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Thursday 18 February 2010

Jeudi 18 février 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Sikh prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PENSION BENEFITS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 17, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 236, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act / Projet de loi 236, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to spend a couple of minutes to talk about Bill 236, and I just wanted to reaffirm what this act really does, if passed.

I know we've heard over and over again that we need to do more, and this is sort of the first phase. We need to do more. I think that sometimes—not in a selfish way—we need to do more with members of this House. Nevertheless, I think the folks out there are more important at this stage.

What does this bill actually propose to do? It provides for the restructuring of pension plans affected by corporate reorganizations while protecting benefits security for plan members and pensioners. Obviously, that's very, very important, because in the last few years we've seen enormous amounts of restructuring, and the workforce is sometimes the last one to be dealt with.

It will clarify the benefits of plan members affected by layoffs and eliminate partial windups. Of course, in the last couple of years we've seen an enormous amount of that.

It will increase transparency and access to information for plan members and pensioners. It will enhance regulatory oversight that, once again, we learned in the last couple of years is needed more and more. Once again, what was in place for the last number of years, previous to the last pension reform, is not good enough for today's economy and standards.

We'll improve plan administration and reduce compliance costs. Once again, that's a big piece of making

sure these plans will stay in effect and help those mostly affected, especially under the circumstances of windup or restructuring.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments? Response?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the comments of the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. I did have an opportunity yesterday to speak at length about Bill 236. As I mentioned in my speech, the government has said they are going to bring forward two pension bills. This is the first, and the people I have met with describe it as kind of tinkering around the edges. The more difficult challenges to do with pensions are going to come in the second bill, which we're expecting sometime this spring.

This bill is dealing with the more minor issues; some, though, that are very important. I know that the member from Simcoe–Grey has brought up issues that he sees are favourably dealt with in the bill. I did make mention yesterday in my speech that my concern is that the grow-in provisions are becoming unique to Ontario. I note, in reviewing the pre-budget consultation notes, that Advocis, one group that came forward, pointed out that harmonizing provincial and federal regulations for defined contribution plans is something to be looking toward.

Ontario would be the only jurisdiction in Canada, other than Nova Scotia, that would have grow-in provisions. In Nova Scotia, they've been advised to do away with grow-in provisions. I'm hearing from the people who are involved with pensions that this would be a bad thing, that we should obviously have harmonized rules across the country, and that having Ontario unique and having grow-in provisions only in Ontario—something that makes the plans more expensive—would be a step backward. That is my major concern with this bill, which, as I mentioned, is highly technical and deals with the easier parts of pension reform.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I would like to start by saying that I listened intently to the member from Pickering–Scarborough East's delivery yesterday of the government's plan for Bill 236, and I must say that it was a really good history lesson. He had a lot of information about what has transpired over the years. But I guess I have a different outlook on this situation, speaking from my experience as a lobbyist in Ottawa for the steelworkers.

I remember being there a few years ago; we had brought forth concerns about the Bankruptcy and Insol-

vency Act, which also interacts with provincial pension laws, so they're married, so to speak—you can't talk about one without the other. While I was in Ottawa, we met with great frustration from the sitting government, as well as the official opposition at the time. We had trouble even getting in to see them to talk about the situation of pensions and the decline of pensions in Ontario, and Canada for that matter.

Some of the members wouldn't even meet with us, and I remember a particular member from Alberta, Conservative member Mr. Ted Menzies, who is now the pension lead for the federal government. In fact, not only would he not see us; he wouldn't even talk to us at the time. I find it quite interesting that he's the lead for the Conservatives on pension reform.

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I'd also like to talk about the demise of pension plans in Canada and of defined pension plans, which have been under attack for years. They've been underfunded for years. Nobody did anything at the time. We set off the alarm bells years ago, and now everything has come to fruition. I find that most governments are reactive, not proactive, and that's what is happening here again.

I'd like to talk about the situation of the elderly in the country. Elderly people are suffering. I don't know who in this room could live on a \$600 old-age—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, I'm having trouble hearing myself—and with the other \$500 it comes to about \$1,300 that a person has to live on in this country. That doesn't cut it. A lot of our elderly people are being forced into homes that they wouldn't want to be in, or into situations where they can't—especially if the spouse dies, that cuts their income in half and they're struggling. Then it becomes a burden to their families as to themselves. These are the people that built this country, paid their taxes all their life, and at the end of their life they're almost being penalized because they're older and can't survive in the situation. Obviously something had to be done quickly, and I'm not sure it happened fast enough.

In reference to the Nortel situation, the Nortel people really were very proactive and demonstrated it in Ottawa on the Hill, brought their concerns forward and were speaking out loudly. With that amount of people involved, they finally got the ear of the government a little bit, as well as of Ontario, I see. Now the Minister of Finance has decided that they may come up with a plan to supplement them up to \$1,000, even though the plan that exists in Ontario—the guaranteed pension investment fund—already says that, even though it's grossly underfunded. They're going to give them up to \$1,000. That, frankly, doesn't cut it. Some of these people are entitled to \$3,000 or \$3,500 a month for their 30 or 40 years of service, and they're going to be cut down to probably a third or less than a third of what they're entitled to. I don't know if this is a temporary fix or if it is a political move, but it certainly does not fix the situation for the Nortel workers. In fact, in my humble opinion, it's an insult to them.

Getting on with that, I'd like to say that we, the NDP, are in support of increasing CPP. Also, we'd like to see an increase to the old age security, which has been there for years and is grossly inadequate, to allow people to have some dignity in their retirement.

I'd like to get into the specifics of the bill and our position now, after getting that off my chest, the frustration that I've faced for years in Ottawa and here. I do recall that when I first got elected I was fortunate enough in the draw to get the first bill; that was two and a half years ago. When I got that, the first thing I did was try to help workers with severance and holiday pay, which they were being ripped off on all over this country and all over this province. Of course, it's still on the books. It died—the government decided not to entertain it—and here we are two and a half years later and everybody's running around with their heads cut off because people are getting ripped off all over the country with pensions and severance pay and all that. It's just on and on. Every week we hear about a new company or a new group of people that are in trouble financially. Now all of a sudden, everybody has come out of the woodwork all concerned about this. It's amazing how these things happen.

I'd like to start on the bill itself with something from the Arthurs report. I think it nicely sets the stage for my remarks: "Ontario's system of occupational pensions—like ... systems in the United Kingdom and the United States—has been encountering difficulties"—that's putting it mildly—"especially during the present decade," with the demise of the markets and the demise of overall national incomes.

"The percentage of the Ontario workforce covered by occupational pension plans has been slowly declining, from just under 40% of the workforce in 1985 to just under 35% today.

"Increasing numbers of workers with pension coverage—but still less than one in five—are now enrolled in defined contribution ... plans rather than defined benefit ... plans, though the latter"—defined benefit plans—"are often seen as more attractive by workers.

"Many pension plans have failed in recent years, and many have been severely underfunded for extended periods for various reasons: financial difficulties encountered by sponsoring companies feeling the effects of global competition; declining long-term interest rates, equity prices and plan asset values; increasing numbers of retired members relative to the number of active members still contributing to their plan; and the rising cost of providing pensions to a workforce whose life expectancy has been increasing.

"The reconfiguration of pension plans triggered by the restructuring of Ontario's economy, as well as their actual or threatened failure, has given rise to considerable litigation.

"Other critical concerns include the rules governing the funding of plans; the ownership of surplus in plans when they are ongoing, wound up or reconfigured; and the protection of worker interests when sponsoring employers do not or cannot make good any deficiency in plan funding.

“Attempts to resolve these concerns by changes to Ontario’s pension laws have faltered, either because they have been politically controversial or because they require legislation that only the federal government can constitutionally enact.

“These difficulties have also revealed shortcomings in the legal and regulatory framework governing pensions, in the agency responsible for pension regulation in Ontario, and in the architecture of plan governance.

“The cumulative effect of these difficulties has been to shake the confidence of employers, unions, workers, pension professionals and policy analysts in the future of the occupational”—workplace—“pension system in general, and especially in defined benefit pensions.”

Before I get into the details of the bill, I’d like to talk about what the NDP will be looking for in terms of pension reform over the coming months.

First, with only 35% of Ontarians covered by an occupational pension plan, there is a clear need for expanded pension coverage for all working Ontarians. Ideally, the way this would be done would be to increase the benefit levels of the Canada pension plan. This would draw on existing economies of scale, risk-sharing and administrative efficiencies in the plan.

The Ontario NDP joins with the federal NDP and the Canadian Labour Congress in the campaign for an expanded national universal pension plan in the form of enhanced CPP. That said, the issue of expanding pension coverage is an urgent one. We in the Ontario NDP do not believe that the Harper government is going to move to expand coverage to a suitable level. Therefore, we believe there is an important role to be played by the provincial government in greatly expanding workplace pension coverage.

The Ontario retirement plan is the next topic. The NDP believes that Ontario should move ahead, as are other provinces, and develop an employment-based pension plan for all working Ontarians who presently lack occupational coverage. The NDP has proposed just such a plan. We are calling our plan the Ontario retirement plan. Before I get into the specifics of how such a plan would work, I’d like to talk a bit about the benefits of the Ontario retirement plan.

First, and most obviously, the Ontario retirement plan would deal with the roughly 65% of Ontarians who presently have no workplace-based pension coverage.

Second, in an Ontario retirement plan, the band of income that the contribution rate would be assessed against would be different from that of the current CPP. A broader band of income would allow for a higher benefit for plan members earning over \$47,000. This responds to exactly the kind of replacement-rate issues that the pension expert Bob Baldwin identified in his report to the Minister of Finance, which was tabled in Whitehorse in December 2009.

Third, an Ontario retirement plan would be used to further the consolidation of a fragmented workplace-based pension plan and system. For example, Ontario has over 6,500 workplace plans. Many of them are very

small. Many of these might elect to integrate into a large Ontario plan which has as its base two thirds of the Ontario workforce.

Fourth, an Ontario retirement plan could allow for the transfer of an RRSP which could be used to purchase past service credits for the basic benefits. This would allow older workers who would not ordinarily be able to earn the full benefit to receive more than they otherwise would.

An Ontario retirement plan would be a publicly run, targeted benefit plan, much like the Ontario teachers’ plan, the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan and the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Pension Plan. In order to maximize participation, every employee not enrolled in a workplace pension plan would be automatically enrolled in the Ontario retirement plan. But the plan is not mandatory. If you have a better way to plan for your retirement, you don’t have to take part in the Ontario retirement plan. If, as your life changes, you decide that the Ontario plan is something you can use, you can opt back in.

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Employees and employers would be expected to contribute equally to the plan. Contribution rates for employees should be phased in over a five-year period. Depending upon economic circumstances, a somewhat longer phase-in might be required for employers. Unlike a defined contribution plan or a group RRSP, the assets of the plan would be invested for the plan as a whole, not on an individual basis. The result is far more security for plan members.

The maximum benefit would be between \$600 and \$700 a month in 2010 dollars. Now, that amount may not seem like a lot to people, but I’ll tell you that that \$600 to \$700 a month could be the difference between an elderly person being forced out of their home; that \$600 or \$700 could pay for their hydro and utility bills and maybe even some food, and the rest of their meagre income could be used for their everyday needs. I think that \$700 a month would make a big difference to a lot of people in my riding, considering that 20% of them are living below the poverty level.

Because many current members of the workforce would not have sufficient years in the plan to receive the maximum benefit, plan members would be able to increase their normal benefit through a retroactive purchase of past service credits. In the new world of work, people are increasingly mobile. Many will work a number of jobs in their lifetime. We can choose to let them sink or swim, or we can step in with sensible solutions like the NDP Ontario retirement plan that will make their lives better. So that’s the coverage issue.

But Harry Arthurs also came up with a number of good suggestions regarding strengthening the existing pension system. First, the NDP supports the Arthurs recommendation for establishing an Ontario pension agency. We believe that pooling, administering, investing and disbursing stranded pensions would be an important role for this agency. In our opinion, an Ontario pension agency

would pretty much solve the problem that Nortel pensioners face. Nortel, AbitibiBowater and Canwest Global Communications could all benefit from an Ontario pension agency.

This agency would be able to take stranded pensions and treat them like an ongoing, active pension. Rather than winding up the plan, the agency would be very proactive, endeavouring to grow the plan to ensure a monthly pension closer to what a retiree expected before the plan became stranded or abandoned. I believe Quebec did that, and it's been very successful. Maybe—just maybe—we should follow suit.

Second, the \$1,000 of monthly pension benefits eligible for protection by the pension benefits guarantee fund is completely inadequate. We believe that over time, the monthly guarantee covered by the PBGF should be increased to a maximum of \$2,500, to reflect the effect of inflation on the original maximum of \$1,000, which has been in place since 1980. I believe Mr. Arthurs recommended this to the government in his plan. After our discussions with him—we had a meeting with him, and we in the NDP suggested that \$2,500 would be a good mark, and it sounds like he took our advice. I wish the government would do that, but I haven't heard anything about increasing the PBGF to \$2,500. In fact, that's not even mentioned. This is probably the main thing that would solve some of the problems of people in Ontario.

Pensioners and people who have lost their pensions, people who are going to lose their pensions and people's pension funds that are underfunded—it will not give them adequate money for what they've worked their life for. These are deferred wages that were negotiated by a lot of these people in contracts. Also, people without unions were hoping that this would cover them, and it didn't. Now they're saying, "Sorry, you're out of luck. The best we can do is up to \$1,000."

So if a person was entitled to \$3,500, that he worked for all his life and that the company put into the pension plan for him, thinking full well that he was going to get that at the end of his life, what happened? They pulled the rug out from underneath all these people. A lot of these companies have left the country: "Sorry, we don't have enough money to put in the fund. Sorry about your luck." Now you're 70 or 75 years old, and a steady income that has allowed you to stay in your home, take the odd trip, and buy gifts for your kids and grandkids has been removed.

While the NDP agrees that the basis on which the levy will be paid by plan sponsors is a complex matter and that a phase-in period may be necessary, we are extremely disappointed that this key Arthurs recommendation is nowhere to be seen in the first package of pension reform in this legislation.

Third, the NDP believes the existing grow-in rights that provide access to early retirement benefits for all qualifying single-employer pension plan members in the event of a full or partial windup should be extended to all such members who are involuntarily terminated. Qualifying members should continue to be those whose age and

years of service add up to 55. We believe that it would increase equity and reduce the number of disputes about full or partial windups. I know there has been some progress on the grow-in rights issue in this package, but we also have some concerns about how it's being implemented in Bill 236.

Speaker, we should get somebody to turn down the heat in this place; it's like a sauna in here.

Fourth, the NDP supports the Arthurs recommendation that all active plan members should be immediately vested for all accrued pension benefits. As you know, as things now stand, if an employee moves on before two years is up, he or she loses their employer contribution to their pension plan. This is something we should have changed years ago, and we are glad that the government is finally putting this in as part of the present package they are offering.

But we also have real concerns with the package. I'm really looking forward to the public hearings on this very technical bill. Here are some of the NDP's initial concerns:

We are very concerned with the changes in surplus distribution on windups. This change in the act is a significant loss of entitlement for plan members. Currently, section 79 requires both, and there has been agreement for surplus distribution and that the employer entitlement to surplus must be established. We acknowledge that there has been difficulty in the application of this section of the act, but we still believe this wording makes things much, much worse. There would have been a greater basis for this change if the government had followed the Arthurs recommendation on vesting and grow-in rights, and if the PBGF recommendation for an increase of \$2,500 a month were implemented. Only the vesting and grow-in recommendations were implemented in this bill; the PBGF recommendation was totally ignored. This is not the delicate balance Harry Arthurs wanted. Putting it bluntly, the NDP believes that the surplus should only go to employers on windup if the employer has clear entitlement to the surplus. That has been another question over the years that has cropped up. We will oppose this provision as things stand now.

The NDP also has some problems regarding the transfer provisions. Transfer between plans needs to be made as simple and transparent as possible. The basic principle of preservation of benefits and commuted value is necessary to ensure fairness and impartiality. Individual choice needs to be preserved in this bill.

There are a number of problems with the way asset transfers are addressed in the act currently. Most significantly, current provisions require the predecessor and successor plans to provide the same benefits, and individuals are not given any choice with respect to their transfers. As a matter of principle, the legislation should incorporate individual choice as reciprocal agreements do now, so that plan members can make a decision, based on full information, to stay in the original plan or move on to the successor plan. The proposed changes to the act remove the requirement that benefits be identical. How-

ever, individual members still have no choice with respect to transfers.

In addition, in the private sector, the interest of the original employer in an asset transfer for past service is questionable. In the public sector, large, independently administered plans generally deal with voluntary transfers under a major Ontario pension plans reciprocal agreement that requires no employer expenditure of time or resources. We believe that this reciprocal agreement provides a better model for transfers in the public sector than the proposed agreements between the original and successor employers.

0930

Last summer, I toured Ontario to ask the people what they needed in pension reform. The result of these consultations is the NDP's Ontario retirement plan. That is what Ontarians told us they need. They also told us that the PBGF is outdated and needs to reflect the current financial situation of pensioners.

There are some useful sections of this bill, but it is a technical bill. It doesn't address the major concerns of Ontario pensioners, nor does it provide the security that our future pensioners need.

I encourage the government to take our suggestions under careful consideration and make the necessary amendments to this legislation to provide the best protection for people from Ontario. We also encourage you to implement the NDP's Ontario retirement plan now so that 65% of Ontarians can look forward to a decent, livable retirement.

I don't have a lot of faith in the fact that the federal government is going to give us all the answers we require. There have been some pie-in-the-sky requests—doubling the CPP, doing these things. I have a strong feeling that that won't be doubled. If it is, it will take many, many years before that happens. It'll be a slow implementation. Every little bit helps—I won't argue that—but we need an Ontario pension plan to supplement the CPP, to supplement old age, so that people in this province are not punished because they live longer, are not punished because they had contributed their whole life to the tax system in this province. They had, with honour, negotiated contracts which would provide them, from their employer, with the proper money instead of taking raises at the time, instead of taking money up front. They negotiated the deferred wages. It went to their pension so that their pension would be there for them when they retired.

As we all know, as we get older, things start going wrong. You start getting medical problems. You start getting financial problems because you haven't had a raise or you don't have the ability to get a raise because you're on a fixed income.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker: I've travelled my constituency. I can't speak for other members. In reference to the condition some of these elderly people are living in, frankly, it's a disgrace. Some of these people worked their whole lives and are eating peanut butter, are living in, I would say, less-than-good conditions as far as—they

can't even afford furniture. They can't afford cleaning services. They're struggling. Some of them are crippled. Some of them are unable to take care of themselves. The hygiene is questionable at best in a lot of cases. This is totally unacceptable. In this province, with this much wealth, in this country, our elderly and our pensioners deserve better, much better.

