehensive way, put together all the incremental changes that have occurred in the area of developmental disabilities. You can imagine, since 1974, the number of programs and the different approaches that have developed in our communities across Ontario in dealing with citizens among us who have developmental disabilities. We must not forget—I know there's been a lot of discussion about the employees, who are very important partners in helping people with developmental disabilities—that we are talking about 40,000 Ontarians. These are 40,000 Ontarians who belong to many of our own families—relatives and friends whom we all know—who are challenged with a developmental disability. It could be in any one of our families, it could be in any one of our neighbourhoods, and it is not an easy challenge to deal with, whether it's a member of our family or our community. Many mothers and fathers have struggled their whole lives in trying to help their child who is unfortunate and has this developmental disability, right up into adulthood. There are many forms of it, and it's not easy.

0940

I can remember, when I was first elected to city council, there was a mother and father who lived on Westmount Avenue, at St. Clair and Dufferin. This couple must have been in their late 70s or early 80s, and they still took care of an adult son who was developmentally delayed. It was almost to the point where the father, again, almost 80, was trying to lift and carry their son around in the home, because they had chosen to keep the son at home. The challenge there was that the bathroom was on the second floor. There was a program at that time, through the city and the province, to allow for the retrofitting of a bathroom on the main floor. That son weighed over 200 pounds, so you can imagine this father, who was 80, lifting the son into bed, out of bed, to the washroom etc.

That is one choice that some parents made. Other parents chose to put their sons or daughters into more formal institutions—a very impossible decision to make—throughout the province, like some that have been mentioned here today. That was very difficult to do too.

I remember that we had a young boy named Leslie who lived across the street from us. He was one of five brothers. He had to leave home and was sent to Orillia. I see the family still, and my understanding is that Leslie is now in a group home, after spending many years in Orillia.

It has not been easy for any government to deal with these 40,000 important Ontarians with disabilities. I think all three parties over the years have supported the concept that the best way to help these adults with developmental disabilities is to put them into community settings, what we sometimes call group homes or community living. That is what the province of Ontario has been moving towards for many years. Our government, following many years of expert advice and consensus, thinks that's where men and women with developmental disabilities should be. They should be in a neighbourhood setting, in a community where they can be supervised by an agency that is expert in providing counsellors and support services.

I remember that for many years we had a great battle about group homes in the city of Toronto. It was very challenging, to ensure that individuals not only with developmental disabilities but all kind of challenges could be housed in a group home. Many of the fears about group homes were extremely exaggerated because of people's misconceptions. I don't know if it's the same in your community, Madam Speaker, in Hamilton, but thankfully in the greater Toronto area I'm glad to say that there is a greater acceptance of people with many disabilities and many challenges being integrated into communities. So there isn't the hue and cry about community living facilities coming into neighbourhoods. In some cases, the neighbours aren't even aware that some of these homes are community living homes. In many ways, they're better neighbours than some of the so-called "regular" neighbours who have disputes about your fence, encroachments and so forth, so they make good neighbours.

That's not to say it's not without challenges, because they have to be staffed properly; they have to have the proper facilities in the home, whether they're hearing-impaired, vision-impaired or in wheelchairs. These community homes, as I like to call them, are most critical in terms of investment. You just can't put people in a home without proper staff and without proper facilities so that they can enjoy the amenities of that house. But they may need special lifts, they may need special washroom facilities, or they may need special access in and out of the home. All in all, it is not a perfect solution, but I think it's a very humane approach to helping people with developmental disabilities.

This is a very complex area, and that's why what I think this bill does is it tries to coordinate a lot of the service delivery mechanisms, because it is sometimes most difficult—even as an MPP and as MPP staff—to weave your way through all the complexities of services and how you contact the appropriate service delivery agent. This bill is trying to accommodate that service delivery model in making it more comprehensible and more

understandable and more seamless, especially for the families of the persons with a disability and for the individual who needs that service.

In every community in Ontario, we have some real silent heroes who are support workers or community workers or counsellors, or they work with foundations that deliver services to our disabled. They are the front line in the delivery of this critical, critical series of supports. They are there working 24/7. As you know, it is not a 9-to-5 job; it's 24/7. We've heard some comments already about the challenges some of the individuals may pose, but it's just a re-emphasis of the fact that it just doesn't mean that the workers in the community homes will leave at 5 o'clock. They're there, they sleep there, they're constantly in contact, 24/7, and again, it is not a 9-to-5 service delivery model. That is why it is extremely complex, extremely demanding and expensive, but it is an investment we have to make.

I know the government invests over \$1.6 billion a year in helping our developmentally challenged individuals in this province, but it's an investment we have to make, because it's an investment in the quality of life we're all judged by as a province. It's sometimes the same thing in education or in health care. It's always relatively easy to help those who are healthy, those who are supported at home and have a great family, whether it be in a school or in a hospital, if someone is in excellent health or a great student. But it's the challenged student, the special student, the patient in hospital who has some acute situation that isn't easily administered to by normal health practitioners.

It's the same with individuals in society who are challenged with developmental disabilities. We sometimes, just because of human nature being what it is—and I think that sometimes governments are guilty of that too—tend to dismiss the potential of people with developmental disabilities. They are misdiagnosed. They are segregated from society. They may be visually impaired or hearing impaired, but we all know of cases where many of these individuals we find are really gifted.

0950

There was an amazing documentary on CBC from 20 years ago about this phenomenal pianist who was thought to be just impossible in terms of his future progress. His hearing, his eyesight—he couldn't see. But this young man—I think it was Roy Bonisteel who did the program—was an incredible pianist who could match the calibre of pianists of great renown. For years, he was not allowed to even play the piano. Then all of a sudden he started playing the piano as if he was at a concert at Toronto's Massey Hall or Roy Thomson Hall—almost Glenn Gould quality.

So many of these individuals, if given an opportunity, will be able to offer all kinds of reciprocal benefits to society. They do. Many of them can work if they get the support and the opportunity to work in a—sometimes they call them sheltered environments, or sometimes they work with assistance. That is one area where I think not only government but employers in the private and public

sectors could do much better, and that is to ensure that within the workplace there are opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. I know that in some of the work settings in this province there are employers who should be congratulated because they hire these individuals. Many of them are very productive and contribute a great deal to the workplace.

I think it's something that government should encourage more employers to do, because this is part of the whole spectrum of service that is needed to ensure that the 40,000 individuals in Ontario who are developmentally challenged get full opportunity, not only in the setting with their medical needs, their educational needs and their social needs, but also in meeting the needs of their potential. Part of that is ensuring that they get an opportunity to work. It is sometimes a bit of trouble for an employer, but still it's something that is very rewarding not only for the adult, usually with developmental disabilities, but also for the people who are in the workplace. In many cases, the individuals with developmental disabilities have so much to contribute. They are sometimes very insightful. They can do things better than we can do. We underestimate the talent sometimes hidden within individuals with developmental disabilities.

So I would hope that in the future there are more opportunities in all of our workplaces. Even in this Legislative Assembly and the legislative precinct, I'm not sure whether there is a program where young men and women with developmental disabilities might get a chance to work. I'm going to speak to Speaker Peters about this. Why not have an opportunity for a placement here in the legislative precinct for a young man or woman or an older adult with a developmental disability? Let them be here in the legislative precinct. Maybe there are some here already; I'm not sure if the program exists or not. But that's one thing that I think would be an example of the Legislature showing leadership in this area. It would be a very good learning experience for us too, and not only helpful for the individual. I will take that request up with Speaker Peters and see if we might do something to lead by example.

This really is a partnership, as I said before, with many excellent community organizations—Community Living Ontario, community living agencies we have all across Ontario. In Toronto, an organization that comes to mind that I deal with quite frequently is the Jewish Vocational Service. They have an army of excellent people who help all kinds of individuals with supports that they need. The Reena Foundation is legendary in the great work that it does here in the greater Toronto area, in Ontario. And I can go on and on. They are the partners who are critical to the success of any legislation the government brings forward.

Governments are one half of the equation; the other half is the service delivery partners in the communities. The agencies in our communities cannot succeed in helping people with developmental disabilities unless the public is supportive. I know there is great activity in terms of fundraising that they do, community outreach

programs. They do all kinds of social programs, and they need the public to participate. I would hope that we don't forget that this is part of any government initiative. The government is now updating this legislation, Bill 77, but it cannot succeed in helping these 40,000 Ontarians unless there is full partnership with organizations like the Reena Foundation, unless there's full partnership with the men and women who are the front-line caregivers in these homes and community homes and in our community settings where these individuals with developmental disability challenges live. So we need to encourage a better awareness of the critical work that they do.

We all know that our police, our firefighters, our transit workers, our emergency service workers, our teachers, our doctors, our nurses, do great work. But what about the front-line workers who work in these group homes, as I said, from morning till night helping some of these most vulnerable of Ontarians? They are never given enough recognition to encourage them to continue to do the great work they do. I'm sure we all know these people, but again, in many cases they are the silent, hidden jewels in our communities—these community support workers in our group home and community home settings who are very generous and very caring. They are doing excellent work, considering that the pay isn't always great and the recognition is very rare. I hope that we, as members of provincial Parliament, in all of our ridings, can recognize the incredible, generous people who help people who need support, again, around the clock in some very challenging—and I know the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills said that it is not easy.

There is no magic solution here. Those of us who have a little bit of an understanding of how challenging this is know how daunting it is. This bill is important because it brings it together in a comprehensive, seamless way, and it's got to be done. We're going to have hearings, and I think they will be very valuable. But we still have a lot of work to do in all of our communities in helping those amongst us—and as I've said, these families are our families, these 40,000 Ontarians are our neighbours, and we have a responsibility to take care of them and to help them and to allow them to reach their potential.

Again, I do hope that this bill and the measures undertaken will be a positive and very helpful step in helping these Ontarians who, for too long, have been unnoticed and not cared for enough. We've tried, but sometimes those of us who are so busy with our run-around lives never stop to think of those amongst us who need extra help.

I think this bill is a good opportunity for all of us to be more aware of the need to make this investment in time and effort and legislation, so that this part of our society is not neglected or taken for granted. I do support this initiative, as most members do, because we know we have to keep making these improvements. I see Bill 77 as an improvement; it's a very valid attempt to deal with a problem that is not easy. Again, in the problem, there are challenges and rewards, because if we can help these

40,000 individuals and their families, we will make this a better place for everybody.

The saying is that we're always judged as a society on how we help the most vulnerable amongst us. This is, hopefully, a positive step in that direction. I commend the minister and the staff in her ministry for undertaking this very difficult and challenging work. I wish them great success at the hearings, and I hope that we can come up with a piece of legislation that really is of benefit to the 40,000 individuals in Ontario who suffer from developmental delays and their families.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I just wanted to give the questions and comments opportunity a kick-off, as well as to say—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I'm sorry. There was an agreement that the time would be divided amongst all three parties. There are no questions or comments.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I can see that I'm out of order. My apologies.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? Seeing no further debate, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion for second reading carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Michael Bryant: It is being referred, and I'll leave it to the parliamentary assistant to speak to this.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek consent for the House to recess until 10:45 a.m.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Agreed? The House is in recess until 10:45 a.m.

The House recessed from 1004 to 1047.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A little late; my apologies.

I have a number of introductions; pray be seated.

On behalf of the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, I would like to welcome Julie Kipp and Jeff Kipp. Jeff works in Mr. Hillier's office.

On behalf of the member from York South–Weston, I'd like to welcome a number of guests who will be here this afternoon: Gianni Bardini, the Consul General of Italy; the Honourable Judy Sgro; the Honourable Gino Bucchino; Julian Fantino; George Visintin; Carlo Fillipazzo; Roberto Buttazzoni; Paolo Ponti; Fabrizio Patuelli; Martin Stiglio; and Maurizio Gherardini.

On behalf of the member from Etobicoke North, in the members' gallery east: Mr. S.M. Muncer, Mr. Khurshid Ahmed Jomezai, Mr. Anwar Merchant, Mr. Samir Dossal and Mr. Anwar ul-Haq. They're representing the Pakistan

Chamber of Commerce, and they're leading a trade delegation to Ontario.

On behalf of the member from Kenora–Rainy River, in the west members' gallery: Mary Cox, Gary Green, Tom Kear, Walter Poremski, Lorraine Schulz, Antoni Shelton and Rennie Terbogt, from the Humber River Health Coalition.

On behalf of the member from Kenora–Rainy River and the member from Parkdale–High Park, in the west members' gallery: Charles Foster, Judy Persad, Edward Lantz, James Wardlaw, Edward Portelli and Chris Robinson.

On behalf of the member from Toronto–Danforth, in the west members' gallery: Lily Chang, Jacqui Latter, Nancy Murphy and Linda Rose, members of CUPE Local 79.

I'd just like to welcome, on behalf of the member from Oxford and myself, Jeff Helsdon, who's from the Tillsonburg News, in the media gallery today.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to seek unanimous consent to move a motion to stand down question period today in light of the fact that the Premier and 14 ministers are absent, and that we have a double-header tomorrow; we would have two question periods back to back.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is there consent? Agreed? I heard a no.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SEWAGE SPILL

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It looks a little bit like summer school in here today.

To the Minister of the Environment: Over 35 football fields worth of sewage leaked into the Ottawa River in 2006, and it has been reported that the Liberal government has known about this for over one year now. Why has the Ministry of the Environment covered up—

Interruption.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Mr. Speaker, there's hardly anybody here.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm not impressed. I would like all those cameras confiscated, please, and not returned to the members.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To the member from Welland: If he persists, I'm going to name him, and I'm going to name all the members.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd expect some respect from the other side of the House. It would have been nice if the minister were here, but why has the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member knows that the tradition in the place is that we do not make—you ask your question to a specific minister. You're making reference to that minister's absence.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Why has the Ministry of the Environment covered up this sewage spill for over a year?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the member to withdraw the comment. I ruled on that phrase previously.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Why has the Ministry of the Environment participated in a cover-up of this sewage spill—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the member to withdraw the comment, and I'm going to turn it to the Acting Premier.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn. But, Mr. Speaker, will the minister call for a public inquiry?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think the honourable member has sought to elevate this matter, but at the heart of it, everybody can agree that the circumstances in Ottawa were highly unacceptable circumstances.

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: The heckling from the member from Leeds–Grenville notwithstanding, I think it is important to note that already in the circumstances still under further investigation, significant acts of accountability have been taken. This a serious issue, most certainly, for the people of Ottawa—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: One you sat on for a year.

Hon. George Smitherman: —and accordingly, that's why the investigation ongoing by the city of Ottawa into the circumstances is essential. We all look forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, and this will be your last warning.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw.

The Speaker: Member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, supplementary.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This spill took place in August 2006. The ministry claims that it found out about it in May 2006. They started their investigation in May 2008. Why did you start the investigation a full year after you found out about this huge spill of sewage into the Ottawa River by the city of Ottawa?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Cover-up.

Hon. George Smitherman: Thank you very much—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook to withdraw his comment, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdrawn.

Hon. George Smitherman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think, as I had a chance to say in an earlier answer to the other member from the Ottawa area, that this is a very serious matter indeed. All of us agree that the protection of the health of the Ottawa River is very, very essential, of course, to the many hundreds of thousands of people who are nearby to it.

That's why the actions that have been taken to date and the accountability associated with them recognize the importance of the matter at hand. That's why there are efforts at present by the city of Ottawa to further examine their own behaviour and conduct and that of their of-

ficials in this circumstance, and that's why more information will be forthcoming on this matter. The Minister of the Environment will be working to ensure that appropriate steps are taken so that appropriate accountability is found in the circumstances.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Yes, the city of Ottawa has seen fit to have an inquiry of their own through the auditor general of their city. But the question here is, what did the Ministry of the Environment do or not do over the period of time? An investigation by the Ministry of the Environment is no good because it's investigating itself.

Mr. Deputy Premier, the only way that you will clean the record of the Ministry of the Environment in this matter is to have an inquiry into the behaviour of the ministry or lack of action by the ministry, knowing a full year about this huge spill, enough to fill the Palladium in Ottawa. We want a public inquiry. Will you have a public inquiry?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member, in his questioning, seeks to draw attention to one element of the circumstance, but what he doesn't focus on is the admitted act—that act that has been admitted by city staff, that they failed to do what was their obligation, which was to notify the ministry immediately. That's why the investigations that are under way by the federal government, by the Ministry of the Environment, and by the city itself are very likely to be instructive in finding further accountability for this circumstance, which is not a tolerable circumstance.

There's much agreement with respect to the notion, to the idea, that the Ottawa River and its health are essential. That's why the actions by the city and city staff—who did not immediately make the Ministry of the Environment aware—are so particularly of concern, and that's why we have these three ongoing investigations at present.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you have acknowledged that because of your lack of action, the *C. difficile* crisis has shaken the confidence of the public in the health care system. If we take a look at the sequence of events, it's obvious that you knew more than you were willing to acknowledge.

The Toronto Star, on October 22, 2004, said, "Ontario's newly formed Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee is studying whether to add *C. difficile* to the list of reportable diseases, said Dr. Karim Kurji, Ontario's associate chief medical officer of health."

Then, on July 15, 2005, the Windsor Star quoted David Spencer—as you know, spokesman for the Ministry of Health—who said that the ministry is setting up a committee to determine whether *C. difficile* should be reported.

Minister, if that's the case, you knew this in 2004 and you knew this in 2005—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member brings evidence today that everybody in health care was very aware of the circumstances related to C. difficile and very aware of the actions that need to be taken in health care provider organizations related to it. That's why, in that very same time frame, we funded 137 additional infectious disease officers. That's why we established the provincial infectious disease advisory committee. That's why we established 14 regional infection control mechanisms. That's why we doubled the funding for public health.

I agree with the honourable member that C. difficile is a particular challenge in the context of superbugs in the hospital and in other environments in health care, and that's why people across health care have been attuned to the circumstances associated with that. The separate issue of whether and how it should be reported is a matter that many have grappled with, for which there has not been a clinical consensus. But we've decided to move forward. On September 30, Ontarians will gain—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The Minister of Health is aware of the fact that work was ongoing in 2004-05. In November 2004, the Canadian public health agency announced it was tracking C. difficile in 25 teaching hospitals in Canada. Again, Minister, your response was no action. By then, we'd had at least 21 people die in Ontario. In June 2005, CUPE's hospital division called on you to make C. difficile a reportable infection—still no action from you, and we had 14 more people die at Peterborough hospital.

Minister, despite the warnings in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007, why did it take you so long to come up with a plan and start reporting?

Hon. George Smitherman: For her own purposes and for the purposes of running down confidence in health care and misaligning responsibility for running front-line health care provider organizations, the honourable member is pretending that she first learned of C. difficile through recent reporting. In fact, we have all known about the circumstances associated with C. difficile in the hospital environment through circumstances learned in other provinces. That's why we created an infectious disease advisory committee and why we created those infection control networks.

I think it's very, very important that the honourable member acknowledge that this isn't a situation that came to rise only in recent circumstances. Hospitals, which have the primary obligation for controlling their environments, have known about these risks and have been dedicating themselves to dealing with the challenges.

1100

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's obvious that the minister is unwilling to accept any responsibility or accountability to the people in the province of Ontario. The reality is that if you are the Minister of Health, you have an

obligation to protect the health and safety of the people of Ontario.

You knew in 2004; you knew in 2005. In 2006, we had the outbreak in the Soo; in 2007, Dr. Baker told you to start reporting and you ignored him. Then we had Joseph Brant. I ask you today: Why are you not prepared to set up an inquiry in order that we can determine what happened in this province, and make sure we protect people in the future when we are going to have more of these infectious diseases?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's not reflected in the record of the words that I have spoken in this Legislature that the matter of accountability is one where any of us in health care can pretend it was all about the actions of one or another. It's about the collective capacity of the health care system to be able to do these things. The people who run a local hospital obviously bear a substantial obligation to operate their environments in a way, with all of the information that's available, that is safe for the patients of the province of Ontario. To have the honourable member suggest otherwise is intensely inappropriate, especially given the fact that she herself has been a Minister of Health.

We see the opportunity, with Dr. Baker appointed and with reporting to be initiated on September 30, of dramatically enhancing the transparency and the power associated with it to the benefit of the patients in the province of Ontario. We think that acting in that fashion is more appropriate than an inquiry, which will take years to come to fruition.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is here at Queen's Park today. They note that parents in Quebec have access to quality, public, not-for-profit licensed child care and early learning for children up to age 12 for \$7 a day. On a day when the Premier and two thirds of his cabinet are visiting Quebec, apparently trying to learn something, can the Minister of Children and Youth Services tell us when the McGuinty government is going to keep their promise to child care? When are we going to move even remotely near what parents in Quebec have in terms of good child care?

Hon. George Smitherman: First, on the matter of child care, I think it's very, very important—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to remind the members that I've already asked them to be conscious of standing within this chamber.

Mr. Tim Hudak: This is unprecedented—15 away.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Niagara West.

If we can remember an old Speaker, there should be only one person standing. When I'm standing, I'm the one who is speaking.

I'd just remind the members that you asked a question. The Deputy Premier is here to respond to those questions in the absence of any minister who may not be here today. So the responsible individual is answering the question.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Upon using my eyeglasses, I find a number of backbenchers sitting in ministers' chairs. How appropriate is that, when backbenchers are being used to basically fill the seats, like papering the room?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member. That was not a point of order. Deputy Premier?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the member from Niagara West: I do think it's important to acknowledge that the honourable member makes a lot of protest, but didn't make any protest when they pulled the presentation of a budget out of the Legislative Assembly, nor did he seem offended at all when the Premier, at the head of his government, attended the legislative question period only 35% of the time.

To the New Democratic Party: We have to be reminded, first off, that by killing the government in Ottawa that was in favour of daycare, they have cost Ontario's families thousands and thousands of funded daycare spots. We have created 22,000 spots by making sure that we backfilled those that were cancelled when they defeated a government in Ottawa that supported daycare and elected one that didn't.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think most people would find it passing strange that in a McGuinty government that has promised new child care spaces and new child care investment over and over again, the only money they could find for child care was federal money. Meanwhile, we have the province of Quebec, which, as a matter of public policy, provides early child care for all children under 12 years of age at \$7 a day.

My question to the McGuinty government: You promised it over and over again. In the last budget, just six weeks ago, you had \$6.2 billion of new spending. How come child care didn't even get a line item in the McGuinty budget?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's always exciting to see the NDP on their feet in the Legislature when they fail especially to acknowledge the role they played as daycare killers in our country. They did that by defeating a government in Ottawa that was prepared to dedicate substantial financial resources to daycare, and instead they killed it. They killed that government and they killed the budget that supported the creation of thousands of funded daycare spots. We've created 22,000 spots. When they were in government, they killed subsidies for 6,000 Ontario families related to daycare.