I think that this Ontario plan would provide them with some—it wouldn't solve all the problems, but it would definitely improve their lives to a point where they might be able to stay in their residence with a little dignity, a little bit of comfort, and not have to rely on their grandkids to help them out, because that's not what they intended. They intended to help their grandparents and their parents stand up for themselves, and their grandparents provided them with the education and taught them the ways so that they could move on and not have to worry about them when they're starting their own families. Well, that's not the case.

A lot of elderly people are, not by their own wish, being forced to move in with their grandkids or their kids because they can't afford to stay on their own. It's a shame. People in this province have worked long and hard to build some kind of security for themselves, and they have to be forced with these kinds of conditions. I see it all the time. I see it every day—people coming into my office. How do I explain—even a young mother coming in with two kids, with nowhere to go, nowhere to live and can't feed her kids.

Then I see a government spending \$1.5 million or \$2 million a day on consultants on one file—the e-file—\$388 million on one file. If we take the 20 agencies that they want to have accountability for, the major ones—WSIB and all the other ones that they want to have a forensic audit for—I think this would be a fair estimate—I'm sure you're talking about hundreds of millions of dollars, maybe billions of dollars, that have gone out for consultants in the last few years—hundreds of millions; billions.

I'll tell you what I could do with that in Hamilton. I'll tell you what I could do for the people of Ontario. I could tell you that I wouldn't be laying off nurses. I'll tell you: The health system and education system would be in better shape—not perfect, but better shape. It's amazing—amazing—that the Ontario government has direct or indirect control over 368 agencies or municipalities in this province—368. So they're going to investigate 20. They're going to investigate 20 agencies out of 368. So if you found \$388 million of questionable spending and not a lot of bang for your buck on one agency called eHealth, if you take the other 19 major ones, I think that'll add up to quite a considerable amount. But if you take the other 340 agencies and municipalities in this province that are controlled by the Ontario government, I think you're going to see that it's going to be mind-boggling. Actually, it'll make Bernie Madoff look like an amateur. It really does. I think he was \$50 billion. I don't even want to think about it. I'm sure it'll unfold over the next few years, all the waste of money.

But getting back to my original statement, how do I explain to a mother with two kids who comes into my office with nowhere to live, who can't put food on the table and can't get a job? What do I tell these people when they read in the paper about all the shenanigans that go on and the waste of money? No wonder some people have a poor attitude toward politicians. I can see it. I can see it. I can see it. I guess I'm a little naive to come here and think that—when I first got here, the Premier stood up in the House and said, "All the new members, welcome to Queen's Park. We're going to work together to better the lives of the people of Ontario."

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He meant that.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, I've had real trouble understanding that statement, because I know for one thing he sure doesn't work with me on committees. I'm sure he doesn't work with our party. He doesn't work with the opposition.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I heard you got invited to the Super Bowl party.

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, yeah, I wish.

All I know is that you can stand up and put on the show for the public, but when the gloves come off, you're nowhere. You're out of the ring; you're out of the arena. So don't tell me that line. Don't stand up here and say these kinds of things in front of the people of Ontario. Because I want them to know, if they realized what goes on, there'd be a lot of unhappy Ontarians—and they probably are already. I really cannot believe what goes on. My eyes have been opened, and I have trouble sleeping now because of what I see goes on. If I've got bags under my eyes, you'll know why. It's really unbelievable, what goes on.

I guess I could go on and on about my unhappiness as to what goes on in this House and what goes on at committee level. I could go on forever. When I first got here, my Bill 6, which was to help people who were losing their severance, losing their holiday pay and losing all this—I was fortunate enough. I guess it was like a lottery: You get to pick your order on the order paper. I got number 1 and I was thrilled. I came into the House and I actually thought Mr. McGuinty, when he stood up, meant what he said, because it passed second reading. That's good for the people of Ontario. They all stood up and everybody was happy, I thought, and my party was congratulating me and saying, "Yay. Good job, Paul. You got that past second reading. We've never been able to do that." I said, "That's good." Well, guess what? It fell. It fell at committee. All the Liberals voted against it. It fell. The Conservatives and the NDP voted for it. It fell dead—dead in the water. It's still sitting there. I said, "You might as well just put that bill in the washroom." It's absolutely ridiculous.

0940

They talk a good game, but when it comes to actually doing something, they wait till the roof's caving in or there are 3,000 people in front of this building yelling at them before they'll do anything. And when they finally do it? "Oh, we're great. We're wonderful. We thought of

this all by ourselves." Nonsense, absolute nonsense. They don't listen to any good suggestions from the opposition or the third party, they just do whatever they want, and when they get there, they claim victory and how wonderful they are. Well, people, I'll tell you, the blinds should be taken off by the people of Ontario to really see what goes on and who's being productive and who's doing their homework, because it isn't them.

I'll end now—I could have gone on forever about this—but I think it says a lot. Once again, I challenge the government to listen to some good advice from the opposition and the third party, from people who just might have some good ideas to add to this pension reform. But most likely, they will do whatever they want and not listen, and we'll find ourselves in another pickle in about three years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I appreciate the comments from the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek—he's always entertaining—but I appreciate also the amount of passion he brings to this file and this bill in particular. The background that he brought concerning his discussions with the federal government—I understand his frustration on that.

I've had the opportunity over the past year, since I was elected, to meet a number of seniors' groups. I've talked to seniors' groups in Fenelon Falls, Omemee and, most recently, in the hamlet of Glen Alda in the northeast corner of my riding. They've all expressed concerns about pensions, about living and going forward as we go through the next few years.

We know that our seniors population is growing—a number of us are approaching that ourselves and will be entering that area—and the concern about pensions is great. I know the current global downturn has had a significant impact on Ontario families and businesses. The government has been taking very proactive steps to ensure that when the economy returns, we will be well-positioned to lead the rest of the world in recovery.

We've provided support for low-income seniors, doubled the property tax support. We've been working on PST rebates, which will kick in this summer, and the tax cuts are coming forward. But that's why we've introduced the Pension Benefits Amendment Act. It is to get protection for our seniors. They've spent their whole lives getting to the point where they deserve to have a secure retirement, and I believe that this bill moves a lot towards getting there.

I'm very pleased that we're participating in the broader national discussion about improving the Canada retirement income system in this regard. I know that Minister Duncan, with his provincial counterparts, recently attended in Whitehorse to deal with this national problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek on Bill 236, the first of the govern-

ment's pension bills. I know he referred to the Arthurs report quite a bit in his comments. He talked a bit about the NDP plan to create a sort of supplemental pension system. Just briefly speaking about that, I would say, ideally, a supplemental system should be national, not provincial. I know the NDP plan is kind of modeled after what's happening in the UK, the system that's been created by the Personal Accounts Delivery Authority, which is called NEST, which stands for National Employment Savings Trust. That is in the UK, a national program. So ideally, I think that is a better solution. I don't necessarily think it needs to be government-run.

I do like the idea of auto-enrolment, and I note there are others, including the Association of Canadian Pension Management, who support having auto-enrolment. In fact, they say expanding coverage should be job number one, getting more coverage for more people. Expanding coverage basically means getting more people involved with direct contribution plans. One way to do that is to have auto-enrolment systems. You could have an auto-enrolment system—I know that in the United States, they've brought about changes nationally to encourage more participation in defined contribution pensions and retirement savings. They've done it on a national basis there.

Many of the changes necessary are or should be national. As was mentioned at the outset, this bill is tinkering around the edges with some of the minor changes involved in pension legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was a pleasure to listen to my colleague's comment on Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

I think there is no doubt in anybody's mind that our elder years need to be well-protected. We need to be able to guarantee to the seniors of this province that they will be able to retire with dignity and with respect. The best way to do this is to have a defined benefit pension plan.

I can tell you that right now in my riding, there is a seven-month-old strike. One of the main issues of why all those more than 3,000 workers are on strike is they want to protect their defined benefit pension plan. The company, Vale Inco, has offered to change to a defined contribution. It is one of the three main issues that are keeping those more than 3,000 people on strike.

Because we've had a defined benefit pension plan for years in Sudbury, there is an entire generation—I would even say there are two generations of workers in Sudbury who are able to retire with dignity and respect. My 89-year-old father-in-law is an Inco retiree. He gets his little pension cheque. It's not a whole lot because he retired many, many years ago, but it gives them the certainty. They know that this little cheque is coming every month. They can plan, they moved into an apartment they can afford, and they do things that they're able to afford because they have the certainty of this. That gives them peace of mind. That gives them happiness. This is something that is worth protecting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I'm delighted to be able to participate in this debate this morning. This debate of the pension act has been an issue that I've been looking at for many years, ever since I got elected here at Queen's Park.

Let me tell you, I can't believe those people could live on the seniors' pension plan. Even though today there are a lot of people who have a pension plan, there's no protection for them, like we see happening at the present time with Nortel and with different companies. Even with the car industry at the present time, there are some doubts there.

Let me tell you, way back in the mid-1920s, only a few companies and the public sector had this coverage or this protection of the employees. Today we only have about 30% of workers who are covered with a pension plan. Those who paid toward a pension plan who do not have protection—I say "protection" definitely, because we know what's going on.

But the McGuinty government said in March 2009 that we will take care of this, and we are. That's exactly what we are doing today. We want to protect our employees, we want to protect our employers, and the government of Ontario has a major role to play in this bill. This is why today, the McGuinty government will introduce a temporary solvency funding relief program to protect jobs and families.

We have worked to simplify pension division when a marriage ends. We have initiated the first-ever actuarial study to examine the future of the pension benefits guarantee fund.

This is, again, a very good bill and I hope the three parties will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has up to two minutes for his response.

0950

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the members for their comments, and I'm quite pleased they went rather easy on me after my outburst, which was warranted, but it must be "Be nice to members week."

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's Kindness Week; that's right. I appreciate the kindness of the members.

However, I must say that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell made a point that back in the 1920s there were few pension plans, and in the 1940s, when unions were formed and things started happening, they started getting defined pension plans. That was a good thing. But it shouldn't take 80 years to set up a pension plan for Ontarians. They should have done it after World War II. Maybe they should have started thinking about protecting pension plans instead of waiting until the economy falls apart, waiting until there's 5,000 people standing in front of Queen's Park or waiting until all the companies are leaving Canada and Ontario, and the erosion of our base industries—I could go on

forever about the decline. To talk about history is okay, I guess, for information, but it does absolutely nothing to fix this situation.

If you look at this bill, there is absolutely no money attached to this bill—zero. It's technical and administrative changes. Sure, there's accountability in there, but not a cent is going towards the PGB fund. If you want real results, if you want to really help the people and pensioners in Ontario, don't talk about flair and administrative changes and say, "We care," and "We feel for you." Let's get the cheques out there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is good to be back in the Legislature, and as my lovely other half was saying to me as I was going back, "I'm sure you'll enjoy being around your playmates again."

I'd just like to begin by congratulating a truly outstanding member of this Legislature on a new position: my colleague from Peterborough, who is the new government whip. He is one of the hardest-working and most effective members of this Legislature. It's awfully hard not to be a Peterborough Petes fan when Jeff Leal is sitting near you.

My colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek referred to, and let's use his words, "an outburst." You get to know your colleagues sometimes in different ways. My colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is one of my defencemen when we play hockey. This is a hard-working guy who came up the hard way, and when he talks about retirement, like many of us in the Legislature, he's looking at retirement and thinking, "Those days are now a lot closer to me than my 40s were," and you think to yourself: "What exactly have we done?"

He asked a rhetorical question, and wondered why after World War II we hadn't thought of protecting pension plans. That gave me cause to think as he was saying those words because it occurs to me that in the time I was growing up, you'd be sitting there, in the 1960s and even the early 1970s, and you'd be reading your newspaper and there would be somebody's obituary with a picture of him or her and a listing of their life's accomplishments, and it would say, "So-and-so passed away on such-and-such a date surrounded by friends and family. He lived to the ripe old age of 72." And that wasn't uncommon. Yet today, the baby boom generation, of which I'm one, begins to turn 65 next year. That's an interesting thing to think about. The biggest demographic bulge in North American history is just going to begin to hit retirement age, or what used to be considered retirement age, next year, in 2011. And I'm sure there's a lot of people out there who are looking at that and thinking to themselves, "My goodness. That's me."

As we move into retirement, as that big demographic bulge begins to drop out of the workforce, we're looking at an age in and around the middle of the century in which for every retired person there'll only be about one person in the workforce. That tells us, as legislators, that it's very important for us to do our work properly, be-

cause it's the work we do here that's going to determine whether or not the men and women who have worked hard, who have taken the torch passed to them by the generation that fought the second of the great wars of the 20th century and have built the peace—when we retire, do we intend to be a burden on the generation that comes behind us? Clearly, we don't. And very clearly, for those of us who are in good health and active as we move through our 50s, our late 50s, our early 60s—we're in much better shape than people were a generation and two generations ago. We're going to live longer. That makes it incumbent on us in government to make provisions for our seniors and those who will become our seniors, to ensure that we have a chance to live a life in comfort and dignity and to do it by being responsible from the vantage point of how we set aside our own money and what our government does with our tax money.

That's a lot of the impetus behind this bill. This is a bill that does something that—I think I can ascribe the quote to the first American President, George Washington, who said, "If I had four hours to chop down a cherry tree, I'd probably spend the first two or three hours sharpening my axe." That is part of what is going on in this bill here.

What the bill says is that we're going to take the time and the process to do this job correctly. What we don't want to have to do is engage in a knee-jerk reaction or panic, because at this point we don't have to panic, but we are going to get it right. At this juncture of time, we're going to act with the best knowledge that we have and the best thinking that we have and lay the foundation for a long-term, sustainable, responsible means of providing for the men and women who are retired now and those who will retire in the generation to come. We have to do that in the light of a global economic downturn which, in one way or another, has governed almost everything that our government and other provincial governments and the federal government have done for most of the last two years.

That's the impetus behind this act, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act. It implements long-term reforms to strengthen the pension system for Ontarians and, most importantly, to increase Ontario's competitiveness.

If one looks at other jurisdictions, you think to yourself, "Okay, western Canada: What drives the economy? Natural resources." What's our natural resource in Ontario? Agreed, we have forest resources, we have rich minerals in our ground, but our real, true natural resource here in the province of Ontario is the people who live here. When companies come here and set up high-value jobs, they're looking for raw materials, not in the ground, not in the Great Lakes, not in our forests. They are looking for them in our secondary institutions; they're looking for them in our universities. So what we do to ensure that good-quality people come here, work here and stay here governs the degree to which we're going to prosper here in Ontario. That's part of what this Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2009, aims to achieve.

What are the principles behind it?

The easiest one is transparency, ensuring that mechanisms are in place for stakeholder feedback and also for posting proposed regulatory changes. You've got to know what's coming up, and that's one of the things this Pension Benefits Amendment Act is going to implement.

Another is balance. We've got to consider both benefit security and also plan affordability. We can't have one without the other, and I think just about everybody will look at it and agree with that.

There has to be co-operation. We've got to collaborate productively between our federal and provincial partners. I believe my good friend and colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka said, and I'll use his own words, that many of the changes should be national, and that's true. Each and every province is going to have to work with our federal government, and that is regardless of who is running the show in any province or who is in power at the federal level, because we're looking at a series of measures that are going to be implemented over a fairly extensive period of time. So we've got to co-operate, and co-operate productively, among the provinces and with the federal government.

1000

That includes harmonizing our rules with other jurisdictions wherever possible so that if you decide for whatever reason that, after a career spent working in Ontario, you're going to live in Victoria or retire in Atlantic Canada, you shouldn't have to go there and find that all of the things that you did are done completely differently in another jurisdiction. Harmonizing those rules is something that ensures that, as a Canadian, if you pack up and move to another region in Ontario or another province in Canada, your pension and its benefits will still make sense and still apply to you there. That's one of the things that this legislation does.

Another is clarity. One of the things that any pension benefit proposal needs is clear, user-friendly rules. Let's give the insurance industry, whom we love to beat up on in this particular Legislature, a little bit of credit in recent years for trying to rewrite a lot of their policies in clear, simple, understandable English. For those companies that do it, good on you. For those that don't, look at the best practices of your competitors. If, as a consumer, I'm looking at two comparatively equal pension agreements, and I can read and understand one, and I can't the other, I'm probably going to go with the one that I can read and understand.

Another is going to be coverage. One of the things that my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek touched upon—and I think it's a very good point—is that we've got to ensure we expand pension coverage for Ontarians. The benefits should strive to be universal, strive to be fair and strive to apply to everyone everywhere in Ontario. That's going to be one of the objectives of this legislation and how we go about applying it in the workforce.

Another is going to be competitiveness. In the long run, Ontario companies have to grasp that, just like anywhere else in the world, the people who work for them, their greatest asset, are not pieces of machinery that they

can put on the junk pile after they leave. Their responsibility is to treat the human beings who dedicate their careers to working for them with dignity after they've left. Similarly, our companies have to remain competitive in world markets, in the way that they provide for their people and in the way that they maintain their cost structures in a global world where you can buy just about anything, anytime, anywhere at something like a comparable price.

Finally, one of the principles guiding this legislation is going to be flexibility. We know what happened yesterday. We know what happened in decades past. We can probably take a fairly decent guess at what's going to happen in the next year and the next two years, but we're not sure what's going to happen in the next five years or the next decade or what the world is going to look like in the 2020s, the 2030s and beyond. One of the things in designing legislation today that's still going to be in force decades from now is ensuring that it's flexible. That's one of the principal goals of the Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

Since March 2009, Ontario has actually taken a number of very important steps to modernize our employment pension system. In the some of the time remaining to me, I'd just like to quickly cover a few of those.

The province introduced a temporary solvency funding relief program, which is designed to protect jobs and families. The overriding concern that Ontario has as we emerge from this particular recession is jobs. This is a measure that does protect jobs.

The province also worked to simplify pension division when a marriage ends. "Till death do us part," is what we pledge at the moment of marriage. God willing, many and most of us will in fact live out those vows, but things happen. When a marriage does end, one of the goals of this legislation and legislation passed by the province last year has got to be the simplification of pension division.