We're proud of the progress we've made. We realize that there are important opportunities to better enhance the capacity for our children to live, especially at young ages, and that's why we're making substantial investments as well in expanding the capacities of our education system to support younger and younger kids.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think what we're getting is an admission that the Premier and two thirds of his cabinet are learning nothing in Quebec today, certainly nothing about child care, because all we hear are excuses. A government that promised new child care spaces, that promised affordable, licensed, quality not-for-profit child care spaces in 2003 and promised them again in 2007, has done nothing. Nothing. The only money that has gone into child care in Ontario has been money from the federal government.

So I ask again, on a day when the Premier and two thirds of his cabinet are in Quebec: When is the McGuinty government actually going to make quality not-for-profit public child care a priority in Ontario, as it obviously is in Quebec?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's nice to see that the honourable member today is a supporter of good child care, but where was he when his party was killing a federal government budget that was supporting child care in the country? Where were they on that day?

In our model, people who earn under \$20,000 are eligible for free child care, and these are the pieces of progress that we've been able to make as we've created 22,000 additional spaces in Ontario. That stands in very sharp contrast to the action of that party, which had the opportunity to support the emergence of a strong national program but instead, for their own political interests, sought to kill off a government that was in favour of child care.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Deputy Premier: At a time when there are 23,000 children in Ontario looking for child care space, the best the McGuinty government can do is find someone to blame.

Perhaps the McGuinty cabinet ministers on tour in Quebec will get a briefing on that province's payday lending situation. They won't find a payday loan outlet there because Quebec introduced a hard interest rate cap of 35%. That's what happens when a province takes serious action to prevent payday lenders from ripping off the lowest-income people in the province.

ACORN, the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, Justice Matters, Ontario Consumer Credit Assistance and financial experts all agree. Why won't the McGuinty government agree that this government's Bill 48 must include a hard interest rate cap of 35% so that we can protect low-income people?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Is he here?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: He's here.

I'm pleased to respond to the question and to begin by thanking the members of the third party. During debate in first reading, they indicated their intent to support this bill, and I really do appreciate that. It's the right thing to do. It's before committee today, as you know, and there could conceivably be a number of amendments put at the

committee. I don't want to prejudge that, so we'll see where that goes later in the day.

1110

Mr. Howard Hampton: Yes, we'll support something on first reading to get it before the House. We'll even support something in principle so that we can have a debate. But what's happening now is that it looks as if the McGuinty government is prepared to accept annual interest rates of 60% or more. Do you know what that means? It means—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Your bill sucks.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Welland will withdraw the comment he just made, please.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I withdraw.

Mr. Howard Hampton: It means that your bill is useless. It means that people would be further ahead to simply refer to the Criminal Code, and that's what Charles Foster of Justice Matters has said. He successfully defends low-income people from payday lender rip-off interest rates. He says that the McGuinty government bill as it stands now is so useless that people would be just as far ahead to use the old Criminal Code. Does that sound like a worthwhile piece of legislation to the McGuinty government, allowing 60% or more interest rates?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Let me just recap for the honourable member what our bill is intended to do. I think it would be a healthy refresher. We've already taken some action, by the way, with respect to posting rates and requiring standardized contracts with all payday lending institutions. Our proposed Payday Loans Act would require lenders and brokers first and foremost to be licensed. That's very important. It will provide authority to set a total cost of borrowing. As the member knows, we're doing something similar to what happened in Manitoba, where they had an independent group look at the rates. We're following their lead there. It would prohibit back-to-back and concurrent loans. It would permit borrowers to cancel loan agreements without penalty within 48 hours—the two-day cooling-off period. And it would impose serious penalties on those who abridge those aspects of the law.

Mr. Howard Hampton: It's apparent the McGuinty government is trying to dress up this legislation any way it can. As it stands now, the lowest-income Ontarians, many of whom are forced to go to a payday lender so they can pay the rent or pay the hydro bill or put food on the table for their kids, are going to be charged interest rates of 60% a year, and the McGuinty government says that's fine. The McGuinty government says that's fair. What is fair about charging the lowest-income people in Ontario 60% annual interest rates when they have to borrow money just to make sure their kids have food to eat?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: As the honourable member opposite knows, it's a priority of this government to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy, and this is one component of that—one of many components.

I just want to point out to the member opposite not only the demographics of those who borrow money—

Mr. Howard Hampton: A 60% interest rate is a poverty reduction measure?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It was 620% in Manitoba. Maybe you could explain that to the House. That's just a bit of an aside.

We would have preferred, frankly, if the federal government had taken their responsibility seriously and come up with some legislation that would have applied equitably right across the country instead of any patchwork quilt. We're working with our provincial partners, including Manitoba, which recently set their rate—their independent panel—at 620%.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. It's little wonder that the public has lost confidence in health care in the province of Ontario, as you continue to indicate that you are unaware of the C. difficile crisis or the numbers or what's happened. For example, October 22, 2004, in the Toronto Star: "Ontario's associate chief medical officer of health said there have been two recent clusters of C. difficile in the hospitals." On November 5, 2004, the Guelph Mercury quotes: "Dan Strasbourg, spokesperson for the ministry, said no hospitals in Ontario have reported numbers above the norm."

Minister, you can't continue to assign blame to the hospitals for responsibility. The responsibility is yours. I ask you today, as I asked you before, how many deaths from C. difficile have we seen in this province since 2004?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member knows the answer, having asked the same question several times last week. But I do think it is the honourable member's persistent questioning on this point about actions taken and about responsibility which requires some further discussion.

Most certainly, the health care system—all of the pieces that must operate together to use the word "system"—bears responsibility when circumstances are not as good as they can be. That's shared. No one is pretending otherwise, but I think the honourable member is pretending that those people—CEOs and the staff who run hospitals—don't bear any responsibility for the conditions or circumstances in their hospitals. It's just not a responsible position; it doesn't bear up with the reality of the circumstance. We took steps—the infectious disease advisory committee and infection networks—putting people in the hospitals with those responsibilities from a very early start, and the honourable member knows that very well.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think the minister knows more than he says. A report last Thursday in the Toronto Star says, "Smitherman warned people might be shocked about infection rates when data come out...." Minister, despite your denials, it's clear that you and your ministry

are aware of the infection rates and the death toll from C. difficile. Will you call an inquiry so that we know what happened and why it happened, so that we can protect people in the future?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's an irresponsible suggestion on the member's part, and she does not have it accurately. The point is that as you move to a more transparent model of reporting on those things in the hospital environment which are related to patient safety, not just superbugs but also infection—just as we did a few months ago when the mortality rates came out. This is challenging information because it's never been made available before. We find power on behalf of the patients in putting that information in the public domain. That's why Ontario is moving forward with a rigorous model of reporting that hospitals and those who work in those environments have themselves concluded will be very challenging, but the transparency is powerful. Any time you bring to the fore information which has not been available before, everybody who gains access to that information is empowered by it, and that's what my comments related to.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Paul Miller: My question would have been for the labour minister or the Premier. I'll have to go to the Deputy Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just—

Mr. Paul Miller: I didn't say they weren't here.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the members.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm sorry. Minister, yesterday was the 25th anniversary of Injured Workers' Day, a very sad anniversary. On Injured Workers' Day last year, the then Minister of Labour told injured workers that he would introduce legislation to eliminate deeming. Deeming—or, more accurately, the phantom job—is the practice that allows WSIB to pretend that you are working and earning a pretend salary. The WSIB can then reduce your benefits because it pretended that you have a job.

It is one year since the minister made the promise to eliminate deeming, and the WSIB is still deeming, and reaming, injured workers. The workers of Ontario don't want any more delays. When will this government introduce legislation to honour its year-old promise to eliminate deeming?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think it's interesting that the honourable member from the party with the history of the Friedland formula would be offering up a word like "reaming." I do think that we've made some progress with and on behalf of injured workers in the province of Ontario. We've seen a reduction in workplace injuries by 24% to date, and recent budgetary action has certainly enhanced the capability of reaching out and lending support to injured workers and their families who are in very, very difficult circumstances with increases that have been above the rate of inflation. I acknowledge that there is more to know about the issue that the honourable

member raises. I know that the Minister of Labour is working on it and looks forward to an early opportunity to discuss in person with the honourable member that very issue.

1120

Mr. Paul Miller: For many, many years, the NDP, injured workers' groups and the labour movement have called for an end to the perverse incentives employers receive under the WSIB experience rating program. This is a program that actually rewards companies to under-report workplace injuries. The McGuinty government has the authority to put a stop to the program immediately. Why won't this government eliminate the experience rating program immediately?

Hon. George Smitherman: I know that the honourable member has had an opportunity in the past to discuss that matter with the Minister of Labour. The experience rating program is under review, as the honourable member has had a chance to comment on in conversation with the Minister of Labour prior.

I do think it's important to acknowledge that since 2003 we have added 200 new workplace safety inspectors, making up some progress that had been lost under the prior government, and have had over 33,000 fewer lost-time injuries: 24% reductions overall in those workplace injuries. This is substantial progress on behalf of injured workers.

We acknowledge that we have more to do to make all of the environments as safe as possible, and look forward to the opportunity to make further progress on these matters.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: My question is to the Attorney General. Ontarians are well aware of the senseless deaths that too often result because of the unlawful use of guns. We are also aware of the devastating effects these crimes have on victims, their families, and communities at large. It is critical that all levels of government join together to reduce gun crime. I myself have introduced Bill 56, which, if passed, would impound vehicles and suspend driver's licences of people carrying guns.

I also know that the Attorney General is working very hard to try and bring all levels of government, especially the federal government, together in terms of trying to stop the source of guns in Ontario. I'd like to ask the Attorney General how he is engaging the federal government in trying to stop the smuggling of guns into Ontario and taking these dreaded things off of our streets and out of our communities.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Eglinton–Lawrence is right that many of the challenges we face as a society involve engaging other levels of government and require constant interaction and meeting. The gun challenge is one.

We've called on the federal government for a national ban on handguns. We called on the federal government to

increase mandatory minimums and reverse-onus bail, and we're pleased the federal government did that.

We've done our part by putting more police on the streets to go after handguns.

The federal government has started down the road; there's more work to do. We've called on the federal government for tougher border security, and I made an announcement that I'll speak to in the supplementary in Niagara Falls just the other day. But the federal government is involved in border security; they're in charge of the borders. We need them to engage more completely in that issue. And we have worked very hard with municipalities, because the fact of the matter is that municipal police forces as well the OPP are leading the charge against gun crime involved in our guns-and-gangs and other initiatives.

Mr. Mike Colle: In my supplementary, I would like to restate to the Attorney General that many MPPs and many elected officials locally in the city of Toronto and the GTA are really fed up with the tragedies that occur almost every day in our communities, and in every case it seems that behind that tragedy is some person with a gun.

I know that he's imploring that the federal government join with this effort to stop this senseless violence that in many cases is ruining communities. Can he please indicate to us what we can all do to ensure that we join together in a real, meaningful partnership to put an end to this gun violence that is destroying families and destroying communities?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Eglington-Lawrence has been leading the charge for many years on this. He has a private member's bill that we're all interested in reviewing and discussing at length.

One of the things he mentioned in his first question was the issue of border security. It's an enormously important issue. It's one of the four points that we have asked all levels of government to engage in to reduce gun violence. A huge proportion of the guns used in illegal activity are smuggled across the border.

The federal government is in charge of the border. What can they do? Number one, sign the protocols the government of Canada executed years ago to implement the protocols requiring extended marking of all guns manufactured or imported to assist the police in tracing guns used in illegal activity; secondly, make it clear that frames can't be imported in Canada; and third, put some federal prosecutors on our guns-and-gangs task force.

The deaths are there; the officers are there. Federal government, spare a few prosecutors and let's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: To the Minister of Health: In government, just as in life, timing is everything. The coroner's report from the Soo hospital in regards to C. difficile and the outbreak they had there has been on your desk for over a year. One of the identified reasons for the

scope of the outbreak and containment challenges was an aging hospital infrastructure. Joseph Brant hospital and the Soo hospital have been in need of funding to upgrade their facilities for quite some time.

Minister, can you tell the people of Ontario, the people of Burlington and the people of the Soo why you ignored the two hospitals that are at the epicentre of the C. difficile outbreak and excluded them from your funding announcement last Friday?

Hon. George Smitherman: If they were excluded from our funding announcement last Friday, it is because they don't have one of the 23 worst-performing emergency rooms in the province of Ontario. But on the matter of hospital capital, I think it's important to make three points to the honourable member.

First is that there was a representative from her political party for eight and a half years in government who didn't make any progress on the renewal of that hospital. Indeed, our government has built or initiated the redevelopment of more hospitals than the last five governments in the province of Ontario combined. This is very substantial progress indeed. Indeed, Sault Ste. Marie, one of those that honourable member mentions, has construction of a new hospital that consolidates two former hospitals that is well under way.

No one argues about the need to continue to make investments in hospital infrastructure in the province of Ontario. That's why we're so surprised to see a party proposing to cut health care by \$3 billion.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I guess I can say that there's some good news with the bad news if Joseph Brant is not considered on the list as one of the 23 worst hospitals with emergency room wait times.

I'm aware that the funding announcement was to resolve some of these wait time issues in hospital emergency rooms, and I am well aware of the need to create priorities. But Minister, only seven of over 150 hospitals have chosen to report their C. difficile deaths, and there are many more of those hospitals that have not reported. They are already 250 deaths in those that have.

The safety of our seniors who are entering Ontario hospitals for elective surgery and never coming out again should be your priority right now. Even the press have acknowledged your partisan tactics. Minister, when are you going to stop playing politics with people's lives and finally give Joseph Brant the funds they need to meet the 2008 infectious—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. George Smitherman: The press have acknowledged my partisan tactics, in part, in the context of trying to hold the leader of that party to the word that he offers privately. I make no apology for that as he makes these comments on principle but won't hold to them in a public environment.

The funding announcement from last Friday which the honourable member speaks to again was a \$109-million investment, \$30 million of that directed very specifically at 23 hospital emergency rooms. But the balance of the

announcement was designed to affect the performance of all hospital emergency rooms by substantially enhancing the capacity of home care to support our seniors at home with a greater degree of hours, or to exit them from the hospital environment to their home—again, with a greater degree of support from home care. This is an announcement about the whole province of Ontario. It's tied in with our aging-at-home announcement, and is made possible because we're not a party proposing a \$3-billion cut to health care.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question to the Minister of Health: 10 years ago, Riverdale Hospital, now called Bridgepoint, got rid of all registered practical nurses and brought in personal service providers. Last week, Bridgepoint management officially informed CUPE Local 79, the union representing both groups, of a plan to replace all personal service providers with RPNs by October 2009. Have you encouraged or approved of this plan?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member calls—I think personal support workers is what he's referring to. This is not a plan that I have either encouraged or approved of. It's not necessary for the Minister of Health to make approval on a matter that is within the domain, if you will, of the independently governed Bridgepoint hospital. In the case of Bridgepoint, they've made this decision on the basis, I assume, that their budget allows them to bring into positions workers with a greater scope of practice, which ought to offer some enhancement to the people who are there.

1130

Our concern is for those PSWs who are dislocated. Through the offices of HealthForceOntario, we're going to work to do what we can—as we're also adding hundreds of new PSW positions in long-term care—to transition those individuals who have been put out of work due to the repositioning of positions in the Bridgepoint hospital family.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: More than 225 women and men, many from racialized groups, could lose their jobs. You are well aware that there's an acute shortage of registered nursing staff. There will be difficulty recruiting new staff. There will be pressures on Bridgepoint's budget. There's the potential, the risk, that there will be fewer people delivering the care that's required. With that combination of replacement difficulties and higher salary costs, we want to know from you, Minister, that you will be ensuring that there will be no reduction in front-line patient care. Will you make that commitment?

Hon. George Smitherman: The plan at present does not offer the prospects of cutting staff. I think the honourable member has offered that up when it doesn't bear up with the information that I have. It's a plan for a one-to-one replacement. There are issues associated with it which are of particular concern, of patients on the one hand who seem to be in a position to have an enhanced

scope of practice on the part of a registered practical nurse, but we're also very concerned about the dislocation of those personal support workers.

As I mentioned to the honourable member, we'll be working through the auspices of HealthForceOntario to see if we can develop some mechanisms—which we have never had in the past, as best I know—to transition those experienced PSWs into opportunities which are emerging in other parts of the health care system. These are decisions that a local independent hospital corporation took. They do have ramifications in health care and for those individuals. We're going to do our very best in the circumstances to affect those employees who will see their circumstances transitioning out of that hospital environment. We're going to look for opportunities for them elsewhere.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I've recently heard and read a number of stories about the Mining Act and disputes that have arisen over mineral exploration activity. On the one hand, I know that mining is very important to our economy and quality of life. It sustains 100,000 direct and indirect jobs in the province and produces the raw materials that drive today's society. On the other hand, I'm very disheartened to read about these mining conflicts in the papers.

I know that in our throne speech, we said we would seek to forge a stronger, more positive relationship with Ontario's First Nations. Could the minister provide clarification around section 35 of the Mining Act and how it might relate to fostering a better relationship with our First Nations partners?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Let me assure the hard-working member from Huron–Bruce that our government has been working over the past several years to continuously improve relationships and engagement processes with First Nation peoples, including a multi-pronged initiative over the past year in particular to develop a consultation framework for mineral sector activities.

In terms of section 35, I think it's unfortunate that the leader of the third party has been providing inaccurate information to the House regarding this part of the Mining Act. In fact, section 35 does allow the ministry to remove crown land from staking, but it cannot be used to cancel existing claims that are in place. So on crown lands that are not yet staked, this could be used to withdraw a culturally sensitive area, as identified by a First Nation.

In fact, just recently we withdrew 2,250 hectares of land from staking in Kirkland Lake at the request of a First Nation in that area. My ministry also has a standing offer to withdraw culturally sensitive sites for other First Nations across the province. We look forward to continuing to work with our First Nation partners.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm certainly encouraged by the government's efforts and that it's committed to working

with First Nations to try to identify sites that should be withdrawn from staking. However, I do have to ask about recent Supreme Court rulings and what they mean for mining in Ontario. As I understand it, the Supreme Court ruled that the crown has the duty to consult where mineral sector activities may negatively impact on aboriginal or treaty rights. I know that the term “duty to consult” is not written in Ontario’s Mining Act, so I ask the minister: Does this mean the Mining Act is preventing us from meeting our duty to consult with our First Nations?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It’s a very good question. Let me say first off that we are committed to meeting our duty to consult. It’s something we take very seriously. We recognize it as a continuing obligation, and our efforts are absolutely ongoing. I must stress that we are meeting our duty to consult in the context of the current Mining Act; in other words, the Mining Act does not prevent us from meeting that duty.

Secondly, we very much welcome the Supreme Court rulings because they help clarify the crown’s duty to consult on mineral activities or, indeed, any kind of development which may impact on aboriginal treaty rights. They also stress that all parties need to work together constructively to achieve meaningful consultation. That said, we are committed to reviewing Ontario’s current Mining Act, and I am proud to say that the work is well under way. Input from our aboriginal and industry partners, as well as the public, will be a vital component to the review. We look forward to moving forward on that.

POLYGAMY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Government and Consumer Services: Under section 293 of the Criminal Code, it is clear that polygamy is illegal, and so is any kind of conjugal union with more than one person at the same time, whether or not it is legally registered. This is contrary to what the minister stated in question period last week. Would the minister like to correct the record, and will the minister finally begin to enforce the law and equality rights for women?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It’s a legal question that should go to the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As the member probably knows, the Criminal Code is quite clear. The section has been there for some period of time, and it is being enforced and prosecutions will be conducted if the investigation by the police—and they do the investigation—reveals information on which there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe an offence has been committed. If we receive the charge, then the prosecution is conducted accordingly.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: John Turley-Ewart, today, in the National Post says you are “giving licence to sharia by stealth.” The minister knows full well that polygamy is illegal in this country. It is so in the Criminal Code of Canada. There are many documented cases within the last week, whether you’re reading the National Post, the Toronto Star or listening to AM640.

Does the minister agree with Imam Hindy, who was quoted as saying, “If the laws of the country conflict with Islamic law, if one goes against the other, then I am going to follow Islamic law, simple as that,” or will the minister put Canadian law first, and will he launch an investigation into these illegal polygamist marriages, which are happening right here in the city of Toronto?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: For all the commentary, the minister said no such thing. The minister has always taken the position, as we all do, that Canadian law in the Criminal Code is the one that is first and foremost and paramount. That’s why we made certain decisions that we did during the last mandate. We are always one that will uphold the law of Canada as outlined in the Criminal Code. From our perspective, if allegations are investigated by the police and the police determine that there is evidence on which to found a charge, that charge will come to the Ministry of the Attorney General’s department, to the crown attorneys, and those charges will be prosecuted in the normal course. The Canadian law is paramount—end of story.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Health. A number of community activists from northwest Toronto are here in the gallery today. They’re here because there has been absolutely no consultation on the site selection for the new Humber River Regional Hospital. Everyone agrees that northwest Toronto needs a new hospital; that’s not the issue. But there ought to be a full and transparent consultation process on where it should be built. Why did this minister allow the hospital corporation to shut the public completely out of this important process?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I do want to acknowledge for the honourable member that our government is prepared to invest in the construction of new hospitals, including in northwestern Toronto. They didn’t build any hospitals when they were the government, except for a little one here and there, and we’re making a real, serious contribution to the renewal of Ontario’s hospital stock.

I think it’s important to acknowledge as well that the hospital has been very engaged with communities through this very long process of discussion about the construction of a new hospital, and also that there aren’t that many 30-acre sites that are available when we start to narrow down the options to make this multi-hundred-million-dollar investment in a new hospital.

I want to acknowledge, as well, our plans to invest substantial resources in the renewal of the existing York-Finch site of the Humber River Regional Hospital chain.

1140

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again, to the Minister of Health: In fact, he hasn’t replied to 18 registered letters, 9,000 signatures—\$25 million raised by this community and already lost.

MPP Sergio, who I see is actually in the chamber today, said he would resign if the facility at Jane and Finch lost its acute care capacity.

There needs to be Ombudsman oversight, and our Ombudsman, André Marin, has actually agreed with this. So I ask the minister again: Will you at least give Ombudsman oversight to this community and at least return their registered letters? Will you at least listen?

Hon. George Smitherman: I know the honourable member is not the health critic, but she sure seemed to be struggling to knit together the storyline there.

No, we're not advancing the governance of Ontario's hospitals to the Ombudsman. We believe in independent, community-based governance. That's been a long-standing tradition in the Ontario health care system.

On the matter at hand, the Humber River Regional Hospital has got lots of integration and engagement with its local communities, and the conversation with respect to the renewal of capital facilities for that hospital has been ongoing for a long enough time that it might be a decade now.