Ontario initiated the first ever actuarial study to examine the future of the pension benefits guarantee fund. This is a very important measure, because the pension benefits guarantee fund hadn't been properly funded, and the actuarial study had to look at what is necessary to ensure that the pension benefits guarantee fund, which is the rainy-day fund if a pension should end up in peril through circumstances that certainly no one foresaw at the time that the pension got going and people were contributing to it—how do we deal with a pension that has gotten into trouble? That's a very important part, and that actually got under way last year.

The province has also established an advisory council on pensions and retirement income. We need to know, to the limit of our ability to foresee the future, what people need in the future. What is their future likely to look like? How will society, technology and other jurisdictions evolve forward so that the legislation that we craft here is to the limit of our ability as legislators—because I'm not speaking in partisan terms here; this is something that all three parties are trying to get right and trying to make work for all 13 million of us, who are all one extended

Ontario family when it comes to looking after one another in our elderly years.

Finally, Ontario is participating in a broader national discussion about improving Canada's retirement income system. This has been something that our Premier has pushed very hard for in the Council of the Federation, which are the meetings of provincial Premiers. In this regard, our Minister of Finance recently met with his provincial counterparts in Whitehorse, where they had some productive discussions about the future of pensions for all Canadians. We plan to continue these discussions this summer.

On that note, I think I'll wind it up for today. I thank you very much for the time to discuss something that's very important to me, to the generation of my parents and to my entire baby-boom generation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the speech from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville on the pension bill, Bill 236.

In his speech, he talked about the concern with—I don't know his exact words, but the burden on future generations, on our kids or grandchildren. I would say to the member that rich public sector pensions are a concern for being a burden for future generations. However, also, the \$25-billion deficit that this government is facing right now is a very obvious burden on future generations. The fact that the McGuinty government is on pace to double the debt of the province of Ontario by 2012 is a very clear burden on future generations in this province. It's something that the government has not tackled satisfactorily to this point.

Another point: When we look at the public sector pensions—I think I'll refer to my comments yesterday—one of the experts talked about public sector pensions where 34% of wages are going towards the value of that pension and how that is not balanced with the fact that those people who don't have these defined benefit pension plans can only put 18% of their wages toward an RRSP. It's just not a balanced situation right now, and that's something that needs to be rectified.

It's not necessarily a provincial responsibility. It would involve changing the tax laws, perhaps, instead of just 18% of pay for those trying to contribute to an RRSP or other system, allowing no limit, but a lifetime limit on what you can put towards your retirement income.

There is a lot that needs to happen in pensions. As I've mentioned previously, quite a bit of it is at the national level. I'm still concerned about the unique features that make us unique in Ontario, so we aren't having a harmonized system, particularly the grow-in part of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for his kind words on our hockey prowess. He made some good points about doing it right and taking your time to do it right. I think that's important also because this is a major undertaking in the

last—well, I guess in the last 30 or 40 years, nothing has been done to improve the situation, like the governments taking a good, hard look at pensions throughout Ontario, and Canada, for that matter.

1010

Once again, if you can do window dressing and say that we're going to tighten up the rules, we're going to tighten up the regulations, we're going to tighten up the accountability, that's good; that's all good stuff. But I get very frustrated about the financial aspect of it, and as the member from Parry Sound pointed out, with a \$25-billion or \$26-billion deficit, it's difficult to commit funds to the pension guarantee fund. That could create a problem, and the only answer, the real answer to the people's dilemma in this province, is financial restitution. That's the only way to solve their problems out there in the real world. You can talk about a perfect scenario, you can talk about improving a situation from an administrative point of view, but as we all know, money talks and you know what else happens. So until you actually are committing to improve the fund that exists now or to create a new Ontario pension plan, I don't really think the results that you're going to get are going to be sufficient.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to be commenting on the comments made by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

I've been hearing this debate and the speech earlier from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, and I heard comments yesterday as well on this very important issue. Clearly, pensions are a very complicated issue, and I think the complexity of the issue is even more highlighted because of the economic downturn. That theme has come up a few times, and a point I made yesterday when participating in this debate—and I think it's still very much valid—was that what we need to do in Canada is take a national approach to this issue. We need to have a bigger dialogue as to the future of pensions, both in the public pension system and the private pension system in Canada. I don't think any one province really can accomplish much. It would result in a piecemeal solution, maybe short term in scope, and what we really need to do, moving forward—we owe it to our seniors, we owe it to my generation and the future generation—is to come up with ideas and plans which are national in scope. That's why it's extremely important that all provinces, including the federal government, sit down together and look at the issues around pensions.

We have Canadians who have pension plans, but we have a majority of Canadians who don't have a pension plan. We need to make sure that we have a system in place which covers both, not to mention that we have to look at the affordability of the system as well. It's important to talk about pensions, how they should be defined and how they should operate and work; it's a whole different thing as to how we are going to pay for them.

That issue is even more highlighted in today's economic circumstances, and we cannot forget that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to take part in the debate this morning on pension reform and to comment on the speech that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville delivered a few minutes ago.

One thing he mentioned—and the radar went up quickly when he talked about how we didn't want the government or our generation of people to be a burden on our children and our grandchildren. I just immediately thought of the \$25-billion deficit, and that's last year's deficit. In the current year, we're looking at a new budget sometime, I believe, in March. It will be very interesting to see what the projected deficit is for this year. If it's \$25 billion this year, you know that it's going to be at least \$22 billion, \$23 billion, \$24 billion next year. So by the end of this term, we'll likely have accumulated another \$75 or \$80 billion onto the provincial debt, and you think that's not going to be a burden on our children and grandchildren?

I think that debt is even more important than pension reform. I would love to see governments actually come and deliver balanced budgets. I know this government went completely crazy when they took over in 2003, and they found that after a summer of SARS, the blackout and mad cow—all those sorts of things were happening—that there was actually a deficit at that time. They made it out to be \$5.6 billion. However, they went crazy over that. Now they've made Bob Rae look like an economic genius because he had an \$11-billion deficit, and now we're at \$25 billion and counting. Good God, what's going to happen to this province if we keep going down this path of mismanagement?

Those were my comments on pension reform, but I would be happy to take part in the 20-minute rotation later on and speak a little more on debt and pension reform.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Mississauga–Streetsville has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaking to the comments by two of those who provided comments to me, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member for Simcoe North, both of them slammed public sector pensions. Let's remind them that in the last days of a Premier that I very much admired, Bill Davis—whom I get to see in Brampton every now and then—the Ontario public service had 105,000 employees. Today it's 65,000, and that number is headed for 62,000. We, in Ontario, have the lowest per capita number of public servants anywhere in the country, and I don't think that we're going to be throwing out public sector employees any more than our government plans to throw out private sector employees in a panicked attempt to balance a budget, because we have a plan. We have a plan that's going to create some 600,000 new jobs, that is going to attract \$47-billion worth of new investment, \$7 billion of which has already

walked into the province, and raise average annual incomes by something like 8.8%. We're going to work that plan because it's the right plan for Ontario and it's the plan that has been justifiably called Ontario-friendly. That's going to be the key to Ontario to continue to thrive and prosper in the years that come.

To my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I'll say much the same thing: A deficit that was brought about by a global economic financial collapse that began outside Ontario is not going to end by what we do or don't do in Ontario. That's not going to cause Ontario to panic and to abandon our seniors, because this is a good plan and it's a good forward-looking plan. I think my colleague from Ottawa Centre has the right solution when he says we should take a national approach to pension reform. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being past 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce Ellard Beaven, father of Amy Beaven, who is here as a page, and all the way up from Timmins to watch his daughter today.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome Paul Di Ianni in the members' gallery, who is an OLIP intern in my office. Welcome.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to take the opportunity, on behalf of page Matthew Kostuch from Dr. Roberta Bondar Public School in Ajax, to welcome his father, Jim Kostuch, and his grandfather, Mitch Kostuch, who are watching from the public gallery today.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'd like to introduce John Jansen, who is the health and safety inspector for district 12 of the Toronto secondary teachers' bargaining unit and a constituent in Willowdale. Welcome, John.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. What test do you apply when you override decisions of bureaucrats and political appointees at LHINs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll refer this to the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I actually want to return to a question that was asked yesterday regarding Barry Monaghan and the drive-by smear by the Leader of the Opposition. I think it's important for members of this House to actually know the truth.

Before taking on the position of the CEO of the Toronto Central LHIN, Mr. Monaghan was the president and CEO of West Park Healthcare Centre for 18 years. Before that, he was the CEO of the Orthopaedic and Arthritic Hospital for five years. He was the chair of the pediatric Cardiac Care Network of Ontario and is also a past chair of the Ontario stroke strategy. Under the Conservative government, Mr. Monaghan served as chair of the Cardiac Care Network for seven years.

The member opposite dismissed him as a Liberal friend. We did a donation search, and the only time—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable member that it's important to—stop the clock, please. The question that was asked pertained to an issue that was asked today and not answering a question from yesterday. So I would ask the member to deal with the question that is asked as of today.

Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: In January, the Premier said that bureaucrats at the Niagara LHIN advised him to close the emergency rooms at Fort Erie and Port Colborne. During the Toronto Centre by-election, Minister Matthews said that Grace hospital's future lies with the LHIN, but just a day later, the Premier showed he'll interfere when it's politically convenient. He swooped in to help the member from Winnipeg by handing out \$15 million to Grace hospital on the day before voting began in the by-election.

Premier, why didn't you step in to save the emergency services at Fort Erie and Port Colborne?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member that we refer to members by their riding names—and riding names here in the province of Ontario.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the question is about LHINs, so let me just complete on Barry Monaghan. We did a search. You referred to him—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just reminded the honourable member that she's answering a question that was asked yesterday in this chamber. I would like the minister to deal with the question that is asked within the chamber today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to Toronto Grace hospital, I can assure you that we have always supported the services at Toronto Grace hospital. They provide an extraordinary and very special service for people, some of whom are quite vulnerable.

It seems to me that actually all parties agreed that the services should remain at the Grace. I was very pleased to meet with members of the Salvation Army and talk to them about how we could continue to provide services at the Grace. It is a very special place. It needs a little bit of help, and I think all parties agreed that it was the right thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: No one would question the merits of supporting the Grace hospital. Of course we all

recognize that they provide exemplary service. But the Premier's defence of Courtyard contracts and exorbitant bureaucrat salaries at the LHINs shows he's not about to give up the farce that LHINs operate at arm's length.

Two days ago, you said that these LHINs are an effort to ensure that decisions about health investments are being made by the local community. But the vice-chair of Grace hospital gets it. He was quoted as saying, "Thank God for by-elections." Even the minister admitted to the media on the night of the by-election that your office responded to political pressure. So why did you take \$15 million away from Fort Erie and Port Colborne and hand it to the member from Toronto Centre's by-election campaign?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Not one hospital has been closed under our watch. And trust me, we would not have started with Toronto Grace, because of its very special place in the health care that is provided here. I deeply regret that the NDP candidate in that by-election chose to make a political issue of it, created a phony issue. The patients at the hospital, the staff at the hospital, the family members, had to deal with anxiety that was a complete fabrication of the NDP candidate.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. On Boxing Day, Reilly Anzovino was in a car accident. Despite the heroic efforts of first responders, Reilly died before she even reached the Welland Hospital, even though the Fort Erie and Port Colborne hospitals were closer. In 2008, your government closed emergency room services at Fort Erie and Port Colborne. Premier, do you regret that decision?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The first thing I want to do, of course, is express condolences to the family. As a mother, I cannot imagine the loss they are feeling, and I sincerely express that sympathy to them.

We are building a health care system in Ontario where every person in Ontario has access to the very best possible care as close to home as possible. Having said that, the reality is that sometimes people will have to travel to another community to be able to access the highly specialized care that is part of today's health care system. I think people understand that we cannot provide highly specialized care in every community hospital. When it comes to emergency care, it's vitally important, absolutely essential, that people get to where that specialized care is available as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: In 2008, the McGuinty Liberals directed the Niagara LHIN to cut \$50 million in services. This resulted in the closure of emergency services in Fort Erie and Port Colborne. The Liberal member for Niagara Falls believes this decision had an impact on this tragedy.

Reilly's father, Tim Anzovino, grew up with our leader. He and Reilly's mother asked us to call on you for

a coroner's inquest into their daughter's death. Will you respect their wishes and ask the coroner to examine whether the closure of the emergency room departments in Fort Erie and Port Colborne played a role in this tragedy?

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite understands that calling an inquest is not a decision that is made by members of government. It's a decision made by the coroner.

I do want to emphasize that in the case of trauma, it is absolutely essential that the victim gets to the best possible place as quickly as possible, without stopping first at a hospital that is not able to provide the care that's required in that emergency.

We asked Dr. Jack Kitts of the Ottawa Hospital to take a look at the situation in Niagara. I've read his report carefully and I would urge members of the opposition to do the same. It's a very thoughtful report on why the changes are the right changes.

I'm going to quote from Dr. Kitts: "Critically ill patients would best be served by direct transport to a definitive treatment centre."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: What adds to this tragedy is that after the Premier ordered the LHIN to cut \$15 million, he handed \$15 million to the Toronto Central LHIN the day before the by-election began.

This is a tragedy that even a member of your own caucus believes resulted from the decision to close emergency services in the region.

The Premier used to call for coroners' inquests on a regular basis when he was in opposition. He has ducked responsibility in this chamber with respect to this question today by deflecting it to the Minister of Health. But it's time to start asking yourselves the tough questions. Will you start leading the call for a coroner's inquest into the death of Reilly Anzovino?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have actually ended the political influence when it comes to coroners' reports, and that's the way it should be.

What I can tell the member opposite is that we will cooperate in every way possible if the coroner chooses to investigate. The Niagara Health System has made the same offer.

I think it's important that the member opposite understands that all of us want to understand what happened in this situation. We do leave it to the coroner to make the professional judgment on an inquest.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier insists that his short-sighted cuts to front-line health services haven't impacted patient care. I'd just like to ask him if he would like to take a little time this morning to once again repeat that claim.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is nothing if not consistent—and wrong—on this particular

issue. She continues to maintain that we have made cuts to our health care system and to hospitals in particular. That is absolutely wrong. It is without foundation in fact. Every single year, we have increased funding for health care generally and hospitals specifically. During the course of the past six years, it's gone up some 42%. We think that it's significant. We think it is important. We think it's in keeping with the priorities and the values of the people of Ontario.

Again, in the upcoming budget, notwithstanding our difficult economic circumstances, we will find a way to once again invest still more money in our treasured and precious health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to take this opportunity to read the Premier a letter that I received recently from a Hamilton man whose surgery had been cancelled:

"Although it is not necessary to correct a life-threatening situation, [my operation] is necessary for the condition to be treated ... before it progresses to a point where more invasive or aggressive treatments are required...."

"Why have we been paying more to the Ontario government by way of the 'Ontario health premium' only to have less service than ever before?"

It's a good question. Will the Premier answer it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I want to sympathize with the individual involved and all of our families that are affected by illness and disease and looking to get treated at the earliest possible opportunity.

But I do want to correct the record. The fact is that we have, for the first time, measured wait times and we can now demonstrate that our wait times are actually getting shorter.

We have more nurses and doctors, and more Ontarians who have now become attached to or have access to a family doctor. We're exploring new opportunities—the first of its kind in North America, for example, when it comes to having nurse-practitioner-led clinics. And we're funding more drugs than ever before.

So I think, by any objective measure, we continue to do more for health care in order to do more for Ontario families, and they are benefiting from the progress we're making together.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While the Premier insists that patients aren't affected, patients continue to disagree, and hospitals are siding with patients.

In their response, Hamilton Health Sciences wrote: "Even though we're recognized as one of the most efficient hospitals in the province, we have been forced to make some changes that will impact patient care.... In 2010-11, we will do 1,200 fewer surgical procedures."

Why does the Premier insist that patient care isn't affected when hospitals state, and I quote again, "We have been forced to make some changes that ... impact patient care"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm glad that my colleague corrected herself, and I understand that the hospitals are, in fact, making some changes. Hospitals are required to make changes on an ongoing basis as they adjust to patient demand and other things that influence their activities.

Something else I want to say that I didn't mention before, insofar as the progress that we're making together with Ontarians: We have in place now these new family health teams. I think we have 150. We're going all the way up to 200. There is a network of nine family health teams in Hamilton, consisting of more than 130 doctors who have hired more than 100 new health care professionals serving almost a quarter-million Hamiltonians, including more than 8,000 who previously did not have a family doctor.

There is always more work to be done, but, again, any objective assessment will tell you that we continue to make progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, 1,200 fewer surgical procedures certainly is nothing for this government to brag about, but nonetheless, back to the Premier.

The Premier continues to claim that patients are not being affected, but we keep hearing from patients who are. Marita Devries, a cancer patient in London, may lose the cancer care nurses who provide her support: "Until your own family is touched by cancer, you do not understand how valuable these dedicated professionals are to the health care system."

This patient says she is being affected. Is she wrong?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate that my honourable colleague is going to want to raise individual cases. That's probably fairly within her responsibilities. I can't speak to the individual cases, but I can speak to you about the general progress that we make, and I want to talk just a little bit about wait times.

Angiographies down by 63%—that's 35 days; angioplasties down 14 days; cataract surgery wait times reduced by 208 days; hip replacements in Ontario down by 195 days; knee replacements down by 263 days; CT scans down by 39 days; cancer surgery is down by 23 days; MRI scans down by 13 days; general surgeries down by 21 days; pediatric surgery is down by 21 days.

Those are objective. They're measurable. They have been measured. They're transparent. We are making progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Doctors are also raising concerns. Dr. Alan Drummond is a spokesperson for the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians. After the closures of ERs in Fort Erie and Port Colborne, he's sounding the alarm bells: "Let's not make health care decisions based on budgetary constraints within regional health authorities."

I ask the Premier again: Why are emergency room doctors raising concerns if patients aren't being affected?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to take this opportunity to thank all of our health care partners—the doctors, the nurses, the health care support workers, the pharmacists and everyone. They have, I would argue, a very heavy responsibility to express their opinion and demonstrate their judgment on a daily basis about what's going on in their own particular circumstances. But our responsibility in government is to keep an eye on the big picture, and the big picture is to ensure that there is always a sufficient level of funding available for our hospitals, particularly for our doctors and our nurses.

I think we can argue objectively, again, that the salaries have gone up, that funding levels have gone up, that there's more technology than ever before and access to more drugs than ever before. We're building hospitals like never before, expanding existing hospitals like never before and building cancer care clinics like never before. All of those are objective, and in the grand scheme of things we continue to make real progress.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This recession was not caused by Ontario families. Ontario families didn't drive Ontario into a deficit, and Ontario families didn't choose to give away billions of dollars to Bay Street in tax cuts. But this Premier has made that choice. Now he's asking the people of this province to pay more for health services. Instead of investing that money in their health care, he is giving it away.