We're going to move forward with plans to renew the capital hospital infrastructure for the good people of northwestern Toronto, because they deserve it. Our government is prepared to commit hundreds of millions of dollars to do that. That includes a new site for the existing Church Street site of Humber River. It also means very substantial renewal and redevelopment of the existing York-Finch site of the Humber River Regional Hospital system. We're proud to be making these investments on behalf of Ontarians.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. In my riding of Hamilton Mountain, there has been an increase in the amount of residents who are recent newcomers to the province. Ontario has always been a province of great diversity. In the city of Hamilton alone, over 23% of the population comes from a newcomer background, and over 70 different languages are spoken.

Today some of these individuals tell me that they are finding it difficult to be competitive in the workforce. Hamilton's newcomers, like newcomers across the province, require programs that will help them put their foreign credentials to work in Ontario.

Minister, will you please tell the House about some of the programs already in place in the province to help these newest Canadians?

Hon. Michael Chan: My thanks to the honourable member for raising this important question.

Hamilton Mountain, like many communities in the province, enjoys first-hand the many benefits of immigration. The McGuinty government understands that when newcomers succeed, all Ontarians succeed. Ontario is in the privileged situation to attract talented and skilled newcomers from all over the world, and breaking down barriers for these groups is one of our top priorities.

In 2007, the Legislature passed Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, and in 2008, this government further showed our commitment by investing \$50 million in bridge training programs.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Minister, in talking to my constituents, I've learned that many newcomers, despite their high levels of education and good skills, are still not employed in their field of training.

I recently made a visit to the St. Joseph Immigrant Women's Centre, which furthered my understanding of the local programs in place to help newcomers with the challenges of a new society. What other assistance exists in Hamilton to ensure newcomer employability?

Hon. Michael Chan: My thanks to the honourable member. I'm pleased to hear that she's visiting with service providers in her riding.

Programs to facilitate employment among newcomers are available across the province. In Hamilton, newcomer settlement programs are working daily with skilled newcomers to level the playing field for all. For example, one partner agency, the Settlement and Integration Services Organization, is a community-based organization which exists to serve immigrant and refugee communities in Hamilton. SISO assists by providing assessments of language ability, settlement services and an engineering bridge training program.

Ontario is the destination of choice for newcomers in Canada. We want to keep it up.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. Today the Toronto Sun reports that your ministry is considering the expansion of prescribing powers for pharmacists, midwives, optometrists etc. I'm going to ask you a very simple question. Yes or no: Are you in fact commissioning a study to review this issue?

Hon. George Smitherman: No, the ministry has not directly commissioned such a study, but most certainly HPRAC, which gives the government advice on such matters, is broadly looking into the issues of prescribing—not just in relation to pharmacists, which I think was the context of the question the media asked me about, but also in terms of the class of drugs that nurse practitioners would have the opportunity to be able to prescribe.

Of course, at all times we're seeking to balance the risks and safety of the population with the opportunities to enhance access for Ontarians to important matters like prescribing. Is it appropriate to have people go to a hospital emergency room to get a prescription renewed, or do we think it might be more appropriate to allow a prescription renewal, as an example, to take place with a pharmacist? These are matters that are being discussed. Initiatives have taken place in provinces like Alberta and some other provinces, so I think it is worthy of consideration. No decisions or advice are offered yet on this matter.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I appreciate the answer, and I guess this is a very complex issue. It will require considerable study. You've indicated that HPRAC is undertaking this review. I'm just wondering whether or not the public, at some time, will have an opportunity to provide some input. Will there be any form of public hearings?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think it's a little bit premature to conclude what steps should be taken as we go further, but most certainly HPRAC's reports to the government are very public reports. So that's one thing we know for sure: that the public will have an opportunity for engagement on any such matter. We encourage people who are taking witness of this issue now to let us know of their views, or to let HPRAC know, this body that's considering the matter. Actually, I don't know, top of mind, whether that requires regulatory or legislative approval. Obviously, if it is in the legislative domain, if we were to initiate such a policy, there would be opportunities for engagement of the opposition and through committee processes etc.

So it's a little bit hypothetical at this point. It is a matter that there's some report work being done on. No decisions have been taken and no advice has been offered on these points yet, but everybody should be duly acknowledged that there is such consideration in the form of a report ongoing.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Correctional Services: In 1990, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that the imposition of a year or more of solitary confinement constituted cruel and unusual punishment. The Correctional Service of Canada says that enforced segregation for 60 days is individually destructive and psychologically crippling. Yet here in Ontario, three young men—Fahim Ahmad, Zakaria Amara and Mohammed Dirie—charged, but not tried or convicted, have been in solitary confinement since June 2006. What will your government do to end this shameful and inhumane treatment of these prisoners?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think the member knows full well that this is a federal prosecution, and I would think that the member knows the procedure and the mechanics that are in place with regard to that.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This government needs to end this case of cruel and unusual treatment. They're being held by the province. The United Nations has standard minimum rules for treatment of prisoners. Will you adhere to those standard minimum rules?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: With regard to provincial institutions and those people who are incarcerated that fall under provincial law, there is a standard of care that we live up to at all times. Obviously, when there is a federal prosecution that is in place, there are rules and procedures with regard to that that fall under federal jurisdiction.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. It's now time for petitions.

1150

Mr. Phil McNeely: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills said that the Ottawa spill was reported to the MOE in 2006, but he lied to this House. It was in 2007, 10 months later. I'd like to clarify—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): First, it's not a point of order. A member can only correct his or her own record and, secondly, I'd ask you to withdraw the comment that you just made.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I will not withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'll ask you a second time to withdraw the comment.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I will not withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A third time to withdraw the comment.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I will not withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I name Phil McNeely, the member from Ottawa–Orléans, and ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort him from the House.

Mr. McNeely was escorted from the chamber.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with the Lord's Prayer which reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their ‘daily bread’ and of preserving us from the evils we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I support this petition.

URANIUM MINING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas exploration for uranium is taking place in Ontario, including on the traditional territory of Algonquin First Nations; and

“Whereas there is also a risk of seepage of uranium and its toxic by-products into the source of drinking

water for hundreds of thousands of people in the Ottawa Valley; and

“Whereas uranium mining will produce toxic radioactive waste, mainly in the form of a fine powder, which can be carried on the wind eastward towards Ottawa; and

“Whereas Canada exports over 80% of its current domestic production; and

“Whereas short-term profits for a few investors should not be sufficient justification for exploring for, mining and processing uranium near population centres, given the risks to hundreds of thousands of people; and

“Whereas citizens of Ontario oppose the exploration, mining and processing of uranium;

“The Legislative Assembly of Ontario is requested to call an immediate moratorium on uranium exploration and new uranium mines in eastern Ontario until there is a full, well-informed and serious public debate and consensus regarding the impacts of the uranium cycle and Ontario energy policy, including the role of nuclear energy as part of this overall strategy;

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for a total moratorium on uranium exploration and mining in eastern Ontario until there is a full, well-informed and serious public debate and consensus regarding the impacts of the uranium cycle and Ontario’s energy policy, including the role of nuclear energy as part of this overall energy policy.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas an all-party committee is reviewing the recital of the Lord’s Prayer at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their ‘daily bread’ and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the Lord’s Prayer in the Legislature.”

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here that was brought to my office by Diane Monk. She collected quite a number of signatures from my riding and, I believe, from the riding just south of me, one that may be well

acquainted with you. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord’s Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition. It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition.

GRAFFITI

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: A petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas graffiti creates a nuisance that can adversely affect property values, business opportunities and the enjoyment of community life;

“Whereas graffiti promotes a sense of disrespect for private property, and a perception that laws protecting public and private property can be disregarded with impunity;

“Whereas it is important that everyone do their part in keeping both public and private properties free of graffiti in order to maintain community pride and confidence;

“Whereas the quick removal of graffiti from walls, fences and other structures is critical to maintaining community cleanliness and beauty; it is always true that prevention is the best policy;

“Accordingly we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature:

“To impose certain conditions on the sale of spray paint, broad-tipped marker pens, paint pens, glass-cutting tools and glass-etching tools or instruments of graffiti and to make it be unlawful for any person, other than a parent, legal guardian, school teacher or law enforcement officer in the performance of duty, to sell, exchange, give, deliver, loan, or otherwise furnish or permit to be sold, exchanged, given, delivered or loaned any prohibited graffiti material to any minor unless the minor is accompanied by their parent or legal guardian.”

I agree with this petition and I will be adding my name to it.

LORD’S PRAYER

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord’s Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their ‘daily bread’ and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I have affixed my signature to this, as I am in agreement, and given it to Radhika.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas crack houses, brothels and other persistent problem properties undermine a neighbourhood by generating public disorder, fear and insecurity; and

“Whereas current solutions—enforcement measures based on current criminal, civil and bylaws—are slow, expensive, cumbersome and not always successful; and

“Whereas safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation is provincial, civil law which counters the negative impact on neighbourhoods of entrenched drug, prostitution or illegal liquor sales based out of homes and businesses and is being successfully utilized in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Yukon; and

“Whereas the following have endorsed SCAN legislation: city of Ottawa, city of Kingston, city of Hamilton, federation of Ontario municipalities, Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Police Services Board, Ottawa Centre MPP Yasir Naqvi, Ottawa Neighbourhood Watch executive committee, Concerned Citizens for Safer Neighbourhoods, Eastern Ontario Landlord Organization, Friends and Tenants of Ottawa Community Housing, Hintonburg Community Association, Somerset Street Chinatown BIA and the Dalhousie Community Association;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to enact safer communities and neighbourhood (SCAN) legislation in Ontario for the benefit of our neighbourhoods and communities.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it by way of page Gregory.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Charles Sousa: This is a petition to support Bill 50, the Provincial Animal Welfare Act. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the OSPCAA has not been updated since 1919;

“Whereas Bill 50 would require all veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, protecting veterinarians from liability;

“Whereas it would allow the OSPCA to inspect and investigate places where animals are kept;

“Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight;

“Whereas Bill 50 would allow the OSPCA to inspect roadside zoos;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends.”

I affix my signature to the petition and hand it over to Dina.

1200

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I’d like to thank the patients of Dr. Tom Short for having sent it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Christopher to carry it for me.

Mr. Michael Prue: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Is quorum present?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Petitions.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE-LHIN) board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System’s deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

“Whereas, despite the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, the largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, this plan now calls for the ill-advised transfer of 20 mental health unit beds from Ajax-Pickering hospital to the Centenary health centre in Scarborough; and

“Whereas one of the factors for the successful treatment of patients in the mental health unit is support from family and friends, and the distance to Centenary health centre would negatively impact on the quality care for residents of Ajax and Pickering; and

“Whereas it is also imperative for Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding;

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

“That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service to our Ajax-Pickering hospital, which now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

“That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain the badly needed 20-bed mental health unit.”

I affix my signature and will pass it to page Jocelyn.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Central East Local Health Integration Network ... board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System’s deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

“Whereas it is important to ensure that the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, a \$20-million expansion that will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and post-partum (LDRP) birthing rooms and an additional 21 post-partum rooms added by October 2008, will not cause any decline in the pediatric services currently provided at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

“Whereas, with the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, the largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government ... ; and

“Whereas it is also imperative for the Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding; and

“Whereas the parents of Ajax and Pickering deserve the right to have their children born in their own community, where they have chosen to live and work;

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

“That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service; and

“That our Ajax-Pickering hospital now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

“That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain its full maternity unit.”

I shall affix my signature to that and pass this to Gregory.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for petitions is about to expire. This House stands recessed until 1 o’clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1205 to 1300.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’ll take this opportunity to welcome a former colleague of ours, Mario Racco, from Thornhill, a member of the 35th Parliament. Welcome, Mario.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

ATTENDANCE OF CABINET MEMBERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: At a time when police and law-and-order folks are crying for resources, when our tourism industry is suffering like we haven’t seen it suffer in probably the last 15 years, when we have seen record manufacturing job losses, when farms are shutting down every day across rural Ontario, suddenly, when we have an opportunity to actually do some good in this House and ask some appropriate questions, all of a sudden we find that the McGuinty Liberals have decided to have a cabinet meeting in Quebec.

It’s nice to go down there, wine and dine and have a fancy photo op. It’s nice when they can go down and give a plaque presentation. The reality is that this costs taxpayers a lot of money at a time when I think they’re showing contempt for this Legislature. The reality is that they could have done this during constituency week. They could have done it last Friday. They could have done it on the weekend. They could have waited until the summer months. But what do they do? They hold it when the House is sitting and we, as members of the opposition, require answers to questions—and we don’t even get that here.

Do you really care whether you’re here or not? That’s what you should ask yourselves. Tomorrow when you go

to caucus, make sure you tell your Premier that he's made a huge mistake, because there's nothing but contempt for this place in the fact that this government would have a cabinet meeting in Quebec at a time when the House is actually sitting.

POLYGAMY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I must say, the Liberals have officially dug their heads in the sand. I've never been more disappointed in a group than I have been in this Liberal government. By refusing to uphold the rule of law and gender equality rights, by allowing and endorsing illegal polygamous marriages, they are, as John Turley-Ewart says, "giving licence to sharia by stealth."

Real people are suffering because this Liberal government is ignoring reality. Safa Rigby, a 35-year-old mum of five, learned just the other day that her husband had another wife. He was multiply married by Imam Aly Hindy, who justifies polygamy this way: "If the laws of the country conflict with Islamic law, if one goes against the other, then I am going to follow Islamic law, simple as that." That's why others like Alia Hogben of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women ask, "Why are they so wishy-washy? Why aren't the officials doing something" about it?

I intend to do something about it, even though the Liberals are passing around illegal polygamous marriages like a hot potato around the cabinet table. I am therefore calling on the McGuinty Liberal government to uphold the rule of law by investigating and enforcing the law on these illegal polygamous marriages.

Surely the Liberals will consider the impacts on children, on gender equality rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And, of course, they will consider the Criminal Code of Canada—or are they secretly putting forward another agenda to bring forward sharia law in Ontario?

These questions need to be asked, they need to be answered by the members opposite, and I demand that they do so.

CLARKSON VILLAGE

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to talk about a historic milestone in my riding of Mississauga South. This year marks the 200th anniversary of Clarkson village.

Clarkson was named after Warren Clarkson, who arrived in 1808 from New Brunswick with others such as Thomas Merigold and Lewis Bradley. He and his family operated the local general store and post office for many years. Their homestead, built in 1819, still stands, and today it is known to the people of Mississauga as the Bradley Museum.

In honour of the family, the road leading up to the estate became known as Clarkson Road and the surrounding area was renamed Clarkson Corners.

Clarkson village is the oldest of our waterfront communities, and the residents are proud of this heritage and of this important historical landmark.

On June 21, Clarkson will be hosting a celebration to mark its 200th anniversary, which will include many attractions such as horse-and-buggy rides, children's entertainment, live music and much more. I encourage all members of the House to join me and the residents of Clarkson on June 21 to celebrate this once-in-a-lifetime occasion.

I offer my congratulations to the people of Clarkson and many thanks to the Clarkson 1808 Celebration Committee and the volunteers and sponsors who have given so generously of their own time and money. Their efforts are what make this year's festivities possible.

STREETSVILLE

Mr. Bob Delaney: The year 2008 marks the 150th anniversary of Streetsville. This year, Streetsville will celebrate our present and past: recent history and events and traditions that span the centuries back to Queen Victoria's reign, when Streetsville was founded and named after local resident Timothy Street.

Streetsville's service clubs, community groups and organizations have established the Streetsville 150th Celebration Committee. Some of the committee members are guests with us here today: Bernice Cunningham, Carol Cairns and Scott Brubacher. I call members' attention to them in the members' east gallery. I certainly welcome them to Queen's Park.

Throughout 2008, Streetsville will celebrate with events, festivals, theatre and, of course, hot dogs, hamburgers and fireworks. On September 13, in the heart of Streetsville, people who were not here or perhaps not alive to see the celebrations that Canadians held coast to coast during our centennial year will feel some of that ambiance as Streetsville holds a day-long anniversary party. Other events include Streetsville's annual Bread and Honey Festival this coming weekend, Canada Day celebrations, Driftwood Theatre and Shakespeare Under the Stars.

The village of Streetsville is exactly the type of village that people will remember. Let's party hearty and start another 150 years of history, progress and memories.

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. John McLaughlin. Mr. John McLaughlin is a resident of Beaches-East York, and he is a former provincial employee. Having worked for more than 25 years, he's a member of the Quarter Century Club.

I'm here today to pay tribute to him because he was a winner recently, on May 21, 2008, of the community service award for former provincial employees. He was presented that award by Lieutenant Governor David Onley.

He has been absolutely instrumental to so many things in Beaches–East York, particularly in the East York area. He was one of the fixtures of the mayor's Christmas dinner, which is held every year on Christmas Day for people who otherwise would not have a place to spend Christmas with family. He is a member of the Kiwanis Club. At Toronto East General Hospital, he's on the volunteer services. On the Toronto East General Hospital Foundation, he does a lot of work around the Beaches Jazz Festival and the Taste of the Danforth. Mr. McLaughlin is a member and a past president of True Davidson Meals on Wheels, delivering meals for the last several years, and he even worked his way up through that rank as well.

To show you how strong a person he is, he had to have knee surgery a few years ago, and within one week he was back there in the hospital—not in the bed, but on two canes—talking to the patients as they arrived, in one of his jobs as a greeter.

I can only say: Congratulations, John; job well done.

REPUBLIC OF ITALY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: June 2 marks the 62nd anniversary of the birth of the republic of Italy. This is one of the most important Italian public holidays, which, like July 1 in Canada and July 4 in the United States, celebrates the birth of the nation.

The national holiday of the republic of Italy—la Festa della Repubblica italiana—commemorates the national referendum of 1946, when Italians voted against the monarchy and in favour of a republic. It is important to note that this was also the first time that Italian women were allowed to vote.

Today also marks the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Italian Constitution, which came into force on June 2, 1948, while the country was still emerging from the rubble and the devastation of the Second World War.

The national holiday of the republic of Italy is celebrated by many Italians living in different countries all over the world. Italian embassies and consulates worldwide hold celebrations in which heads of state of the host country are invited to participate. Here at Queen's Park, a celebration is hosted every year by MPPs of Italian origin, and it is going on as we speak. Celebrations held on this day offer Italian Canadians the opportunity to celebrate their heritage and offer other Ontarians the chance to learn more about the Italian culture and the contributions of Italians over the centuries. Congratulations to all of those celebrating Italian Republic Day.

1310

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: New and young and expanding cattle, hog and horticulture farmers need help. That shouldn't be a surprise to the members of the Legislature, because our party has told them over and over that under the government's cattle, hog and horticulture program,

these farmers didn't get the support they deserved. We told them about retired farmers getting cheques for \$80,000. We told them about farmers who got cheques for livestock they didn't have. Yet the government has done nothing to solve the problem.

I want to commend the farmers in my area who are also working to raise awareness of the situation, farmers like Tina Veyhof, a pork farmer who has spoken out about her struggle to hold on to her farm and feed her four children because she didn't receive support under this program, and farmers like Rene Boerkamp, who recently wrote to the Ontario Farmer about his situation and asked others to share their stories. He said, "An injustice has been done regarding the Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture payment program, in which the beginning and/or expanding producer has been left in the cold and as a result has to deal with not only bad market conditions, but also with colleagues who are a few steps ahead through a government payment they did receive, therefore creating an unlevel playing field between farmers."

If the government won't listen to us, maybe they will listen to these farmers. They are the ones who need help. They are the reason the government needs to fix this program before anyone else is forced out of farming.

PSYCHIATRIC PATIENT ADVOCATE OFFICE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Grazie, Signor Presidente.

Last week, the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, an arm's-length advocacy and rights protection program of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, celebrated its 25th anniversary.

In 2001, the PPAO's mandate was expanded to provide rights advice to patients in general hospitals with a mental health unit and to patients living in the community who are being considered for community treatment orders, and their substitute decision-maker, if any. This means that the PPAO is now a service provider in almost every community in Ontario. Last year, this resulted in more than 22,000 patient visits, with service being provided in 45 languages.

I am proud to be part of a government that has invested \$270 million in new funding for community mental health, a 66% increase in support. This means that 208,000 new clients are being served in the community, including assertive community treatment teams, crisis management programs, residential safe beds, supportive housing, and early intervention programs for adolescents and young adults.

On behalf of the people of Ontario, I invite you to join me in congratulating the PPAO on its quarter-century of service to the people of Ontario.

INJURED WORKERS' DAY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yesterday, June 1, was Injured Workers' Day. It's a day on which we remember those workers who have been injured, have become ill or have died on the job.

This year was the 25th anniversary of Injured Workers' Day, and its importance and symbolism have not wavered at all throughout the years. It is never easy to hear of a worker being injured on the job. This government knows that when a worker is injured, there are repercussions not only at work but also in terms of how it affects his or her family and quality of life.

The health and safety of Ontario workers is one of our government's top priorities. The Ministry of Labour continually participates in awareness campaigns with its health and safety partners to increase the collective knowledge of hazards in the workplace.

We have taken action to put more money into the hands of injured workers through benefit increases and announced reforms to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. This government has also paid special attention to our new and young workers to ensure that they have information about safety and employment standards as they are entering the workforce. This government knows that we all need to work hard to prevent these injuries from happening, but also to recognize the help that's needed when injuries do occur.

REPORT, CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that on May 29, 2008, the Chief Electoral Officer tabled his report on the 2007 referendum returns and his report on selection of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT (WORKPLACE DEATH, CRITICAL INJURY AND OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESS REGISTRY), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL (REGISTRE DES DÉCÈS, DES BLESSURES GRAVES ET DES MALADIES PROFESSIONNELLES SURVENUS DANS LE LIEU DE TRAVAIL)

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 84, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to create a registry of workplace deaths, critical injuries and occupational illnesses / *Projet de loi 84, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail afin de créer un registre des décès, des blessures*

et des maladies professionnelles survenus dans le lieu de travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The bill amends the Occupational Health And Safety Act to create a registry of workplace deaths, critical injuries and occupational illnesses, information that is currently provided to the Minister of Labour. The online registry would make it available to everyone.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COSMETIC PESTICIDES BAN ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'INTERDICTION DES PESTICIDES UTILISÉS À DES FINS ESTHÉTIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 26, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 64, An Act to amend the Pesticides Act to prohibit the use and sale of pesticides that may be used for cosmetic purposes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak for a few minutes to Bill 64 this afternoon. I sure wasn't planning on speaking to it this afternoon, but I know our member from Niagara West-Glanbrook will be here shortly to speak to the bill. I would like to get a few points on the record, as this may be the last opportunity there is to speak to Bill 64 in its second reading. It is, of course, the Cosmetics Pesticides Ban Act, 2008.

I think most people in the general public support reducing unnecessary use of pesticides, which, as we know, means insecticides, herbicides, fungicides. My impression of this bill is that the bill itself is cosmetic, as so many different bills that the government is putting through this Legislature are. It is my feeling that this bill is really more superficial. It's about optics. It's about looking like you're doing the right thing to do what is perceived to be reduction of use of harmful and toxic substances, but I would argue that it's not necessarily based on fact.