Why does the Premier keep putting the health care of Ontario families last?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Of course I'm going to disagree with my honourable colleague. I want to remind her about the \$10 billion in tax cuts for people.

I also want to take umbrage with what my colleague says about families. Of course they want us to continue to find ways to invest in their health care. They want us to maintain the quality of services that we're providing to them today. But at the same time, they want us to take into account what has happened to our economy, to our revenue base. They want to ensure that we put in place a plan that addresses our deficit. They want to ensure that we don't burden their children and their grandchildren with a deficit for which we should have taken responsibility.

So we're going to, through the budget, continue to find that responsible balance, one that is informed by the values of Ontarians and that will ensure we continue to invest in important programs like education and health care and, at the same time, begin to address the deficit.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: My question is for the Premier. Recent media reports quote members of the Liberal caucus saying that morale over there is lower than a garter snake in a puddle on a backcountry road. I'm not

saying that came from the member from Niagara Falls, but no one would blame him if it did.

You, Premier, have handed out to a foreign country billions of dollars, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to settle embarrassing lawsuits, used \$15 million to help elect the member from Winnipeg, and they're offering millions more to help your candidate in Ottawa–West Nepean.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I do not need any help from the armchair Speakers on the government side.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. I'd just remind the honourable member of the warning I provided to the honourable member from Whitby–Oshawa. We refer to members who are here in this chamber.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Did you really think that taking \$15 million from emergency services in the member for Niagara Falls's riding wouldn't matter to the safety of that community?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to take this opportunity to speak to what is fundamentally an important issue. It's part of a bit of trickery in which my colleagues opposite are engaged.

The member for Toronto Centre, newly elected, spent some time outside the province of Ontario in another Canadian province. I think there are members in all our parties who have spent some time in another province and who are now representing Ontarians in our province. More than that, I think there are members in this Legislature who have spent a bit of time in another country before living in our province and representing people.

If they have something against people living in other provinces or something against people living in other countries, they should have the guts to stand up and say that. We're open to all Ontarians. We don't care where they come from. They are representing Ontarians here, and we're proud of that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean–Carleton should be in her seat, as she knows.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will come to order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: "Outsiders not welcome."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance and Minister of Economic Development.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: One day I hope to see a question answered in this Legislature.

The decision to rob \$15 million from the Niagara Health System says a lot about how little you care about listening to your own caucus, or maybe unelected political staff in your office is telling you that the member for Niagara Falls didn't try hard enough to see you. But recent Toronto Star reports suggest he's not alone in

feeling like Dalton McGuinty has left him on the outside. Several members of the Liberal caucus must be taking note of how Dalton McGuinty picks winners and losers.

What does it take for you to admit you made a mistake in forcing Fort Erie and Port Colborne to close their emergency rooms?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would be very proud, and I will be proud, to put our record up against the Conservative government's record when it comes to health care. I recall those days when they closed hospitals. I recall the day when they closed hospitals in my riding. I think Ontarians recall those days very well—not fondly, but they certainly recall those days.

I think they understand the experience they're living when it comes to their health care today: more hospitals, more health care, more doctors, more nurses, more family health teams, more nurse-practitioner-led clinics, more medical school spaces, more drugs, more technology, more of everything for Ontario families when it comes to their health care.

RETIREMENT HOMES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. The Ottawa Citizen reported this week on the needless death of an elderly woman let down by a system that should have been able to care for her but didn't. This woman was transferred to an unregulated for-profit retirement home in spite of her complex medical needs. New Democrats, health care workers, experts in the field and now the Ontario chief coroner have called for the regulation of retirement homes.

After years of broken promises, is the Premier finally willing to protect Ontario's frail and elderly and create a strong system of regulation for retirement homes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the minister responsible for seniors' issues.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Thanks for the question. I am proud to now be the minister responsible for seniors. It's an area of intense interest, obviously, to all members of the Legislature.

We have made a commitment to regulate retirement homes. We've had a fair bit of consultation across the province. I think we've made the statement that we will be introducing legislation in the spring session. We are on track to do that. It will make sure that we have the proper balance to protect residents of retirement homes and to ensure that they are adequately regulated.

The matter that I think she's talking about is also very much a health care matter, and retirement homes will not be the only part of the solution to the issue that she has raised.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, you did make a promise. That was in 2006. Yes, you did do extensive consultation. That was also in 2006.

In November 2008 I asked, "When are the regulations going to come out?" Let me quote what the minister responsible for seniors' issues said at the time: "We will

announce in months ahead, and the member will be pleased with the outcome of the work and discussion.” That was in 2008.

In 2009, I asked the same question again and got fed the same answer that the regulation was coming. Meanwhile we have people dying. You’ll have to excuse me if “the regulation is coming” is not the answer we want. We want action now.

How many more times will I have to stand in this House and ask before this government takes action and creates a province-wide regulatory system to protect the frail and elderly in retirement homes?

1100

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Again, I would hope that the member would listen carefully to my answer. What I said was that the solution to the problem that she is talking about may not rest with retirement home legislation; it may rest with ensuring that we have in place the proper procedures for when individuals are released from a hospital to another facility. The issue that she is talking about does require addressing; I just repeat that it may not be that it is in retirement home legislation that the solution to that problem rests. It may be that, in terms of the solution, it is how our other health care facilities deal with release of individuals.

The Minister of Health, I know, is aware of these issues. We’ll work together to find those solutions. I just repeat: It may not rest in retirement home legislation—

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

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, yesterday I was pleased to see Bill 242 introduced in the Legislature as Ontario moves toward implementing full-day learning for four- and five-year olds. It is clear that enhancing the earliest years of a child’s education will pay dividends far into the future. In our competitive global economy we need to prepare the most educated and skilled workers that we can, and full-day learning will begin to prepare our youngest pupils for the challenges ahead. The extended-day portion of the proposed act is also good for working parents who want to know that their children will be well looked after and have quality educational programming.

Minister, as this is a major undertaking in our education system, can you tell us how this program will be implemented across Ontario and when we will see our four- and five-year-olds in a full-day program?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We are very proud, as a government, to make this commitment to four- and five-year-old students in the province of Ontario. As has been identified, when we provide full-day learning it does enable students to be more successful in reading, writing and math. When they are more successful in those early years they will be more successful throughout school and more likely to graduate. We are providing the well-educated workforce for the new economy.

What I can also say is that we have worked very closely with school boards across Ontario. They have identified for us those schools in their communities that have the capacity, where we can begin to roll this program out and where the need is most important. We are looking forward to, in the days ahead, the excitement that’s going to come in our communities when four- and five-year-olds can—

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Minister, it is clear that this is the right policy for strengthening our education system and enhancing our future workforce, but this policy also helps children from families who are in high-need communities right across this province. We, as a government, have committed ourselves to a poverty reduction strategy in Ontario, and the introduction of full-day learning for our youngest students will assist parents and children who struggle every day for a better life.

In my riding of Ottawa Centre there are neighbourhoods that could clearly really benefit from this program. I’m hopeful that this kind of programming for kids and families will go a long way to undermining poverty in a meaningful way. Minister, can you tell us how this policy will help those in high-need communities across the province and what this program will mean for those in need in my community of Ottawa Centre when it is implemented?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: There’s a great deal of excitement about this announcement and there are many questions about it, so I do appreciate the member, who is focused on the needs of his riding.

As he has indicated, poverty reduction is going to be impacted by this investment. We know that more than one half of the phase one schools are in areas where local boards have identified that there are high needs. In the member’s riding, actually, I am able to say that there are two schools that have been identified: Cambridge Street Community Public School and W.E. Gowling Public School. They are located in high-need areas. We thank the boards and we look forward to continuing to work with boards as we roll this very important initiative out.

Parents want this. This is good for our kids and this is good for our economy going forward. This is an investment in our future. We are absolutely committed to it and it will be successful because of the partner—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. I appreciated his comments earlier about those of us from different parts of the country.

What are you afraid Ontario families will learn from a public inquiry into eHealth, an auditor’s review of the Samsung deal, and a coroner’s inquest into the tragic death of Reilly Anzovino?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure I caught a question there, but I did hear reference to the word "Samsung."

I just want to reiterate how important this new industry is that we are building together here in Ontario, and that is green energy, energy from renewable sources: the wind, the sun, biomass and the like.

We have just secured the largest investment of its kind in the world, and it's happening here in Ontario. It will lead to 16,000 jobs, four manufacturing plants and 2,500 megawatts of clean, renewable, green energy. Most importantly, it's going to give us the capacity to export our products—wind turbines, solar panels and the like—south of the border to a burgeoning green industry in the United States of America. We're going to position ourselves as the leading green-energy cluster in North America, ready to meet that capacity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. McGuinty knows who got rich off the untendered contracts in the eHealth scandal, because he did the deals. He knows the secret details of his mother-of-all-untendered-contracts to Samsung. And he had a hand in cutting the emergency services from Port Colborne and Fort Erie.

We have been the ones calling for a public inquiry into eHealth. We've called for the auditor's review of the Samsung deal. We have called for the coroner's inquest. The only thing standing in the way of all these accountability measures is Dalton McGuinty. What makes you think you are going to get away with it?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague very much supports the new rules that we have put in place. They require that expense claim information for all cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, political staff and senior management within the Ontario public service be posted online on the government's website.

What the Minister of Government Services has asked of the leader of the official opposition is his agreement to also post online the expense claim information of the official opposition's office. We're wondering: If we agree to this transparency and accountability, why won't they as well?

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, I congratulate you and I hope it's the job you really wanted.

Ten of the province's largest school boards have asked you to change the way special education is funded. There are still 36,000 elementary and 4,800 secondary students waiting for special education services. The boards have asked for a timely, transparent process to address growing demands, demands that the Liberal government has so far disregarded. What is your government going to do to clear up this growing mess?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Ensuring that we have adequate resources to meet the needs of our students in

schools who have been identified with special needs has been a priority for this government. I can say that, and I can also say that we have increased funding for special education in our schools since coming to government—

Hon. James J. Bradley: How much?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Thirty-nine per cent. So I think that demonstrates very clearly that we do want to continue to work with boards.

When we arrived, there was a funding formula that was not working effectively. Now we have a special education funding model. There are five components in the way the support for special education is delivered to schools. We will continue to work with boards to understand how we can improve the direction of those dollars. But I do think it's fair to say—

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

1110

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I say that there are 36,000 students waiting for services at the elementary level and close to 5,000 at the secondary level waiting for services. Your answer is, "We've increased funding by 39%." It doesn't jive; it doesn't make any sense.

According to the senior superintendent of special education at the Toronto District School Board, "The province's funding model underestimates the count of special needs students and the complexity of their needs." The Peel board claims that a shortfall in terms of special education can leave students waiting for months for special education assessment—in some cases, years. This problem is but one example of your ministry's indifference to the needs of Ontario students.

You promised a review in 2003, and then you re-promised that review in 2010. Will you tell us when this much-needed review will actually take place?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I think is very important for the people of Ontario to understand is that we have increased support for special education by 39%, and we have done that in the face of declining enrolment. Our commitment to our special education students is actually very firm.

I would also say to the honourable member, with respect to how those dollars are delivered, that the former parliamentary assistant on this file, the member from Guelph, did a consultation with all of our partners in education on the grants for student needs. The grants for student needs are the vehicle that delivers dollars to school boards to support students. We have had some very good consultations. I am in the process of reviewing that feedback at this time.

Since coming to government, we have continually improved the—

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

AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the new Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I

want to congratulate the member from Huron–Bruce. I know she'll do a great job for Ontario's farmers.

I know, Minister, that as one of your first official duties, you attended the federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers' meeting, which was held here in Toronto. These meetings, of course, are an excellent opportunity for ministers from across Canada to discuss the opportunities and the challenges that are faced by our farmers.

Minister, as the agriculture and agri-food industry is the second-largest economic driver in this province and for most of our rural ridings the primary driver, could you tell the House what issues you raised on behalf of Ontario's farmers in order to ensure the long-term future and the economic viability of this very important sector?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you for the question. I just wanted to share with the House how proud I am to be the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. It really is a proud day for me.

This meeting was an important opportunity for me, as the new minister, to meet with my federal and provincial colleagues. The FPT meetings allow for discussion of the key issues facing agriculture and food sectors in a national context. The meetings provided an opportunity to review progress on the key commitments that were made in 2009 at the annual ministers' conference, specifically relating to the strategic review of the business risk management programs and national initiatives such as food safety and traceability.

My priority was to ensure that the national BRM strategic review moves forward aggressively. Ontario farmers are dissatisfied with the suite of programs that are available to them, and I made that clear to my federal, provincial and territorial colleagues—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Minister, I know that you've been pushing for a national business risk management strategic review since before becoming minister, and it's certainly something that Ontario farmers have been asking their federal members for.

I'm also aware that you've been asking our farmers to support your efforts to push the federal government to come to the table as partners, and that has been consistently brought up to me as I've gone from farm meeting to farm meeting this winter, so I know it is a priority for the farmers of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and for all Ontario farmers.

Farmers have been telling me the same thing they have told you; that is, they are dissatisfied with parts of the existing suite of programs. They say it's not working for them, and they don't want to wait until 2013 for that review.

Minister, I understand that you presented the Ontario agriculture stability coalition's proposal at the FPT meeting. Can you share with us how that was received and what the next steps will be?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I did raise the fact that Ontario has already started a dialogue with our provincial produc-

ers in relation to the business risk management strategic review under way. I want to reinforce the need to address the producers' concerns. They want complexity, bankability and predictability in the programs, and the suite of programs, quite frankly, doesn't meet that test any longer.

The coalition of Ontario stakeholders has developed a draft proposal which I presented at the FPT meeting, and I expect that that proposal will be considered as the national review process moves forward by the national government.

The federal government laid out the next step of the review specifically targeted toward business risk management, on which I am thoroughly speaking out and saying, "Get engaged. Provide your input. This is your opportunity."

I encourage all Ontario producers to participate. I expect that the dialogue we have started will continue, and I look forward to participating in the—

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

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Education. As you know, bullying remains a very serious issue and a frequent occurrence in our schools. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, approximately one third of students are bullied and almost one third have indicated that they have bullied others. So today I've introduced a resolution for debate, calling on the Ontario government to officially recognize the third week of each November as bullying awareness and prevention week.

I ask you today, can we count on—can I count on—your support for our resolution?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Of course you can.

I think it's important for everyone in this House to understand that we all come here for the same reason. I agree with the honourable member that any time and every time we can act co-operatively to address very important issues like bullying, particularly in our schools, I think you have the goodwill of everyone in this place.

I would also like to say that the honourable member would be aware that on February 1 of this year, the keeping our kids safe at school act came into effect, and as part of that we now require at schools that parents of students who have been victims of bullying must now be recognized. It requires, as well, that school staff work directly with all—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much, Minister. I know that the families who are gathered in the gallery today, who appeared at a press conference with me to share their stories, will be pleased to hear that you are prepared to support the recognition of the third week in November as raising the awareness of bullying and focusing our efforts on preventing it.

I ask you: Can we all then be assured that Ontario schools will officially recognize this week, the third week of November, this year, in 2010?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's also important to remember and recognize the good work that has been going on in our schools by our schoolteachers and all members of staff to address the very serious issue of bullying. They very much have appreciated the regulations that have come to assist them and support them to deal with these important issues.

I want to say in this Legislature as well that we are providing professional development around this very important piece of work: training for 7,500 principals and 25,000 teachers. We do want to make very clear the statement to parents and to students who come to our schools that it must be a safe place for them to be. We are going to do everything in our power to ensure that the information around our commitment and the processes that will protect children—

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

1120

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. As employees at the Brockville Mental Health Centre are handed layoff notices, we know there are plans to transfer a 24-bed acute care unit from the mental health centre to Brockville General Hospital. There is just one problem. The hospital's president says there is a \$1.5-million shortfall to make the transition actually work.

Given this Premier's penchant for by-election bailouts, can the citizens of Brockville expect a cheque from the government soon, or is this by-election race not quite close enough to warrant another 11th-hour spending spree to keep vital services where they're needed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I met with the now Senator Runciman shortly before he left this place to go to the place of eternal love about issues facing us in Brockville and I committed to him that we would look carefully at the proposals that he had laid out for us.

What I can tell you is, when it comes to hospital funding, our hospital partners are doing really tough work right now. We've asked them to take on some challenges, and they're working closely with the LHINs. They're going through their budgets line by line, trying to find places where they can actually save some money so we can reinvest that in better patient care.

We've increased hospital funding by 42% since we were elected in 2003. This year alone, we increased hospital funding by almost—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In a community where health sector layoffs are widespread and the future of the mental health centre remains in doubt, people are rightfully worried when they hear that an acute care unit is to be

transferred and then find out that there's not even enough money in the bank to actually do it.

A government spokesperson told reporters a few days ago that the Ministry of Health is committed to a "smooth transition" of the acute care unit. If the government's "smooth transition" doesn't mean a \$1.5-million cheque will arrive a day before voters go to the polls, can the Premier instead tell us today exactly what his government will do to ensure there will be no cuts to health care services for the people of Brockville?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The leader of the third party has a level of cynicism that I just can't accept.

We're working very hard to protect the progress we've made in health care across this province. There are cases where we do understand that a hospital needs more funding in order to continue to provide the services in that community. This is part of the work we do in the ministry all the time.

The hospital is working with the LHIN. It should not come as news to anyone that we're committed to keeping our health care system strong. These are difficult times. Hospitals are working hard to find the savings without impacting patient care, and that is happening across the province as well as in the great riding of Leeds-Grenville.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, strong transit systems are a key to a vibrant economy. In my riding of Willowdale, a huge number of my constituents rely on public transit to get to work, to school, to visit friends and family, and to take advantage of everything the GTA has to offer.

Our government delivered on a major platform commitment by creating Metrolinx and by tasking it with making it easier for folks to get around the GTA and Hamilton by public transit. This fights congestion. It creates jobs. It helps to build Ontario's economy.

Minister, what is Metrolinx doing to help Ontarians use public transit effectively and efficiently?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member for Willowdale for the question.

Last year, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development estimated that congestion on our roads cost us about \$6 billion. Metrolinx is doing great work to improve transit. This is not an option; this is something that must happen—reduce congestion and get people out of cars and into transit.

I've had the opportunity to meet with Metrolinx leadership on several occasions already, and I look forward to working with them as we implement the plans.

As you know, our \$11.5-billion MoveOntario 2020 funding commitment is the foundation of the Metrolinx regional transit plan. Last year, the Premier announced that we're moving ahead with \$9 billion for priority transit projects, including the York Viva bus rapid transit, Scarborough rapid transit line, Eglinton crosstown light rapid transit and Finch West light rapid transit.

As I said, these aren't optional. These must go forward if we're going to remove the congestion on our roads that both the member from Willowdale—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, my constituents in Willowdale need reliable and affordable public transit, whether they're travelling within Willowdale or trying to get to the downtown Toronto core. Public transit in Toronto is essential to making Toronto a livable and prosperous city, but we know that the challenge is that municipalities are struggling with this \$6-billion cost of congestion. In my opinion, it's critically important that our government continue its investment in support of municipal transportation needs.

Minister, what has this government done to support public transit in Toronto, and more importantly, how will we maintain our level of commitment in these very, very tough economic times?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Despite the tough economic times, we are moving ahead. We estimate that the Metrolinx project will create more than 429,000 jobs over the next 25 years, so it's a significant investment. It goes without saying that I share this keen interest in transit because my constituents are also dependent, as are all of our constituents, on an effective GTA transit system. We've committed \$12 billion to fund transit projects in Toronto. So if we think of Toronto as the hub of those needs, we've already committed that \$12 billion. That includes \$3.5 billion to the city of Toronto and \$8 billion to Metrolinx for projects for rapid transit, as I said, along Eglinton, Scarborough, Finch West and Sheppard East. We've also delivered on our commitment to provide two cents per litre of provincial gas tax. That's something no other government has done, and that's \$164 million a year to the city of Toronto—

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

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: A question to the Premier: Well over 1,000 steelworkers at US Steel in Nanticoke have been laid off and locked out since last March. They've been out in the cold for almost a year now.

My question to you, Premier: Have you or has your minister met with the company? Have you met with the steelworkers? Have you taken any steps whatsoever to save these jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: To the member's question, the Ministry of Labour has an experienced, knowledgeable mediation team that is always there to work with the parties. I mentioned yesterday a labour dispute that is happening—not this one, but I'll speak to this one in particular. My focus and the Ministry of Labour's focus is always to work with the parties so that they can put their differences aside, so that they can come back to the

table and find that common ground where they can get a collective agreement done.

We respect the collective bargaining process. It has worked very well for Ontario. Our labour relations record today is the best it has ever been in 30 years. Over 97% of all collective agreements are done without any work stoppage. But we always encourage the parties to—

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Back to the Premier: I don't think you've done anything. It has been almost a year. Families are being split apart; people are losing their homes. This is a foreign-owned company. Have you met with the federal government? Do you have a policy for primary industry? You haven't met with the mayors of Norfolk, Hamilton and Haldimand. I'll make this very clear: You don't have your mediation team working 24/7 on this one. What have you personally done in the past year to get a thousand steelworkers back to work?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member is wrong. This is an active file, and what I can say is that our mediation team is always looking for ways to assist the parties to get them back to the table, to work through those differences. Unlike the member here who looks at divisive ways of separating groups, we look at bringing them together.

As I said, our labour relations system is one of the best in the world and the mediation team there works as hard as they can to do all that they can to assist the parties. That is the right thing to do. The wrong thing to do is what the member is doing here, and that is dividing the parties, dividing the community. We do not agree.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. It's well-known that Metrolinx has been subjecting residents in west Toronto to deafening pile-driving. In the fall, the pile-driving was condemned by the Canadian Transportation Agency as being unreasonable and having caused undue harm.

1130

Within the last two weeks, a federal court denied Metrolinx leave to appeal the Canadian Transportation Agency's decision. Yesterday we learned that Metrolinx plans to appeal that decision of the federal court.

Why is this agency wasting valuable public dollars to litigate, rather than complying with the CTA ruling?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, let me just say that the member opposite has information that I do not have, because my understanding is that that decision has not been made. But that is, in a way, beside the point.

First of all, I want to say that I have visited the site. I have looked at Hook Avenue. I've looked at the site. I've listened to the pile-driving. I understand that there has been a disruption in people's lives and I'm very sympathetic to that. But that's also why I'm pleased that Metrolinx has complied with the order in terms of shrouding

the piles and using the equipment that is much less disruptive to people's lives.

The point here is that we must complete these projects. We must deal with the congestion that the member from Willowdale was just speaking about. We must move ahead and build the next era of transportation in the GTA. We have to do that. In 25 years, when my—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The fact is that Metrolinx is more interested in dragging this issue through the courts than in dealing with the residents and responding to their complaints.

The solution is clear. The CTA has given them a solution. Metrolinx's pile-driving must use quieter technology. Rob Prichard was in my office promising to do the same, before he turned around and appealed the decision. Why won't the minister intervene to stop Metrolinx from using taxpayers' dollars to fight taxpayers?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me be clear: The decision has not been made. Let me also be clear that the compliance and the mitigation orders have been complied with, and the noise has been reduced.

Let me also be clear: We're talking about hundreds of thousands of jobs. We're talking about jobs that will drive our economy and will create a transit system that will be functional for this region.

In 25 years, when my granddaughter wants to come downtown, I don't want her to say, "Grandma, what were you doing? You were the Minister of Transportation and you didn't push ahead a transit system that works for this region." That's what we have to do.

I would have hoped that the member opposite would have been interested in those jobs, would have been interested in the economic driver, and would have ultimately been interested in a functional transit system for the GTA.

VIOLENCE FAMILIALE

M. Phil McNeely: Ma question est pour la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires.

J'apprécie le travail qu'a fait votre ministère dans toute la province pour soutenir et protéger les femmes et les enfants qui sont victimes de la violence domestique. Pourriez-vous informer cette Assemblée de ce que le gouvernement a fait dans ce domaine, et notamment dans la région de mes commettants?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier mon collègue pour la question. Permettez-moi de vous donner quelques exemples récents.

Notre gouvernement a récemment annoncé un financement de 3 \$ millions à Ottawa pour la Maison Intervalle, pour la construction d'un nouveau refuge. Cela fait partie du plan gouvernemental d'investir 50 \$ millions dans les infrastructures, et avec ceci, nous créerons 450 nouveaux emplois, dont 100 nouveaux emplois dans l'est ontarien.

Nous avons aussi, dans la région de Waterloo, donné 3,5 \$ millions pour Women's Crisis Services. Mon collègue ici qui représente Waterloo a été un fier défenseur de ce groupe. Alors, j'étais très heureuse de pouvoir y participer.

J'aimerais ajouter que hier j'ai eu le bonheur d'annoncer la première maison d'hébergement francophone à Toronto. La province va investir 5,2 \$ millions pour ce refuge qui était demandé depuis trop longtemps.

Ces quelques exemples montrent que la lutte contre la violence domestique était l'une des priorités de notre gouvernement. Nous avons respecté notre promesse et nous continuons de le faire en collaboration avec nos partenaires du secteur.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to recognize the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. She had some guests and we moved quickly through and they didn't get introduced, so I will give her that opportunity.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to recognize the people who joined me for my press conference this morning as we attempted to do everything we could to raise awareness on the prevention of bullying.

I'd like to introduce Katie Neu and her father. She represents Bullying Canada. She was a student in our schools. I'd like to recognize Sunnie McFadden-Curtis from Benchboy Productions, and also, Lesa McDougall from Bluewater Citizens for Education, and her daughter, as well as Karen Cameron from Bluewater Citizens for Education. These are all people who have experienced bullying first-hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to ask members to extend a special welcome to a group of students from Sterling Hall School who are visiting Queen's Park today with their teacher, Mrs. Elizabeth Gray, from that renowned school. And I want to extend a very warm welcome to student Spencer Van Winters, whose father, Kees, made a special point of alerting us to the fact that his son would be in the chamber today, and let me know that he is an aspiring politician as well.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my great pleasure to welcome Councillor Godwin Chan and Councillor David Cohen of Richmond Hill. Councillor David Quinn has been serving our town of Richmond Hill for 22 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity to welcome a good friend of mine, Lori Baldwin-Sands. Lori is an alderman from my home town

of St. Thomas, a very conscientious member of council and a good friend as well. Lori, welcome to Queen's Park today. It's great to have you here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Greg Haskett and Dennis Aarts from Oxford Pork. I appreciate them coming to Queen's Park to reinforce the crisis that our hog producers are facing.

In fact, the decision of the appeal tribunal said, "All parties agree that the Ontario hog production industry is now in a state of crisis, has been in a state of crisis for some time, and seems likely to remain in a state of crisis for the foreseeable future."

These farmers are not the only ones in trouble; fruit, vegetable and beef producers are on the same sinking boat. Current support programs are not working. They are based on average production margins. Put simply, if you make zero, the government will give you exactly the same amount. The McGuinty government response was to quietly reallocate \$82 million from support programs to their own priorities.

Three months ago, I asked the Minister of Agriculture this question: Why would the government pull out its promised money, right when our farmers need it the most? Let's hope the fresh minister has not gotten enough training to break promises yet.

I ask the minister to commit to make sure farmers get every single penny of the \$325 million allocated for support programs.

Ontario needs to adopt a business risk management program for all sectors. There's no time for excuses. The grain and oilseeds program has already proven it works and should be continued today.

I believe our farmers deserve support, and I am hopeful that my colleagues across the floor will realize it too.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: This past November, I had a great opportunity, with some other members of the House, to participate in an event for Local Democracy Week right here at Queen's Park. It's a project that's been designed to ensure that youths recognize that change can be made in their communities through the power of democracy.

Nearly 200 high-school students from Toronto were here at Queen's Park and city hall. The featured program included remarks from Craig Kielburger, co-founder of Free the Children, and other speakers. It also included interactive sessions with politicians, which even involved an entertaining round of political speed dating.

Every election, we hear the news about voter turnout. In particular, we hear that the youngest age group consistently has the lowest turnout. There may be a number of reasons for this, but we also know that young people in our community are participating in many other ways. From organizing environmental committees in their schools, to leading fundraisers to help people recover from tragedies such as the earthquake in Haiti, the young people in our community intend to make a difference.

Local Democracy Week wants to capture these interests of our youth, teach them how democracy can bring about positive change and address the important issues in our community.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the organizers of Local Democracy Week. They organized a great event here at Queen's Park, and I'd encourage all other members to come out to next year's Local Democracy Week.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Norm Miller: We heard this week about the millions of health care dollars that are being diverted away from Ontario patients. Since 2006-07, more than \$176 million has been directed towards salaries and administration at Mr. McGuinty's unelected, unaccountable local health boards. In 2006, there were 40 bureaucrats making \$100,000 or more per year. Three years later, the list of local health integration network, or LHIN, bureaucrats making more than \$100,000 is up 150% to a total of 95, and executive salaries are up 213%.

The Minister of Health may want us to believe that the LHINs make those salary decisions. Her intervention with \$15 million for the Toronto Grace hospital during the Toronto Centre by-election proves that the buck stops with her.

I raised the point of high salaries in the administration of health care with the Minister of Health this week when we met on Tuesday to discuss local health issues. She acknowledged that there is a need to review salaries.

The people of Parry Sound-Muskoka are very concerned that health care funds reach their destination—front-line health care workers and patients. The minister and the McGuinty government must be accountable for those dollars. That's their job.

FRANCES LANKIN

Mr. Michael Prue: This morning, when I got back after question period, there was a press release on my desk to announce that Frances Lankin was stepping down as CEO of the United Way of Toronto. She is stepping down to spend time with her husband and family in the small community of Restoule.

Mr. Norm Miller: In Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, in Parry Sound-Muskoka.

I just wanted to stand today to talk about the remarkable job she has done for the United Way in this city and the region for the last eight and a half years.

I also cast my mind to remember the remarkable job she has done throughout her life, particularly in the last 25 years. This was a woman who started out as a corrections officer, became a union leader, became an MPP, became a cabinet minister, became a leadership contender for the New Democratic Party, and, finally, ended up as CEO of the United Way.

Along the way, she made a remarkable difference to our city, to this Legislature. One of her small, little bills, private member's Bill 44, was to get a third councillor for East York following the megacity, and my community is forever thankful for that bill.

One of the things she did as CEO was to come out with Poverty by Postal Code, so that everyone understands where the poor places are in Toronto and what needs to be done to fix them.

We wish her and her husband, Wayne, much happiness in this new phase of their lives. We thank her from the bottom of our hearts for what she's done to date.

FAMILY LITERACY DAY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: On January 27, Premier Dalton McGuinty and I had the pleasure of visiting St. Valentine Elementary School in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. The reason for our visit was to celebrate Family Literacy Day, which takes place every year on January 27 to encourage families to read and learn together. The Premier and I read a story to the children, and the children, in turn, recited a poem to us.

Family Literacy Day reminds us that when families are doing fun activities together, like singing a song, playing a game, following a recipe or reading a map, they are strengthening their literacy skills. These skills are essential for success at school, work and in life. Reading at an early age lays the foundation for strong literacy skills.

The Ontario government is doing its part to improve literacy by launching full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds in almost 600 schools this September. By making education a priority, we are laying the foundation for a stronger workforce.

I really enjoyed my time at St. Valentine school. The staff and the children were great. I look forward to going back to the school in the future.

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YVONNE MARTIN

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of a truly remarkable woman, Yvonne Martin. Yvonne, a nurse, was on her fourth medical mission to the impoverished country of Haiti. On January 12, 90 minutes after arriving, a devastating earthquake shook the country and destroyed the guesthouse where she was staying.

Although we mourn her death, we remain extremely proud of her life. At her memorial celebration at Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church, a church we both

attended, the following statement was made: "Yvonne's life was a testament to God's enduring gift of love to us."

Yes, no one forced Yvonne to leave the safety of Canada for a medical mission to one of the poorest countries in the world. She had fully earned her retirement after 36 years of caring for patients at the Elmira Medical Clinic. Yet she felt moved by her strong Christian faith to use her nursing skills to help those in need. Yvonne had come to love the people of Haiti, and she was moved to try to improve their lives in the midst of their daily struggles.

Hundreds came out on Wednesday, January 21, to remember and celebrate Yvonne's rich life, faith and family, including her husband, Ron, her three sons and 10 grandchildren, to whom we express our condolences.

Since her death, many tributes have poured in and many articles have been written. An editorial in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record on January 15 perhaps says it best: "Our world needs more Yvonne Martins." How true.

TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to speak about the great town of Richmond Hill. In a report released by the Conference Board of Canada, Richmond Hill has received top grades. The town is only one of six Canadian municipalities to receive an A grade.

Richmond Hill is top of the class when compared to 50 other cities across seven different categories. Richmond Hill has been ranked second overall for the category of innovation—the only one in the GTA. This level of category is the result of our highly skilled residents who have contributed in increasing Richmond Hill's calibre in this category.

The report describes Richmond Hill as "among Canada's most attractive places and tops the field of suburban communities." The report also states that Richmond Hill has become the second-most diverse city in Canada, after Toronto. Also noted is the town's well-educated workforce and the low crime rate.

Please join me in congratulating the town of Richmond Hill's residents, members of the council, represented today here by Councillor David Cohen and Councillor Godwin Chan, the mayor and all of the great public servants who have helped develop the town into not only a great place to live, but also a great place to work and invest.

SHELLEY-ANN BROWN

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: On Tuesday, February 23, Canada's women's bobsled team will compete against the best in the world at the Vancouver Winter Olympics with the objective of a gold medal for the first time. One of those fine athletes is Shelley-Ann Brown of the city of Pickering and my riding of Pickering-Scarborough East. I know that the residents of Pickering are fully and enthusiastically behind Shelley-Ann and are anxiously awaiting the bobsled event.

Shelley-Ann joined the bobsled community on the World Cup circuit three years ago as a brakeman and has made impressive strides in her quest to be at the top of the Olympic podium. Shelley-Ann teamed up with Kaillie Humphries of Calgary and has gone on to finish with a silver at the World Cup event in 2009 at Park City in the USA.

Shelley-Ann is a great athlete who attended the University of Nebraska on a track scholarship and went on to be named the Husker Power Athlete of the Year in 2002 and finished fifth in the 100-metre hurdles at the NCAA Championships in 2003. It was her abilities in track that first attracted the attention of bobsled pilot Suzanne Gavine-Hlady, who convinced Shelley-Ann to go to Calgary and give bobsledding a try. The rest is history, and according to her sister, Frances, "Shelley-Ann's lifelong dream has been to represent Canada at the Olympics. When she joins with her fellow athletes at the opening ceremonies, proudly representing Canada and doing her best to bring home a medal, her dreams will be fulfilled!"

I know that all members of this House join me in wishing the best for Shelley-Ann and all her teammates at the VANOC 2010 Games. Go, Canada. Own the podium.

REUVEN BULKA

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to rise today to congratulate Rabbi Reuven Bulka on the recent announcement that he will be given the keys to the city of Ottawa.

As you know, I rose in this House this week with a member's statement to mark the beginning of Kindness Week, but we would not have been celebrating another highly successful Kindness Week in Ottawa if it were not for Rabbi Bulka, whose enthusiasm and dedication to improving the world around him have enriched so many lives, including my own.

Rabbi Bulka has a distinguished career as a spiritual leader, author, radio host, columnist, TV host and contributor to scholarly journals. He has led the Congregation Machzikei Hadas in Ottawa since 1967 and holds Sunday Night with Rabbi Bulka on CFRA, along with his own television call-in program titled In Good Faith.

A prolific writer, he has published over 30 books and academic articles in the fields of religion, health and psychology throughout his career.

A dedicated grassroots volunteer, Rabbi Bulka is renowned for his tireless commitment to the Ottawa community through his service on countless charitable and civic boards, regular participation in charity events and, of course, spearheading Kindness Week.

Rabbi Bulka is a great man and a true inspiration to us all. Despite his high public profile and busy schedule, he remains very accessible to his congregants and his community at large for support, encouragement, advice, questions or quandaries. I know I've been privileged to have his counsel and support.

To Rabbi Bulka, I congratulate you on your long-standing and distinguished service to our community and your outstanding contribution to our city. I cannot think of a better person to entrust with the keys to our city than you.

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: At the beginning of proceedings, when I extended a welcome to the students from Sterling Hall School, they had not yet arrived in the chamber. I wanted all members to take a look at this class and see how finely dressed they are in their uniforms. I want to welcome them in a special way, and their teacher, Mrs. Gray. Everyone here would recognize Spencer Van Winters, I'm sure. Could we have him—there he is, right there. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Labour concerning US Steel. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HEART MONTH

MOIS DU COEUR

Hon. Margaret R. Best: February is Heart Month. I want to take this opportunity, first of all, to welcome—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member that if you're going to be wearing a scarf that is identifiable, you may want to ask for unanimous consent of the House to wear that scarf.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your direction. I would like to ask your permission and the permission of the House to wear it.