One point I would like to make is that this bill would address a very tiny amount of the actual pesticides used in society; some 4% or 5% are used on people's lawns. We've heard the argument from the government that it's okay for golf courses, which use of course far more pesticides than people do on their lawns, because the golf courses have training. I would say that if that logic is to be followed, it should be fine that businesses—in our area, we have the Weed Man; I would argue the people who work for the Weed Man and do the application of

pesticides through that business are probably as well-trained or better than farmers who will use pesticides in the growing of crops. Using the government's own logic, I would think they may consider an exemption for some of those businesses that certainly have expertise in the proper application of pesticides.

1320

They say also that this bill is based more on political science. When you look at information coming out recently from Health Canada on a popular herbicide—I think it's an herbicide—2,4-D, which just came May 16, 2008, Health Canada finds that 2,4-D can be used safely. It is the federal government that has traditionally regulated pesticides. So here we see this coming out May 16, stating:

“Jim Gray, executive director of the industry task force ... on 2,4-D research data, said, ‘After reviewing an unprecedented depth of scientific data and expert panel reviews regarding the impact 2,4-D may have on children, adults, animals and the environment, Health Canada determined the herbicide meets all of Canada's pesticide health and safety regulations, which are among the toughest and most stringent in the world.

“These most recent findings by the PMRA are consistent with previous decisions made by authorities including the World Health Organization, European Commission, US Environmental Protection Agency, and recent studies by the US National Cancer Institute that deem 2,4-D to be a valuable and useful herbicide that does not pose human health or environmental risks when used according to label instructions,’ Gray added.

“This conclusion supports the 2005 and 2007 draft assessments issued by PMRA, which found that 2,4-D can be used safely on lawn, turf, agricultural, forestry and industrial sites when label directions are followed.”

It seems to me that this is a pesticide that the federal government, through extensive scientific testing, has found to be safe to use. Yet, with this Bill 64, I believe it is one of the substances that would no longer be available to be used in Ontario, even by trained professionals. Other than in the arena of public opinion, where people just assume that all pesticides are bad and will hurt the environment and risk public safety, it seems to me that actual science is not what is determining the construction of this bill; it is more political science, because it is a popular thing to do. That is true of so many of the different pieces of legislation this government has brought forward.

Recently I met with the local East Nipissing-Parry Sound chapter of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, as I do from time to time. I met with them in Magneta-wan—I always enjoy getting together with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—and they let me know some of their concerns with what they've been hearing about what's going on. One of the bills they expressed concern about was this Bill 64, the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act. I did point out to them that agriculture is excluded from coverage in this bill, and they were happy about that. I know they are trained and that they have different

systems in use on the farm to regulate how they use pesticides. But they still had concerns, and they still wanted to make their feelings known, when given an opportunity when the bill might move to the committee stage. I assured them I felt quite confident that the government would want to get input from other interested stakeholders, so I said I felt quite confident that the bill would be going to summer committee hearings and that it would likely travel around the province so that those in rural areas would get an opportunity to comment to the bill.

I've just recently learned that that is in fact incorrect, so I'd like to make sure the members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture realize that they won't get an opportunity, at least not close to where they live, to give input in this bill, and to just forewarn them that by the looks of things, the government is going to rush this bill through and try to pass it before the end of this session of the legislature. So those interested stakeholders should immediately give comments to whatever committee the bill gets referred to. You'll get a very short window of time to be able to make comment to the bill. I just wanted to make sure the Ontario Federation of Agriculture was aware that there likely would not be summer hearings on this bill.

I suspect that the reason the government is trying to rush the bill through now is that there are actually people on the other side who want to see tougher legislation than this bill is putting forward: probably some municipalities that already have tougher pesticide bans in place that will be weakened by this provincial bill because it's going to take precedence over the municipal bills that are already in place. I think the government wants to rush this through and get it over with as quickly as possible.

As I say, it's all about optics. They can say they've brought in this ban and they're protecting the province, whether it is based on science or not, not wanting to take the time to get input from farmers and perhaps those in industry who are in the business or some of the scientists who have done studies. They just want to get the bill passed quickly. To those who may want to give comment, you're going to have a very short window to do that at committee. Make sure you check with the clerk of the committee to find out when you have that opportunity and make your voices known.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 64, the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act, this afternoon. I would like to share my time with the member—

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's a rotation, so our member will have a chance to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I am pleased to rise to offer some comments on Bill 64, the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act. I have some comments on behalf of my constituents from Niagara West-Glanbrook, and I have some personal comments on the legislation as well.

First I want to commend Toby Barrett, the MPP for Haldimand–Norfolk and critic for the Ministry of the Environment. I think he has done an outstanding job on this legislation. He has researched it thoroughly and has spoken quite eloquently to this bill.

I hope the minister will be open to the amendments that I anticipate Mr. Barrett will be bringing forward on behalf of the PC caucus. I'll speak to a few of those things that I hope the minister will take into serious consideration as he reviews the Hansard debate at second reading as well as any amendments to the act that are brought forward.

I do have to make sure I give some initial comments about how the bill was announced. You may remember that a big press conference was held on Earth Day with Premier McGuinty, and Minister Gerretsen in tow, and probably a bevy—is “bevy” the appropriate word?—a horde, of staff from the Ministry of the Environment and the Premier's office in attendance. The Premier was asked a question by the media: Would this legislation overrule any kind of municipal frameworks, or could municipalities have more strict rules on top of Bill 64, if passed and implemented? Members will recall that the Premier said that indeed municipalities could have stricter rules on top of Bill 64, that it would be the floor, and municipalities could put their own set of rules on top.

Of course, this was not in keeping with the facts; it's quite the opposite of what the bill states. The bill says it's a province-wide scheme, that municipalities could not have rules that are of a higher standard than the province. The Minister of the Environment, Mr. Gerretsen, was standing beside the Premier at that point in time. You would expect that he would have corrected the record. The Premier misspoke because he wasn't properly briefed, he didn't want to give the proper answer, or for whatever reason. But Minister Gerretsen did not correct the record, and I think Robert Benzie of the Toronto Star has made some suggestions about a chill that has come down from the Premier's office and those working in the Premier's office and the ability of ministers to express themselves and to respond to questions if not in line with the Premier's wording.

So Minister Gerretsen stood there without indicating that the Premier had misspoken. I think if the minister had corrected the Premier at that point in time, it would have killed the story. It would have got the facts out to the general public through the media. He may have had his wrist slapped for contradicting the Premier, but in the interest of being honest about what's in the bill, I would have hoped that the Minister of the Environment would have corrected the Premier. Instead, he stood there mute on the stage and did not correct the Premier.

1330

There was another opportunity for the minister himself or his staff to correct the record among the media after the press conference. That, too, was an opportunity that was not taken up by the staff at the Ministry of the Environment or in the Premier's office, and it allowed the story to go out for approximately a week to the media

and to stakeholders that the bill would allow municipalities to have higher standards than those in Bill 64's regulations. That was not true; that was a false impression that had been put out there. Strangely, sadly, nobody in the Premier's office or the ministry made an attempt to correct that.

Later on, some members of the media discovered that this was not the case, and they pestered the minister about it. I would've expected that the Minister of the Environment would've apologized here in the Legislature for allowing a false statement to be spread through the media in that sense. Unfortunately, he failed to do so. As a result, what should have been a good-news announcement for the government was spoiled by the Premier's lack of understanding of his own bill, the minister's inability to correct the Premier, and a lack of any activity by staff to make sure the media had the facts with respect to the bill.

As I said, I think that shows two things. First, ministers are very wary of crossing the Premier. Political staff and ministers' offices are obviously very wary of running on the wrong side when it comes to Premier's office staff. Third, I think it illustrates a bit of duplicity. Are the McGuinty government's environmental initiatives all they're built up to be?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I don't think that's a nice word.

Mr. Tim Hudak: To my friend the Minister of Natural Resources: I think it's accurate when it comes to a number of your bills. I know that if you were the Minister of the Environment at the time, you would've corrected the Premier. You would've been confident in your standing and confident in your knowledge of the bills, and you would've made sure that this issue was killed immediately, as opposed to having it spread out there for a week or so. But I'll get into some other aspects of the bill.

I wrote to the minister on May 2, Madam Speaker—Madam Speaker, of course, hailing from the Hamilton area, and well aware of the gypsy moth concerns we have in Hamilton, the rural areas which I represent around the Glanbrook area, upper Stoney Creek, and spreading eastward into West Lincoln, Pelham and Grimsby. In fact, the gypsy moth infestation is now being found along the Niagara River at the easternmost boundary of Niagara, Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake. A spraying program is happening, but it's been funded exclusively by landowners and some municipalities.

I've called upon the Minister of Natural Resources, actually—and I hope she is still considering this—to resurrect the old provincial cost-shared program that split costs between the Ministry of Natural Resources, municipalities and individual landowners to eradicate gypsy moths. The problem is that we are at infestation levels we have not seen in many, many years. I thought it was an appropriate measure. I hope the minister is taking that into full consideration and will help out. Otherwise, I fear what kind of damage will be caused to the ecosystem in

Hamilton, Glanbrook, Niagara and even to areas like Brantford.

The reason I bring this up, Madam Speaker—you're probably wondering—about gypsy moths and the Pesticides Act is that the minister has given himself some exemptions in the act. In fact, a large room for exemptions has been one of the criticisms we've heard here in the Legislature, the number of exemptions and the vagueness about what those exemptions are going to be. One area that I have called on the minister to clarify is if spraying for insects that are causing significant damage, like gypsy moths, will be allowed under the act or not. When we contacted the Ministry of the Environment, they said that it had not yet been determined if that would be the case or not.

So I wrote to the minister on May 2, and I hope to hear back from him soon. Let me just quote you a little bit from my letter. The ministry did "include some exempted uses in the legislation, such as for agriculture, on golf courses, and for managing forestry issues. Residents and municipal leaders in Niagara and Hamilton are concerned that Bill 64 will effectively ban the spraying of gypsy moths in areas other than those used for agriculture."

A number of local municipalities such as Hamilton and West Lincoln have implemented cost-shared aerial spraying programs with local residents to combat the gypsy moth problem. I have joined with those municipalities and property owners in calling the province to come forward with its own cost-shared spray program. However, they've expressed concern that if the province bans spraying for gypsy moths, the infestation will no doubt continue to spread into new territory, including provincially protected areas like the Niagara Escarpment and the Ontario greenbelt. I've kindly asked the Minister of the Environment to clarify and confirm that spraying for gypsy moths and the like will be allowed to continue should Bill 64 come into law. I do hope to have a response from the minister in the very near future.

We did have a response from Aidan Hyde—I don't know if that is Aidan sitting over there. No, not Aidan. Well, Aidan Hyde, from the minister's office, did respond, indicating that the ministry will look at amendments to regulation 914, but at the time was not able to give us clarification on the minister's intent when it comes to spraying for gypsy moths.

I also wrote to the Minister of the Environment on June 2—today, Madam Speaker; and the minister will have that on his desk shortly—on behalf of a hardware operator in my riding. Vineland Hardware Electric Ltd. does a great job and has outstanding customer service. They're close to the corner, just east of Highway 8 and Regional Road 24. It's one of the last truly independent hardware stores in the province of Ontario. It has that stature, if you will, because of its outstanding customer service, its history in the community and its great selection of products.