Interjections: Agreed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed. Please continue.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Thank you. I am wearing the Heart and Stroke Foundation scarf for heart.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Mr. David Sculthorpe, the CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and Ms. Nadia Yee to the House today.

I rise in the House today to remind Ontarians that heart disease is growing at an alarming rate. Every year, heart disease and stroke are responsible for one in three deaths in Canada.

For many decades, we have considered heart disease an affliction that mostly affects Caucasian men. This could not be further from the truth. On January 25 of this

year, the Heart and Stroke Foundation released their annual report on Canadians' health. It clearly stated that the face of heart disease has drastically changed due to the addition of several new groups now considered at risk. They include young adults in their 20s and 30s, women between 35 and 45, baby boomers within the 50-to-64-year range, ethnocultural communities and aboriginal peoples.

Mostly to blame for these alarming facts are unhealthy habits and sedentary lifestyles we have adopted in the past two decades.

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The direct impact has caused obesity levels across the age spectrum to soar to dangerously high levels. Many Ontarians are at unhealthy weights. According to the report, our young people are beginning their adult lives with multiple risk factors for heart disease, including obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes. As distressing as this sounds, what is even more tragic is that even today, while many people do understand that heart disease can largely be prevented by taking steps to improve their own health and their children's health, they are not taking those steps.

We must remember that children model their parents, teachers and caregivers. As adults, we have a responsibility to take the lead, to lead by example, and that includes all of us in this House. We should lead by example by being active every day, eating healthy foods, reducing our amount of salt intake, being smoke-free and managing stress. We simply cannot afford to be complacent.

I commend the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario for their research and advice on cardiovascular disease, and I am grateful to count them among our partners in prevention.

The government of Ontario is working with a wide variety of community-based partners, including the Ontario Heart and Stroke Foundation, on several strategies that are focused on priority and disadvantaged populations. Healthy eating and physical activity are priorities for the Ministry of Health Promotion, as is evident with the following initiatives to prevent obesity and heart disease: the healthy communities fund, a province-wide investment for local groups to promote physical activity, healthy eating and healthy living; Ontario's after-school initiative, a new program for children and youth in priority communities that provides supervised programming from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. on physical activity, nutrition and wellness; and also EatRight Ontario, a free service providing nutrition and healthy eating advice from registered dietitians online and by telephone in more than 110 languages.

These initiatives are some key programs for a healthier Ontario. The Ministry of Health Promotion, along with its partners, continue to provide supportive environments and access to education, information and services to assist Ontarians in making informed decisions to change behaviours and live healthier, more active lives.

The phrase "prevention is better than cure" is relevant in more ways than one. It is easier to develop healthy habits than it is to influence and change settled, unhealthy behaviours.

As we are in the midst of cheering on our incredible Olympic athletes in Vancouver, I take this opportunity to wish all our athletes well. I also want to acknowledge our athletes that we fund in the province of Ontario at this time. It is perfect for us to take this opportunity to embrace the passion that our athletes have for healthy living, sport and physical activity. Our Olympians are role models for healthy living; let us all take a lesson from them. Get out, get active. We are what we eat. Eat healthy.

Ontarians, our health is indeed our wealth. It is the most important asset that we have. In this Heart Month, let us celebrate our hearts for one simple and one profound reason: Our lives depend on a healthy heart.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Health Promotion on behalf of my colleague Gerry Martiniuk, who is unable to be with us today. He writes:

"A perfect storm.' Those are the dire words used by the Heart and Stroke Foundation to describe the challenges facing the health of Canadians. According to the foundation's 2010 annual report, a perfect storm of risk factors and demographic changes are coming together to create an unprecedented burden on Canada's fragmented system of cardiovascular care, and no Canadian, young or old, will be left unaffected.

"It's a sad day when the young people of our province are threatened with heart disease.

"This is a warning that we, as leaders of our province, must take seriously and must address through the creation of a strategic plan to meet this challenge and protect the health of our citizens.

"Studies show that the prevalence of childhood obesity has clearly been increasing. We all know that these obese children face an increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and other serious complications. What are we doing to protect these young people from illness? What are we doing to promote healthy eating habits and lifestyles?"—and the minister has reported some of them.

"Heart disease is the second leading cause of death in Canada, preceded only by cancer. A staggering one in three Ontarians suffer from a chronic disease.

"Our party's approach is simple: The prevention of chronic diseases improves outcomes. Prior to 2003, our party revitalized Ontario's anti-tobacco initiative, making it one of the most ambitious tobacco-control programs in Canada at that time. We're proud of the fact that we launched the heart health program, one of the most far-reaching cardiovascular disease prevention programs in North America to date.

"Ontario's lack of electronic patient records causes real concerns in measuring and therefore in managing

chronic disease. Ontario is failing to meet the chronic disease challenge.

“As February is Heart Month, I wish to personally thank the Heart and Stroke Foundation for its commitment to improving the health of Ontarians.”

Locally, in my own riding, we have a Heart and Stroke Foundation luncheon every year, and every year it's a sellout and we have great speakers. This year it was held at the Hawk Ridge Golf and Country Club.

I also wanted to pay recognition to two outstanding teams in our area. Team Glenn Howard are now, for the fifth year in a row, the Ontario curling champions. They barely missed out on qualifying for the Olympics. Team Kevin Martin, of course, won, and they're fighting to be the Olympic champions in curling.

On top of that, I also wanted to pay recognition to a young gentleman, Adam Dixon, from the Midland area, who's on the national Canadian Paralympic team as part of the sledge hockey team and is doing very, very well.

We've had some things happening in this House, and I wanted to bring up the harmonized sales tax, because as we talk about creating a healthy environment and creating opportunities for young people, the first thing we're doing, in a lot of cases, is we're adding this new tax on July 1, another 8%. I think of things like skiing: If you want to take your family out for a day of skiing, what will happen? You're going to pay another 8%. If you want to go to a cross-country ski trail, you'll be paying another 8%. If you want to walk the golf course—walk 18 holes—you'll pay 8% more for your golf membership. Why does the government not get this? If you're talking about trying to eat healthy, if you're trying to—

Mr. Bob Delaney: That's incorrect. That's incorrect.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He can babble on all he wants over there, but the reality is that I'm right on this. The reality is that this is another tax and it's a tax on keeping people healthy. I'm very sorry that he's taking this to be so negative. As I look across at you, I understand what's wrong. You don't get it. You've already swallowed this poison. The reality is that you need to make tax credits for people so they can eat healthy, so they can join a gym and sports organizations, so they can ski and golf and get outside. And what are we doing here? We're adding more taxes. That's a disgrace, when we're taking things like the Heart and Stroke Foundation and taking an opportunity here when we should be looking for resolutions and things for the future. What are we doing in this Legislature? We're adding, coming July 1, another 8% on to everything anybody wants to do in a proactive manner to make their lifestyles healthier.

I do want to congratulate and welcome the members from the Heart and Stroke Foundation here today. But the reality is that I'm trying to put a point across. Maybe you can lobby this government so they can listen to what I'm trying to say. Let's not put an 8% tax on everything. Let's in fact give tax credits for people to join clubs and get memberships to sports organizations, so they can live healthier and eat healthier and not have heart disease.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about Heart Month—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member from Simcoe North, I would ask that you withdraw the comment.

1330

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. It is my pleasure to rise today in this House to speak about Heart Month.

It certainly was nice to hear from the Minister of Health Promotion, and I, for one, wish we could hear her more.

I acknowledge the excellent work of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, health care practitioners, anti-poverty groups, health centres and, of course, individual Ontarians who are all working to lower the incidence of heart disease in this province.

Heart health remains a serious issue across Ontario. We know that every seven minutes, a Canadian dies from a stroke or heart attack. Yes, we have made great progress over the years through research and education, but there's much more to be done.

Studies tell us that cardiovascular disease is unevenly affecting people across the province. We know that in northern Ontario—the constituents I represent—we have a rate of heart disease that is 50% higher than the rest of Ontario, or the people living in the west-central or east-central parts of this province. We also know that Ontarians receiving social assistance have three times the rate of heart disease than people who are not receiving assistance or are of higher incomes. Our First Nations communities also have double the rate of heart disease than people who are not from First Nations. Those differences speak volumes.

The World Health Organization tells us that 90% of type 2 diabetes and 80% of coronary heart disease could be avoided altogether with simple things like good nutrition, regular exercise, elimination of smoking and stress management. We clearly need to understand the role of prevention in heart health and the impact of the social determinants of health. The above statistics should be a wake-up call, if we still needed one. We need to connect the dots between these factors and heart health.

Let us ask for a moment what we are doing here in Ontario to minimize those risks. Have we succeeded in investing in health promotion and disease prevention? The answer is, not really. Are we doing what we can to discourage the use of tobacco? I don't think so. Are we doing enough to support Ontarians to have access to healthy food? Here again, I don't think so. And we still do not have in place proper income supports like a strong anti-poverty strategy—something that would have a tremendous impact on heart health.

But we have the opportunity to bring solutions to the table today. The good news is that the government could take simple steps by bringing forward two private

members' bills that have received the support of this House and are now kind of sitting in limbo. The first is Bill 124, the cigarillo bill, which was co-sponsored by the member from Brant and myself. The second is Bill 156, the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act. Those two bills don't cost the government a cent, but they would help curb this epidemic of heart disease.

In December, 14 months ago, this House voted in favour of Bill 124 to ban the sale of individually sold candy-flavoured cigarillos, which are very popular among young smokers and basically are addicting the next generation of smokers. I was there when it received royal assent—I attended the ceremony—yet the Minister of Health Promotion has failed to this day to enact this law. So any kid with a buck in his pocket can get addicted for life.

Legislators voted in favour of Bill 156, the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act, to force the big chains to post the number of calories on their menus and decrease trans fats in restaurant food. This bill sits in limbo.

On this day, in this month, let us take our responsibility of lowering the incidence of heart disease seriously, get proactive and bring forward these important steps that represent the best opportunity to lower heart disease.

Ça me fait plaisir, monsieur le Président, de célébrer le mois de mars, qui est le mois des maladies cardiaques. On sait tous qu'avec une saine alimentation, une vie active et sans fumée, un poids santé et le contrôle du stress, on peut réduire le risque de maladies cardiaques pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes et nous permettre de vivre une vie plus longue et en santé.

PETITIONS

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank the Rugby Women's Institute for sending this petition to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 2008-09, the Children's Aid Society of Simcoe County ... served 4,356 families and 10,890 children and also conducted 3,159 protection investigations; and

"Whereas the CAS currently has 399 children in their care; and

"Whereas in July 2009 the McGuinty government cut funding to the Simcoe county CAS by 10.4% this" fiscal "year, which is \$5.6 million less than the amount the CAS requires to operate; and

"Whereas, beginning in February 2010, the CAS will have exhausted all of its cash flow allocations, including a \$2-million line of credit, and is now facing decisions on which bills it can now pay, including consideration of payments to the 174 foster homes which have children in their care;

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

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty should immediately review the situation at the Children's Aid Society of Simcoe County and ensure that the province provides for families and children who need critical government support to protect children and families from harm."

I agree with this petition and will sign it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under conditions ...; and

"Whereas by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks' table with page Rachael.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition that's addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I have a few people to thank and acknowledge: the Peel Poverty Action Group, headed by Edna Toth; and particularly Elsie Thompson of Swanhurst Boulevard, who gathered the signatures; and Annie and Mary Giantone, who were kind enough, among others, to have signed it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the population in Peel has tripled from 400,000 residents to 1.2 million between 1980 to present. Human services funding has not kept pace with that growth. Peel receives only one third the per capita social service funding of other Ontario communities; and

"Whereas residents of Peel cannot obtain social services in a timely fashion. Long waiting lists exist for many Peel region service providers ...; and

"Whereas Ontario's Places to Grow legislation predicts substantial future growth, further challenging our already stretched service providers to respond to population growth;

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

"That the province of Ontario allocate social services funding on the basis of population size, population

growth, relevant social indicators and special geographic conditions;

“That the province provide adequate growth funding for social services in Peel region; and

“That Ontario develop, in consultation with high-growth stakeholders, a human services strategy for high-growth regions to complement Ontario’s award-winning Places to Grow strategy.”

It’s an excellent petition. I’m pleased to affix my signature in support of it and to ask page Quinton to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It’s another harmonized sales tax petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in Simcoe North do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the ... blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers.”

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

1340

CEMETERIES

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition that’s addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. On behalf of my seatmate, the very hard-working member for Niagara Falls, I’d like to read it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

On behalf of the member from Niagara Falls, I’m pleased to present this petition and to ask page Julia to carry it for me.

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

“Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we’re not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn’t found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

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

“That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area.”

I agree with this petition and will sign it.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a petition here that was collected by the member for Niagara Falls. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this. I’ll affix my signature and give it to page Amy to carry to the table.

HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the community of Waubaushene in the township of Tay has two entrances off Highway 400, one of which is the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp; and

“Whereas the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp entrance has had numerous accidents, including fatalities, over the past two decades; and

“Whereas the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp entrance is very confusing and awkward for drivers trying to make left-hand turns onto Highway 12 from either Pine Street or the Highway 400 ramp; and

“Whereas the Tay community policing committee and the council of the township of Tay have expressed grave concerns over the safety at the Pine Street-Highway 400 and Highway 12 intersection; and

“Whereas there is a strong feeling in the community that traffic lights at the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp and Highway 12 intersection would save lives;

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

“That the government of Ontario support the Tay community policing committee and the council of the township of Tay and immediately install traffic lights at the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp and Highway 12 intersection.”

I’m pleased to sign my name to this and present it to Matthew to present to the table.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the member for Niagara Falls, who has collected a number of these petitions from residents in downtown Ottawa—the man gets around—I’m pleased to read this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by MPP Kim Craitor.

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

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents;” and it goes on, Speaker, and concludes:

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

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition and to send it to the table with page Brady.

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: “Whereas residents in Simcoe North do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that

will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax ... will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers.”

I’m pleased to sign that and give it to Julian to present to the table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DES PETITS IMMIGRÉS BRITANNIQUES

Mr. Brownell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 241, An Act to proclaim British Home Child Day / Projet de loi 241, Loi proclamant le Jour des petits immigrants britanniques.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Brownell has moved second reading of Bill 241. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jim Brownell: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill 241, an act to proclaim September 28 in each year as British Home Child Day, and to share with my colleagues a story that few Canadians know anything about. It is a story about courage, strength and perseverance. It is a story of Canada’s and Ontario’s British home children.

Between 1869 and 1939, about 100,000 children were sent to Canada from Great Britain, many of them to work as farm labourers and domestics in homes in Ontario and across Canada. These were the British home children, boys and girls anywhere from six months to 18 years of age. They were part of the child immigration movement. Most of them came from orphanages or other institutions, such as the Maryhill Industrial School in Glasgow, Scotland.

For a variety of reasons, the children were sent to Canada, and particularly Ontario, as we were a growing economy and in need of labourers. Officials believed these children would be better off in a new land with fresh air and wide open spaces.

Most of the children were transported by British religious and charitable organizations. For the most part, these organizations believed that they were doing a good and noble thing for the children, who were worse off living in poverty in Great Britain.

In reflecting on the home children of Ontario, we think about the work of Dr. Thomas John Barnardo, the energetic founder of the Barnardo's Homes that placed 30,000 children in Ontario. Hazelbrae in Peterborough, Ontario, was Dr. Barnardo's receiving home for girls. We think of the indomitable Maria Rye, who brought the first group of British children to Canada in 1869 and housed them in a refurbished jail near Niagara-on-the-Lake.

We remember Annie Macpherson's Home, originally opened in Galt, Ontario, in 1871, then moved to Stratford, Ontario, in 1883. Sending some 200 children to Canada each year, she came to Canada every summer to visit her children personally. James Fegan was the founder of Mr. Fegan's Homes for Boys in North Buckinghamshire, England, and in other communities throughout England. He had a distributing centre at 295 George Street here in Toronto.

To my family, William Quarrier is remembered as the founder of the Orphan Homes of Scotland, having sent over 7,000 Scottish children to Canada from Quarriers Village at Bridge of Weir, just outside Glasgow, between 1871 and 1938. It was from Fairknowe Home, Quarrier's receiving house in Brockville, Ontario, that my grandmother, Mary Scott Pearson, and great-aunt, Margaret Scott Pearson, were sent out as domestics in Ontario.

This afternoon, I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature Keith and June McKey. They are here in the east gallery. It was June's mother, Christina Myles, who arrived in Canada as a home child in 1914, and her uncle, James Myles, arriving in 1915. They were sent from Quarrier's home in Scotland to the same home in Brockville, Fairknowe Home, that I alluded to previously.

1350

As for my grandmother, she was just 42 days shy of her 14th birthday when she arrived as an orphan at Halifax, Nova Scotia, aboard the SS Hibernian on September 28, 1891. After spending some time in Cottage 10 in Quarriers Village, her sister Maggie departed from Greenock, Scotland, aboard the SS Pomeranian in 1894. Fortunately for these two young orphans, they were to be reunited in eastern Ontario before Maggie departed with her husband to homestead in Manitoba.

The story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance. Many home children faced adversity. Most were able to overcome it, but it was by no means easy. The British home children faced considerable challenges and some experienced tremendous hardship. They were susceptible to mistreatment because their living conditions were not closely monitored.

Arriving in Ontario with their worldly possessions tucked into little wooden trunks, siblings were often separated upon their arrival and many never saw each other again. This is an important part of the story that deserves to be told.

Their story does not end there. Due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children did endure, and most of them went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contribute immeasurably to the development of Ontario.

While the British home children were underprivileged and suffered from unfortunate circumstances, they endured and almost all of them who came to Canada remained in Canada and, indeed, in Ontario. They grew up to raise families of their own. They contributed to our country's economic growth and prosperity. They helped to cultivate our country's values and defend our country's freedom. More than 10,000 of them fought for Canada in the First and Second World Wars.

In the gallery today, I'm pleased to welcome Sandy Drysdale and his wife, Victoria. Sandy's father, James, was orphaned at the age of 12 when his mother, Susan, a farm worker in the southwest corner of Scotland, died of rheumatic fever in 1926. Of the five orphaned children, the three boys went to Quarrier's home at Bridge of Weir and the two girls went to live with one of their aunts.

In a message to me from Sandy Drysdale, I quote: "My father made the choice to come to Canada and was one of the last groups of British home children to come to Canada. He served in World War II with the Royal Canadian Artillery and, upon the end of the war, returned to Canada to work and contribute to the country we enjoy today."

As well, I welcome Sandra Joyce. Her dad, Robert Joyce, came over to Canada from Quarrier's home in 1925. He was 15 and his brother was 12. Robert worked on farms in the Brockville and Smiths Falls areas, but at the age of 20 he made his way to Toronto, where he enlisted in the Canadian Army and was stationed in both North Africa and Italy in World War II. So those are contributions that they certainly made for our country's freedom.

Canada's British home children are part of our country's history. They are part of our heritage. They represent a part of our past and their descendants represent a part of our future. Their stories are ones that need to be taught in our schools.

In her book *Quarrier's Story*, Anna Magnusson recalls the words of Beth Bruder, whose mother, Catherine McCallum, came to Canada from Quarriers Village at Bridge of Weir. I'm certainly delighted to welcome Beth Bruder in the gallery here today, and I quote Beth's words to Anna Magnusson: "We must remove the stigma that so many children felt in coming to Canada as home children, and we must move to emphasize the positive contribution the children made to Canada."

Today, it is estimated that 12% of Canada's population is made up of British home children and their descendants. That represents more than four million Canadians, and the number continues to grow. Yet, there are many Canadians who still do not know the story of the home children. They are not aware of the hardships that they suffered and the sacrifices that were made. They are not aware of the tremendous contributions that British

home children made to the social and economic fibre of our great province

Many Ontarians are not familiar with the story of acceptance, the desire for home children to be accepted into families and lives of Ontarians. In the epilogue to Kenneth Bagnall's book, *The Little Immigrants: The Orphans Who Came to Canada*, the spirit of acceptance is told. Following the death of Frank McLean of Appin, Ontario, the funeral was held on a terribly cold January day, a few kilometres west of the village of Melbourne, Ontario. Among the pallbearers was a man who became like a son to McLean, Albert Wayling. He was an orphan from Britain, having been placed in Dr. Barnardo's Homes and then sent to Canada.

In heart-wrenching words, Bagnall writes about this orphan boy, now grown into a man: "Now, on this day that was personal and final, he was there because he was a son. Even the affections of the McLeans, so full and sincere, were not always able to dispel his feelings that he was, at times, an outsider. Perhaps Frank McLean sensed that. For on that cold day outside the Baptist church, standing within a family's grieving circle and sharing his sorrow, Albert Wayling, the Barnardo boy, found himself at last where he longed to be."

We, as members of provincial Parliament, have the opportunity to change that lack of knowledge about the contributions to Ontario by the British home children. We can help tell their story. We can proclaim September 28 the day of the British home child in the province of Ontario. We can give Ontarians an opportunity to learn about their past and to collectively recognize the contributions of Ontario's British home children and their descendants.

This year, Canada Post will issue a stamp commemorating home children. As well, the federal government has proclaimed 2010 as the year of the British home child. As I stand in the House today, I certainly encourage all my colleagues in this House to support this bill. In September 2009, I had the great opportunity of travelling to Glasgow, Scotland, to walk in the footsteps of my grandmother and my great-aunt, who were orphans and who were sent, as you heard, to Canada as very, very young—well, my grandmother was not even a teenager yet.

I have to say that the travels I did in Scotland were certainly travels of discovery, travels to hear the story of determination, first of all, and then of perseverance—perseverance with living in the village where, obviously, they were loved and accepted into a community, but then acceptance into Ontario by the communities. It was tough. We've heard stories of how very, very tough it was for these orphans who had been placed in Ontario and throughout Canada.

I think it's time, as we are seeing in Canada, and with Canada Post in recognizing the British home children, that we, as parliamentarians in this House, recognize September 28 as British Home Child Day. As the sponsor of this bill, September 28 is recognized as the day that my grandmother, 42 days shy of her 14th birthday—she

was in her early teens—set foot in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I do not know how she got to Ontario, but I certainly know that she was received at the Fairknowe Home and worked a very hard life in Ontario. I'm very proud to sponsor and support this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to rise today to support the bill that has been introduced by my colleague the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I was quite moved by the personal story that he communicated to us and certainly the lives of these children. I will tell you that until the member brought this bill forward to designate September 28 of each year as British Home Child Day, I was not aware of the fact that these children had come from Britain between 1869 and the late 1940s and settled here in Canada—many of them in Ontario—how they got here and the ages of those children. So I'm very pleased to be able to support this bill. I trust it will be passed today. I'm pleased that the House of Commons in Ottawa has also passed, with unanimous consent, a private member's bill to recognize this year as the Year of the British Home Child, that Canada Post will be issuing a stamp to commemorate the home children, and that Canada's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration plans to include recognition of their story in citizenship ceremonies.

1400

It is certainly a story that, listening to the member today, needs to be told. I think it's another indication of how this country has welcomed so many people from so many countries to our shores today, and it also speaks of the adversity that these children faced. But I think that the overwhelming message is that they overcame the adversity, they overcame the obstacles, they overcame the challenges, and they have had a significant impact on this country, certainly on the institutions and all that we hold so dear. They've contributed to our economy and made a difference in the lives of many people.

I have to tell you that when I took a look at this bill that was introduced by my colleague, I couldn't help but recognize that there are children in all parts of the world. And I recalled the story of my own father, who, shortly after World War I, having been born in Austria, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was left with a father who had been killed during the war and a mother who developed tuberculosis and died. He and his sister were sent to an orphanage in southern Austria. But at that time, there were many, many orphans in Austria as well, and it was decided that these young children would be shipped by cattle cart to Holland. They would work there in much the same way as many of these children did, as labourers in the field, milking the cows. And so, when my dad was seven, he and his sister, who was just a few years older, arrived in Holland. They arrived to work for this farmer and his wife and their children.

You write here about the fact that many of these children felt loneliness and sadness, and I still remember that about my dad at times, that there was a loneliness

and sadness in having been separated from all of your family in Austria. In fact, I will tell you, I've tried to trace our family, but I can't find my roots. I've gone back and we've looked and we can't find them. He was never able to find them, either.

He married my mother, who was Dutch, and they came to Canada in 1951. I would say that that was where my father did find happiness. Living in Canada, we were accepted, just as these children were accepted. They worked hard and, just as these children showed remarkable determination, courage and strength and overcame the obstacles, I would say to you that so did my father.

I saw similarity here, because even today, there are many children who are orphans. Sometimes people are motivated and they think, "Well, maybe if we send these people elsewhere, to another country, it's going to be in their best interest." But I don't think we always take into consideration the consequences of uprooting these children from their roots and their extended families. And children are very resilient, as these children were.

If I take a look at what it is we are proposing to do today, I think in many ways we are not only recognizing these children from Britain who came to this country, but children from all over the world who have been sent to different countries, continuing to today. Look at how so many well-meaning people today think we should uproot the children of Haiti and take them to other countries. Then we stop and ask ourselves: Is that really in the best interests of those children if they still have family there, if that is their country? We have to hesitate and we have to think. So I applaud Mr. Brownell for bringing forward this bill today. I am certainly going to support him.

I just want to congratulate the people in the audience here today who obviously have a history of which they can be proud and have demonstrated courage, resilience and strength. I thank you and I thank those who came before you for the outstanding contribution you've made to Canada. It's our diversity that strengthens us. Your being here, I think, makes this bill real and alive for all of us today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Right off the top, I want to say that of course I'm going to support this bill. I think it's an important initiative. Quite frankly, I didn't know much about this issue at all until I did the research for this bill. I was also absolutely shocked and appalled by this piece of our history. For those who are watching and listening at home, know this: 100,000 children, some as young as four years old, were sent from Great Britain to be indentured servants to do mainly agricultural work, but also to work as servants in homes. Children—child labourers. This went on in Canada until after the war, but it went on until the 1970s. Great Britain was still shipping children out as indentured servants to South Africa and Australia. What I found particularly shocking is that I didn't know about this, and I wondered how many Canadians know about this part of their heritage.

You heard Mr. Brownell say that almost 12% of Canadians are descendants from these little children. I'm

a parent. Can you even begin to imagine a four-year-old getting on a boat and arriving in a stranger's house? One of them described being put with the dogs in a shed and having to eat with the dogs. Another described having to walk to school without shoes. The fact that there was abuse goes without saying. In fact, the estimate of the abuse that happened to these children is as high as two thirds, and is probably realistically much higher.

They were indentured servants; they worked as child labourers. That is not to say that many of the agencies that sent them from Great Britain had, for the time, the best of intentions. They were sending them away from poverty in many instances, but not all. Some of them were sent simply because they were frightened of them growing up in the wrong religion, and some of them—in fact, most of them—were literally sent without permission from their parents, and completely legally so. They were sent, remember, to a foreign country, Canada, where they had no citizenship, no identity, where they had no contact with their parents or grandparents and had to reinvent their histories after they grew up. This is unbelievable. I am shocked that I didn't know this.

Beyond just a day set aside, what I hope comes out of this discussion today is a beginning of a redress, and from the federal government as well. This should be taught in our schools. I see a school here. You should be learning about this: 100,000 children—maybe some of your ancestors—came over as indentured servants working for people, without any identity. Think "slavery." That happened here, and it happened with British children.

When we set the stage to look at what they were escaping from in Britain, of course, that's not pretty either. We should all be aware that in Victorian England, there were no laws of any kind to protect children. Child labour was rife. This is the period we read about in Dickens. This was a period when little children would go to work in factories, they would start before the light came up and come home at 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock at night. In fact, you can read transcripts of the House of Commons in Britain at the time when they began to look at the issue of child labour, and they are terrifying. Remember, we're talking about six-year-olds, sometimes four-year-olds, going to work.

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In one, I read of a carding manufacturing plant where the dust was so thick that one child could not see the child next to them and inhaled that dust 12 hours a day. They had 40 minutes for lunch. They were fed the same food that the pigs were fed, and if they didn't eat it, it was fed to the pigs. This particular individual who testified before the House of Commons committee, in those days just before the turn of the century, developed incredible health problems by the age of 13, as you can imagine, and ended up in the poorhouse. Even the poorhouses were a step forward for children who did child labour.

It's interesting, but anybody out there who thinks that libertarianism sounds cool, anybody out there who

questions the role and necessity of a government that stands up for social services, that stands up for labour legislation, that stands up for the right to unionize—anybody who questions that—should read about the reality of life in Victorian England, because that's what unfettered capitalism looks like, my friends. It looks like that. It looks like children going to work in factories at the crack of dawn and working there for 12 hours a day. It looks like no health care; that's why some of the children were shipped over too. That's what it looks like. It looks like children starving to death on the streets of London—that's what it looks like—and coming to work in Canada, South Africa and Australia as virtual slaves. That's what it looks like when you don't have a government that stands up for the rights of its citizens, particularly its children.

I absolutely commend our visitors today. "Courage" has been used as a word to describe them. The courage to tell one's own history is courage indeed. The only way we change history is when we tell the truth about what happened in our history. Thank you so much for standing up and enlightening all of us, and hopefully all of Ontario, by being here, being present and letting this history be known.

Of course—the courage—we want to emphasize the positive. These little children went on, against all adversity, to be contributing members—founding members in many instances—of the country we know as Canada and of Ontario, our province. These were the children who did the work that made this country and made this province—it's frightening to even say that—the children who did the work that made this province and made this country. It's absolutely shocking.

It's fascinating to me. I am, as we all are if we're not First Nations people, in some way, shape or form the descendant of immigrants. I know that the immigrants in my family, like all immigrants, had a struggle when they first came over. On my British side, they went out and homesteaded on the prairies. On my Italian side, they escaped poverty and starvation in Sicily and came over to be small business owners. But none of my history compares to your history. None of my history compares to the descendants who would speak about their grandparents coming over as indentured servants. The only corollary I can think of—it's true in our country too, but certainly to the south—is the descendants of slaves.

Did I know about this? Again, I can't express enough my absolute shock at discovering this part of our history. Thank goodness the federal government has recognized this and has shone a light on it. Thank goodness the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has recognized this and shone a light on it so that all of us can be educated about this quintessential part of our history to honour those and their descendants, because certainly, they deserve honour.

I am still flabbergasted, and I hope there are educators watching, because I hope it becomes part of the curriculum of our schools to tell this story. This is a phenomenal story. It's a story that needs to be shouted from the

rooftops in Canada, that we know that at least one in 10 Canadians comes from this. Also, it's a story that needs to be told because in an era of cutbacks and recession, we have to recommit ourselves—all of us—to the rights of the child, to the rights of workers, to the medicare system that we have, to a well-funded educational system, because that's what separates us from the reality these children faced.

The reality that these children faced, and our reality, was changed by government. It was changed by organized labour. It was changed by a number of people who took a number of risks on behalf of those who could not speak for themselves. So in honouring these children, I'd like to honour all of those people, from a diversity of political backgrounds, who really laid the foundations for what is a far more civilized society than these children faced.

Absolutely, I'll support it. Thank you for the opportunity to discover part of my past, part of all Canadians' pasts. Hopefully, because we know our history, we will not repeat it. Hopefully we'll move on, and hopefully we'll let others know about this incredible, shocking and yet heroic story.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I too want to join the members who have just spoken and begin by expressing my support for the bill being brought forward by the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

This is one of these rare opportunities—for those of our visitors here—that we really get to debate, to listen carefully and to speak to things we know little or nothing of.

I think you've heard it said already by the other members, and I will just reiterate those comments, that except for Mr. Brownell's efforts, this is something that wouldn't have been in my world. It wouldn't have been something that I would have known of. Save and except for this place, it's probably something that never would necessarily have crossed what I would have done in my life. So I want to thank him for bringing forward the bill and to comment as well on the work that he does here in the context of Ontario's history when he speaks to motions, when he speaks to bills—things like the bill he had on the gravesites of Premiers and the work he did in that regard to recognize Premiers in this province who have passed away and whose gravesites were unmarked, and we knew not where they were. It's the type of work that Mr. Brownell does, and I think he has done it again in this instance.

I want to speak briefly. I was sitting here a few minutes ago looking at the faces—and you wouldn't be able to see them from the gallery here; and in the members' gallery, your guests who are here today would not as well. But I was looking at a group of young people who left just not long ago, from a class that was here, and I was thinking about what they must have been thinking about as the speeches from the members opposite were being given, as they thought about their own circum-

stances. These, in many ways, are the new faces of Canada, if I can be so bold as to call them that. I was thinking about what they must have been thinking about their lives, how they may have arrived in Canada, or in Ontario, if they weren't native to Ontario, as the case might be, and hearing about children as being referenced in servitude in this province not so long ago; how they reflected on their own lives and on the history of this place that they have an opportunity to sit in today, and listen to their parliamentarians and legislators speak about the history of others in this province.

It's interesting not just because of the situation these children found themselves in, not because of the struggles they found, the life they found and the province and country they helped to build, but it's interesting to have young people in this place who have a chance to participate in this very real way in what this province has been and continues to be about.

It also drives home, probably, for many of us in this room a bit of our own history, as we were each speaking to this point. My own background is one where I was born in Saint John, New Brunswick. My grandparents were coal miners out of Nova Scotia. Beyond that, their history is questionable to me from first arriving in this country, but they were the salt of the earth, and under the earth in that instance, in working hard to provide for their families. Certainly they didn't arrive in this country, grow in this country, with any silver spoon in their mouths, but they raised their children in multitudes, as was the form of the day. My mother had five brothers and sisters, all of whom ended up moving to Ontario following a very significant mine disaster—two mine disasters—in the late part of the 1950s in Springhill, Nova Scotia. My mother started the transition from the East Coast to Ontario to provide a better life for her family: for myself, her and then subsequently the others.

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So it drives me to think about my own history because most of these children would have travelled to the East Coast by boat, landed in Halifax or elsewhere, travelled from there through the Maritimes to Ontario and elsewhere and struggled, as was said, merely to survive to build a future for themselves. It gives me—and each of us—a chance to think a little bit about my own heritage and history in this country and the struggles that my parents and grandparents went through to provide for what I have today, what my children have and now what my grandchildren have the opportunity to experience. It was the work these British home children did, in this case, struggling to make a better life for themselves and ultimately for their families—with the recognition of how they wanted to make this a better place for their families, children and ultimately their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

This, I think, is an important piece of legislation that Mr. Brownell has introduced here today. I'm going to be very happy to support the bill when we get to the vote, when the time comes, for a great variety of reasons. For one, because it's important to do. It's important to

recognize, in many instances, our history in this province. This is just one example of many that we've had the opportunity to debate, but an important one; one that most, if not all, of us would have acquired very little knowledge of along the way. It also builds the repertoire of diversity in this province—in the context of the histories of where we came from, of what we have lived through and the way that we've grown in this province—and our opportunities on a go-forward basis by reflecting on where we were.

We speak of hundreds of thousands of children coming from a place that was seen to be a poorer and worse place than where they were coming to, and we speak of the good intentions of those who assisted those children in providing a better life. In many cases, it wasn't necessarily a better life, but in the longer term I think that the vast majority of their descendants would say that it did prove, ultimately, to be a better life for those who came after. But it wasn't a few children; it was tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands over a long period of time, coming from orphanages and institutions that could no longer afford to take care of them and were looking for a means to provide for those children in a fashion that they no longer had the capacity to do. Looking to Canada—looking from afar. It's not as we know today, where we can fly across continents in a matter of hours.

But they saw it through a particular lens: as a land of real opportunity, a growing economy, a growing nation, an entrepreneurial spirit, opportunity that would abound in a vast land that spread from ocean to ocean. One can only imagine the magnitude of what they were considering for these children at that point in time—and how those children might be able to contribute. Their families contributed to the economy of a growing and new country that was just gaining its legs in the world. To think that some 12% of Canada's population is now in some way made up of or related to the British home children becomes significant in the context of the base population of this country.

I note as well that Canada Post will be issuing a stamp commemorating home children this year. What better way to help commemorate, just in a small way throughout the country, than by providing that opportunity on a stamp that would be available throughout this country.

I want to thank Mr. Brownell for bringing forward the bill. I'm pleased to be able to speak to it and will be very happy to support it when the time comes for a vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to join in what apparently is a chorus of support for Mr. Brownell's bill. I've worked closely with Mr. Brownell: He was my PA when I was the Minister of Consumer Services. I know of his interest in history and—not just his interest in history, but his interest in social justice as well. Mr. Brownell, thank you for sharing this with us.