Mr. Horsley, the owner, asked me if what he heard was true—I think he said it in the *Globe and Mail*, but I can't say with certainty if it was in the *Globe and Mail* or

another journal—that Roundup was going to be exempted from the act but other pesticides like Killex and some of its competitors would not be. Mr. Horsley asked me what determination the minister would use for exempting certain pesticides and not others. I wrote to Minister Gerretsen on his behalf. Just to quote from the letter:

"I kindly ask that" Minister Gerretsen "respond to Mr. Horsley at the address provided below and explain how you will be making these determinations and the science that's involved in the decision-making process. He would also appreciate an explanation of how you expect this ban will impact retailers like him. And finally, if the above-mentioned media reports are true, why is Roundup entitled to a specific exception while others are not?"

There's more detail in the letter, but I wanted to make sure that the minister was aware of the concerns of Mr. Horsley and other hardware store owners and retailers in the province like him.

We also contacted a number of municipalities in our area and asked for their views on the proposed legislation. We received a response from Larry Fortier, who is the manager of parks and facilities with the town of Grimsby. I'll give you some of the bullet points that Mr. Fortier brought back to my attention.

He says, "It will be interesting or even may be a non-issue for us depending on the definition of the term 'cosmetic,'" which is in dispute as part of our debate. He says that the "department in Grimsby has always used very little pesticides for aesthetic reasons.... Our main use, of the various pesticides available; is to aid us in providing safe and healthy turf for our facility users. We also only apply pesticides when necessary; the industry term is 'integrated pest management.'"

He goes on to say, "Those of us in the sports turf industry are making grass do things that it was never really put on this planet to do—grown at very low heights and see constant use throughout the growing season. The wear and tear combined with the requested mowing heights causes the turf to be in an almost constant state of stress, thus weakening the grass plant, making it more susceptible to pest investigation (weeds, insects and disease). Without the aid of pesticides and with our current manpower it would be next to impossible to provide safe, healthy-quality playing fields."

That comes from Bruce Atkinson from the town of Grimsby. Larry Fortier had some concerns as well about the impact on municipalities.

We also heard from the city of Welland, which expressed concerns about bowling greens and sports fields. He says about sports fields:

"We spray Roundup on warning tracks and stone infields and on softball fields. Failure to do this would result in grass and weeds growing, which could lead to a liability issue. To manually do this would be a big cost to the taxpayers, as it would take many man-hours."

He goes on about insecticides, but in the interest of time I won't get into great detail. Maybe I'll copy these to the Minister of the Environment for his information.

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The bottom line from the city of Welland staff was, if pesticides are omitted from our maintenance plans, our bowling green would close, sports fields could have liability issues and taxpayers would be on the hook for more money, with fewer services. I hope the Minister of the Environment will respond to the concerns of our municipal partners.

There are exemptions for golf courses. Bill Carroll on CFRB has pointed out—with great comedy, I'd say—that somehow golfers are immune. If pesticides are so nasty for families, children and residents of the province of Ontario, what is it about golfers that makes them immune to the ill effects of pesticides? Perhaps if we all carried putters around we could ward off the evil impacts of pesticides. Mr. Carroll, among others, has pointed out: Why golf courses and not parks? At the municipal level, why golf courses and not front lawns? If pesticides are so negative in their impact, why was it not more broad-based instead of this exemption for golf courses? I'll ask my colleagues opposite; maybe the minister for public safety and security can tell me: What it is about golfers that makes them immune from the ill effects of pesticides?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: They're going to ban shorts.

Mr. Tim Hudak: They're going to ban shorts?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Yes, so you can't get the ill effects on your legs.

Mr. Tim Hudak: So shorts instead will be banned on golf courses, my colleague from Mississippi-Carleton—

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Exactly, like I said.

Anyway, I wanted to bring those points forward that we have received from a number of constituents and municipalities in my riding. I have one from a resident of Grimsby, who asked not to be named but acts as a greenskeeper at a golf course in southern Ontario. We'll make the case that golf courses should be exempted. I said I would read this into the record. The constituent writes, "As you know, all of our products are extensively tested and pose no health hazards. No country is more strict than Canada in ensuring the safety of Canadians in terms of pesticide use. We are professionals and do our applications strictly according to label rates.... These chemicals are expensive and we do not waste them.

"We in the golf industry need our exemption and we need your help."

So an individual who works—doesn't own a golf course; a worker in a golf club, who lives in my riding, makes that point. I guess the other point would be, if the exemption exists for golf courses, as the constituent indicates, why is the minister not similarly considering exceptions for municipal parks, as Welland and Grimsby have brought forward?

I did have a letter as well from Lavinia Sharp, who's a constituent of mine in the beautiful community of Caistor Centre. Ms. Sharp is a supporter of the legislation. She

did talk about gypsy moths, because she was aware of my letter to the minister asking for an exemption to allow for spraying of these pests that are causing considerable damage in the rural areas outside of Hamilton and in Niagara. She writes in her letter, "I have witnessed devastation throughout West Lincoln from this invasive, non-native species and find it alarming that this spray would ever be considered 'cosmetic.' My mother and I have a 25-acre woodlot and it's a costly matter of survival, not a matter of cosmetic upkeep, for the trees in our lot." Woodlots are another exemption, but I think the point is that Ms. Sharp writes that gypsy moth spraying should be an exempted use.

She responded to my concerns about the way this bill was introduced, the Premier saying something that was not, in fact, in the bill, and the minister's failure to correct him. She responded to me in writing here: "Yes, I feel misled by their actions and I'm angry about it. They should apologize for their greenwash and strengthen this important legislation to allow constituents to further protect themselves. I want them to be taken to task for misleading me and I want them to live up to what they claimed, even if it was a claim in error. That's what's most important to me." I said I would bring her concerns forward. It's something that she says she has been concerned about for some time.

In her letter she also says, "And my concern has grown as I've watched development run rampant in ecologically sensitive areas and unnaturally green lawns appear across our landscape. With each step"—she asks for expansion of the Greenbelt Act and for stronger legislation, but as I said, she also concurs that the way the bill was brought forward was under some pretences that weren't in keeping with the facts.

The other thing I don't think I fully understood from the minister was, if my understanding is correct, that all of these pesticides are reviewed by Health Canada. Health Canada invests significant resources in ensuring a top-quality scientific review of a pesticide and its potential impact on the environment.

I used to speak in this Legislature, when Minister Gerretsen was the Minister of Municipal Affairs, about the political science that was underlying the greenbelt boundaries, as opposed to environmental science. I am concerned that he has brought the same bag of tricks over to the new Ministry of the Environment, where his decisions of what would be allowed uses or not—what pesticide would be allowed or disallowed in the province—may be based more on political science than on good environmental science.

It may also be reflective of who's the best lobbyist. I believe that the vast majority of taxpayers in the Niagara West-Glanbrook area would like to ensure that if any pesticides are banned, they are so done based on the scientific merits of the argument as opposed to who's gone to whose fundraiser or any other political considerations rather than on good science.

The last thing I'll say on this is that municipalities have had a role historically. I've mentioned a couple of

reasons why. They've played that role to make their own judgment locally of what kinds of property standards to enforce through their bylaws. This is consistent with municipalities' historic roles in these areas. This would take away any municipal discretion. I know that the city of Toronto, among other municipalities, has written to the minister expressing their concern about Bill 64.

That's the bottom line. People of Niagara West—Glanbrook have responded. I'm glad to have a chance to read them into the record. I do hope the Minister of Environment will respond to both of my letters soon. I do ask him to take seriously the views brought forward by our hard-working critic from Haldimand—Norfolk, Toby Barrett.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you.

Prior to calling for questions and comments, Vic Dhillon, the member for Brampton West, has asked me to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal, an MP currently in the riding of Newton—North Delta. Welcome. Thank you for joining us.

Questions and comments? The member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'd like to compliment the member for Niagara West—Cranbrook—Glanbrook; it's as bad as Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

I want to point out, particularly for the young people sitting up in the east gallery, the structure of how we control pesticides and herbicides in Canada, in Ontario and in our municipalities.

First of all, the federal government is responsible for approving the product. They have a board of the most eminent scientists in all of Canada to determine the risks and the benefits of any pesticide or herbicide that might be used on our farms, in our gardens, on our lawns, on our golf courses etc. They determine whether or not a product should be put up for sale, should have restrictions on it in terms of whom it's sold to or whether it should be applied by people who are specially trained.

The province's role is to license people who can put these products on our lawns, on our gardens and on our farms. So this again is another set of experts who decide what the training shall be, what the qualifications shall be, to put those products on those particular areas.

So our objection—perhaps most of our objection—to this is that there have been no scientific studies done by the government of Ontario to show that there is a huge risk, or any risk, associated with putting pesticides on lawns or on the side of our highways etc. We would love to see the facts before we vote on a piece of legislation to ban this particular use. Maybe the ban should be wider. Maybe it should be narrower. Maybe there should be no ban.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to rise to comment on the discussion of my colleague for Niagara West—Glanbrook on Bill 64. I think he ably set out that, from the beginning, this legislation has been bungled. From the day of the announcement—and we now realize that the Premier misspoke the depth of where this ban could be

implemented—we've now heard from communities like Collingwood, Toronto and Markham, who are saying, "Hold off. If you pass Bill 64, you're actually going to downgrade the level of protection that we, as a community, have held public hearings and passed a bylaw on."

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How unfortunate, because there are organizations, municipalities and individuals who'd like to participate in the debate on Bill 64. I, for one, would love to hear from the Ontario Pesticides Advisory Committee. If you look at who makes up this committee, they are plant physiologists, environmental chemists, pharmacologists, toxicologists, environmental toxicologists, plant pathologists, community medicine, environmental agriculturalists, forest pathologists, environmental biologists, and on and on it goes. How unfortunate that the government has chosen, by not bringing forward public hearings and travelling committee hearings, that we won't have the benefit of these scientific committee members who can share with us what they've done in the past and what they can do in the future in terms of regulating and mandating pesticides in Ontario. I think it's a real shame that they've chosen to ignore those experts and instead relied on polling and their own internal discussions to proceed with Bill 64 without travelling hearings.

I will leave it at that for future debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? Response?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I thank my colleagues from Carleton—Mississippi Mills and from Dufferin—Caledon for their comments, and they're both right. My colleague from Carleton—Mississippi Mills points out, as a former Minister of the Environment—and a darned good Minister of the Environment, let me add—that Health Canada already reviews these. An eminent panel of scientists, for example, looks at these products. Surely decisions should be based strictly on science and not the politics of a particular chemical or which company has been to which member's fundraisers, by way of example.

The minister, when you hear him debate in the Legislature, says that agriculture has been exempted because they are trained professionals who know how to put the proper amount of pesticides on food products, and therefore the exception is due. There are, however, as my colleague from Carleton—Mississippi Mills said, similarly, professionals who apply pesticides in urban areas. If it's a matter of application, if the minister believes that people who apply pesticides should be licensed, then why have a different set of rules for one sector than the other? Wouldn't it be better to have a regime of licensed professionals who know proper use, if application problems are the result of this bill?

Similarly, as my constituent Lavinia had talked about, the application in golf courses—in her letter, she objects to golf courses being exempted. One would wonder why there would be one set of rules for golf courses and an entirely different set of rules for what would resemble a golf course: a park across the street. It does seem that

they made decisions based on a bit more politics than actual science behind a determination of what kind of exemptions should be allowed or not.

My colleague from Dufferin–Caledon put it rightly: Let's have some public hearings. Let's see what people have to say. Let's make sure we look at all of the different sectors or individuals that use pesticides, and then we could bring forward proper amendments to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Gerretsen has moved second reading of Bill 64. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Shall the bill be sent for third reading?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): So ordered.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the House adjourn.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion is carried.

The House adjourned at 1355.

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**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Gerry Martiniuk, Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch,
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Helena Jaczek, Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri,
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott, Peter Shurman
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