I recently visited my homeland of Scotland this past summer and, being aware of the story, did do some

travelling through Glasgow and elsewhere, hearing the story. It's a heart-wrenching story; it really is heart-wrenching. It lends some evidence to the old saying that every saint has a past and hopefully every sinner has a future. We lift ourselves up all too often as being the self-righteous country, the country that did everything right. We can point fingers at South Africa and talk about apartheid and we can point fingers elsewhere, but we turned away the St. Louis at one point in our history, and we welcomed—well, we didn't welcome necessarily, but we took kids who were essentially stolen from their own homes and brought here.

I hear that the British Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Gordon Brown, intends to proceed with an apology, and I think that's entirely appropriate. Our federal government might want to consider that, too, although they've taken some significant steps, which I think we all applaud, and that's good. It's particularly good following right on Family Day. We just celebrated Family Day here, and it's important that we tell our stories, because we all have a story to tell. It's important that we be forever vigilant in ensuring that our kids know that story, that we take the time to tell them the story, not just all the good parts—that's easy—but the truth. It's absolutely essential that we do that, that we help our citizens from whatever background to examine and to celebrate their roots.

The British home children came, and we should say, "Welcome to Canada." I don't know if anybody ever said that: "Welcome to Canada." We want to say, "Thank you very much for the contributions that were made." In hindsight, we do what is often so comfortable to do, but—with a degree of sincerity that I think will be reflected soon in this place—we acknowledge that there were some wrongs that were done along the way.

But notwithstanding that adversity and notwithstanding whatever mistreatment was there, the British home children somehow rose above that—remarkably, magically almost—to make a contribution to this country that ought to be recorded in the annals of our history and will be recorded in the annals of our history and the history of their kids and their grandkids, so that they can continue to make that contribution down the way.

Welcome. I'll support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Brownell, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Jim Brownell: First of all, I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Parkdale–High Park, Pickering–Scarborough East and Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for their support and words in support of this bill today.

I am certainly very proud and happy, too, to have some of my Canadian Quarrier family friends, friends that I made in Scotland, with me today. I met them here in Toronto at the airport and we flew over to Scotland and had a wonderful time there in September. From left to right: Victoria, Sandy, Beth, Sandra, June and Keith. Thank you so much for coming here today as descend-

ants, as family members, to hear this story, a story that we heard from all sides, a story that hasn't been really told in our history books. I don't know if the students are still up there, but this is, as a retired teacher, a story that was not told in our history books, and I really think it is important.

We heard this afternoon stories of courage, determination, perseverance, and we heard the word "honour." I think that with this bill, we're doing just that. Just as the federal government proclaimed this year as the Year of the British Home Child, just as Canada Post is doing with the stamp, we here in the Parliament of Ontario, in this House, can certainly open a page of the new history book. I hope that in the new history book we do have this story told, the story of these young orphans who, with just a little wooden trunk—the little wooden trunk that my grandmother brought to Ontario is now out in British Columbia but it's still around, and in that little wooden trunk was her story.

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I thank all those who supported the bill here this afternoon and I want to say that I look forward to this becoming proclaimed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): For those who are visiting us today in the galleries and those watching at home, we'll vote on this ballot item in about 100 minutes.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I move that, in the opinion of this House, bullying is never acceptable, whether it be physical, verbal, social or cyberbullying, and that the government of Ontario should take all steps possible to prevent bullying, including:

—officially recognizing the third week of each November as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in Ontario; and

—having every safe-school team in the province direct the development of activities for their school during Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to rise today to speak to the resolution to make our schools safer for our students and our teachers, and also to ensure that we take every step possible to raise awareness and to prevent bullying.

Many people have asked me why I introduced this private member's resolution. This happened because last fall I was approached by parents, students and teachers who were very concerned about some of the personal experiences that had occurred to them. They were concerned about the impact of bullying on themselves and on their families and the fact that we didn't seem to be seeing any decrease in the number of incidents. I committed to them that I would research the subject, I would do a consultation, and I would embark on an

initiative to try to make sure that we can make our schools safer for our children in order that they can learn. That's why we have the private member's resolution here today.

I'm very thankful for the number of people who came forward today. We have parents here who joined me at the press conference. We had students and teachers and we had community partners. Certainly, everybody is committed to doing what they can to lift what is almost like a veil over bullying. There has been a culture of silence, and I think that's why, by setting aside a week each year, we can raise the awareness of the fact that it is a serious issue and we need to make people aware of that.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has indicated that one in three students experiences bullying at school—an absolutely unbelievable number. Almost one in three students has bullied someone else. Another startling statistic is that between 2003 and 2007, the number of bullying cases remained about the same. We simply are not seeing a decrease in the number of situations within our schools.

Now, when we talk about bullying, we're talking about bullying that can be physical, that can be verbal, that can be social or, more recently now, we have cyberbullying. It doesn't matter what form; bullying is never acceptable. It hurts.

It's as a result of the people, the parents and the students, approaching me, it's as a result of the first-hand concerns and the reports that they brought to my attention, and it's as a result of the high statistics on bullying that we continue to see today and of the far-reaching consequences of bullying that I believe all of us in this House must make a concerted effort to stop the bullying. My resolution is intended to do so.

I have consulted extensively with educational stakeholders throughout the province of Ontario. I'm very pleased to have, within my press release today, a quote from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. Their president, Sam Hammond, says they lend support to my proposal "to have Ontario formally recognize bullying awareness and prevention week in an effort to focus greater attention on effective prevention strategies at the school level. Activities related to an annual focus on bullying awareness would naturally fit with the role of new safe school teams the Ministry of Education is requiring in ... school."

We also are supported by the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and their president, Paula Peroni, who have indicated that this week would be "a tangible activity" to make the fact that we want to create a safe, inclusive and caring learning environment for our students a reality.

We're supported by the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and their president, James Ryan, who says that teachers know "how important it is for our students to feel safe and secure," and by formally recognizing this week we can help "to raise public awareness of this important issue."

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and their president, Kenneth Coran, also are very sup-

portive of this week and having the school teams set up. They say that "prevention of bullying is key to ensuring that all students feel safe" at our schools.

Today there were members in the audience and I just want to acknowledge the fact that they were here. We heard from Katie Neu, a young woman, 18, from Listowel, who was bullied from the time she was in kindergarten. Finally, in grade 9, she couldn't take it any longer and she made the decision to leave school, got her diploma, her certificate online, and is now doing all she can to support other young people who have been bullied, because personally she found no one who could support her through this very difficult period of her life.

Here today as well was Sunnie McFadden-Curtis, whose son was bullied. Certainly, her family has gone through a nightmare and she's now focused on bringing it all to life in a documentary.

We had here today, from the Bluewater Citizens for Education, Lesa McDougall, and Karen Sebben. Again, these are families who have experienced bullying of their children and see this resolution today as an important first step toward ensuring a vision for safe schools. They indicate our children cannot learn if they do not feel safe.

What happens to children who are bullied? It's quite frightening. If you take a look at the research, you can see that those children who have been bullied may suffer from anxiety, depression, substance abuse and low self-esteem, and experience academic failure. Also, these students, in a few cases, go on to commit suicide because they feel nobody, but nobody, understands them or can help them. Many of these children—after listening to the parents and the children themselves—have been forced to leave their school, go to another school, perhaps in another community. Some have entered the private school system where they've had to pay for the price of going to school. It's really quite remarkable that, in this day and age, anyone would have to leave a school and move elsewhere to receive their education simply because we haven't been able to deal effectively with the whole issue of bullying.

Not only does the research show that the person bullied experiences problems, so does the person who is the bully. The bully is the one who well may use aggression as a form of power in the future and become an abusive adult—maybe spousal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse. It's also the adult who may become involved later in violent crime.

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We have to help those people, and we have to help those children who are being bullied. If we set aside one week a year, we can make sure we focus on effective prevention strategies. We can teach children how they can develop the tools to protect themselves against bullying, as well.

I want to read you a story from a nine-year-old boy that was sent to me by his grandmother when she learned I was going to be introducing this bill. Dawson Ladouceur from Kitchener says:

"The first reason I think kids bully is because they don't feel good about themselves or how they look, so

they hide it by bullying kids. This makes the bully feel more powerful and forget about his own problems.

“Another reason is that they are just plain mean. They might come from a house where the parents are unloving and abusive. This makes the child feel angry and upset and wanting to hurt someone else.

“Some children are not confident can be really scared and upset by what bullies do to them and won't want to go to school. But I am a confident kid. If I am wearing glasses and people say: ‘Ha-ha, what nerdy glasses you have. You look like a nerd,’ I will either ignore it or say that these are my glasses and you can't make me take them off so go away. I will then just walk away.

“Another reason kids bully is if they have been bullied themselves. They will feel mad and helpless so then they will try bullying on another child. Also if a kid is constantly bullied and feels they aren't getting any help from the teachers, they bring a small weapon (i.e. a small pocket knife) to school to make them feel confident and safe.”

He concludes by saying, “That's why I think it's important for schools to help make the students feel safe and put a stop to bullies.”

That's from a nine-year-old in Kitchener.

Yes, bullying is a very, very serious issue. It impacts not only the students who have been bullied, it impacts the students who do the bullying and all of the witnesses in that school. It impacts the teachers and the principal. It impacts the parents, and it impacts the whole community. So we need to make sure that by setting aside this annual week where we can raise the awareness and focus on prevention and make sure that the safe school teams are set up in every school in the province of Ontario and they can direct the activities, we do what we can to lift the culture of silence.

Bullying is there. Bullying isn't going to go away. Yes, we have new legislation, and this resolution that I've introduced is complementary to the legislation.

But I tell you, folks, I heard today from more families who support this resolution. One of them was Myles Neuts's father. If you remember, in 1998, 10-year-old Myles Neuts was found hanging on a coat hook in the washroom of his school and he never came home again. That was in Chatham, Ontario. Today, when his father spoke to Marie in my office, the pain that he experienced 12 years ago was evident in his voice. His message is that bullying, whatever the situation, is wrong; people get hurt; people die; it must stop, and it's up to everyone in the community to stop it.

I hope you'll support our bill and stop the bullying.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to commend my colleague Ms. Witmer for bringing this bill forward. I wholeheartedly support this, as I expect all members of the Legislature will.

I first raised the issue of bullying in this House on June 11, 2008. That was motivated by an experience in my own riding. A six-year-old student was assaulted in a

washroom by two 13-year-old students. At that point in time, the frustration the parents experienced—not even to begin to enter into the intimidation and the pain that was felt by the grade 1 student. The frustration at that time that was experienced by the parents was that there seemed to be no response from the school. The issue continued to be minimized by the teacher and the principal, as well as by the school board.

I was frustrated at that time because the then Minister of Education refused as well to address this issue, which is why I put the question to the Premier on that occasion and asked the Premier to intervene and to direct the Minister of Education to investigate. To his credit, on that day the Premier stated very clearly that he shared my concern, our collective concern, and would in fact direct the Minister of Education to move forward to investigate and to do something positively about this issue of bullying.

We're now some two years later on, and yes, as my colleague indicated, there was legislation introduced. But unfortunately, as I was listening to the press conference this morning hosted by my colleague, I heard the concern expressed during that press conference by Lesa McDougall, who represented the Bluewater Citizens for Education. In response to a very direct question as to what she felt the real concern was and whether this legislation that was passed will address the issue, she responded with these words: “The discretion of principals contained in that legislation is not acceptable.” I believe that the bill that's before us is extremely important because it will do as my colleague indicates: It will help to raise the awareness of this issue, not only on the part of the student body, but on the part of teachers and principals, and hopefully board members as well.

Something that was very disturbing to me, as I was dealing with the issue in York region, was a letter that I received from the parent of this grade 1 student. She said the following, in response to a letter that she received from the school board: that the letter “only reinforces the efforts made by the school and board to downplay and conceal the assault and the mishandling of it under their direction.”

The concern is that we can have all of the legislation that we want; as long as we don't make it very clear that there is in fact a responsibility on the part of those individuals entrusted with the care and protection of our children while they're attending the schools to report—not at their discretion, but to make it mandatory for them to report any bullying to the parents and, yes, to the authorities. Because only then can we be assured that these matters will be dealt with in a responsible way.

I would therefore appeal to the current Minister of Education, not only to obviously support the bill before us and to ensure that, while this bill will be passed—I have no doubt—unanimously by this Legislature for second reading, it will then receive third reading and will in fact be put in place by the government; but in addition to that, to take the necessary steps to make amendment to Bill 157 to ensure that reporting is in fact made

mandatory and not left at the discretion of the principals. Because I believe that even principals would want to ensure that they are under the legislated responsibility to report, not to have it left to their discretion.

Finally—and I'll close with this—we heard and have heard repeatedly from the principals' council of this province that one of the major concerns is the level of supervision within our schools and the lack of funding for supervision within schools and on school property. We can pass legislation. We can pass this bill. We can raise awareness. But if we don't provide the tools, the resources and the personnel within our schools and on our school properties that will allow the necessary supervision to take place, all will be for naught. At the end of the day, we have to raise awareness of this important issue, but we also have to ensure that those we expect to be responsible for the safety of our children have the appropriate resources to deal with it.

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I want to thank my colleague Ms. Witmer for taking this initiative and for being available to parents and educators, to listen to them and to bring this forward and give this province-wide awareness. We trust that this is an important step to resolving this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on a very important issue, which is brought by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

First of all, right at the outset, I want to say that I will be supporting this motion because of the importance of the issue around anti-bullying.

I think we know the impact bullying can have on our children in our schools. Our schools are supposed to be a safe environment, a healthy environment, an environment for our children where they can learn and get education. This is not an environment where our children should be stigmatized, harassed, threatened, hurt, injured or anything of that sort. We obviously, as a community, as individuals in our community and as members of the Legislature, need to do everything in our power to ensure that bullying does not take place in school and that our children in our schools are not impacted by that.

I think it would be safe for me to say that all of us, as MPPs, have had instances of speaking with many constituents in our ridings who have brought issues that are ongoing in regard to their children. I had a few of those opportunities, unfortunately, in my riding of Ottawa Centre. In fact, I've spoken about this before in this Legislature. While in the last election campaign in 2007, I met a parent who asked me questions around bullying and my position on it because their daughter had gone through quite a traumatic series of events in their school. Shortly after I was elected, I approached those parents again so that I could work with them and ensure that they had the recourses available. Fortunately, at that time, I had the opportunity—and their circumstances are obviously quite horrific as to what their daughter went

through. Of course, I'm not going to mention names. For a young girl, the kind of instances of sexual exploitation she went through were extremely harrowing, I must say. It was disturbing to learn that that kind of behaviour took place in school and little action was taken.

Fortunately, at that time, the Safe Schools Action Team was engaged. The MPP from Guelph is the chair of that. I had the opportunity to sit down with her and learn about the scope of that action team, the kind of work they're doing, be able to then connect my constituent with the Safe Schools Action Team and be able to get my constituent's point of view to the team, and help shape some of the legislation that came through later to create the safe schools legislation to help make sure that we diminish the impact, to the extent we can, and hopefully one day totally eliminate bullying from our schools, because I think every student has the right to feel safe and to be safe in their school.

This is an important issue and an issue that is paramount to all of us. By having a week where we can raise awareness about bullying and how to prevent bullying—making sure that our school boards and our schools have the tools and resources to make that happen is extremely important.

I'm quite happy with the kinds of things we have legislated through the Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act, Bill 157, legislation that was passed by this House on June 1, 2009. The legislation now requires that school staff report serious student incidents to the principal, including bullying, that principals contact the parents of victims of such incidents, and that school staff respond to address inappropriate and disrespectful student behaviour; for example, racial and homophobic slurs. The act came into effect on February 1, 2010.

These things are really important because we want to make sure that our teachers, our principals and our staff act as quickly as possible when acts of bullying are brought to their attention. We need to make sure that victims, children in our schools, are protected from bullying and, of course, we need to make sure that there are active policies in place by which education is taking place and by which children, teachers, staff and others are being taught how to prevent bullying.

As I was preparing for this debate today, I got the opportunity to look at the bullying prevention and intervention policy of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. This is the school board, obviously, that's responsible for public schools in my community of Ottawa and my riding of Ottawa Centre. I was heartened to see that there is quite a vigorous policy that exists to ensure prevention of bullying and intervention in those circumstances. As I look at this motion, I think the kind of effort the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board is making, for example, goes hand in hand.

Obviously, the board believes that bullying is a serious issue, with far-reaching consequences for both the entire school community and the community at large. It puts out steps by which bullying prevention and intervention programs should take place, consistent with a progressive discipline approach. They support the use of practices

that take into account the needs of individual students by showing sensitivity to diversity, cultural needs and special education needs, and they provide training to all administrators, teachers, occasional teachers and all support staff to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to address bullying and ensure that others are trained and made aware of the policy.

I think those types of policies need to be highlighted by the kind of awareness week that this motion by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has put forward. We need to make sure that there is time dedicated when we focus on measures against bullying. Of course, that exercise should be taking place every single day; we should not just be focused on one day or one week alone. But a week is important to highlight and accelerate our efforts.

I'm very happy to stand here and speak in support of this motion. I congratulate the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing forward this very important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will be supporting the motion. Bullying is a serious issue. It has existed for a long time and it's likely to continue for a long time. There is no doubt about the destructive impacts of bullying on families and the individuals affected. There is no doubt about it, and we all know.

Bullying should not be confused with sexual abuse. They are two different issues. The four issues that I heard of parents who came to the committee when we discussed Bill 157 were matters of sexual abuse of children against children, young people against other young people. I have to tell you, I was hurt by the description of what happened and hurt by the lack of action by those who were entrusted to deal with these issues. From what I heard, the principals involved did not deal with it well, trustees who were contacted did not deal with it well, and it was a failure of the system, no doubt about it.

But as I hear some members comment about bullying and linking it up with sexual abuse—they are two different things, and they need to be addressed. The solutions are very similar. We have to talk about that. One week where we make people aware of bullying is a good idea. We involve students, we involve teachers, we presumably involve principals and superintendents and everyone in the system, including trustees. It's a good thing. It cannot hurt.

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I heard the member from Kitchener–Waterloo also talk about prevention. This is where I believe we need to go. It's really prevention that is lacking. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talks about a culture of silence. In my view, it's a culture of inaction, not a culture of silence, because people are talking about it. The question is, what are we doing about bullying, sexual abuse and violence that is happening with students against students in our school system? We have reports that speak to what it is that we could be doing.

Before I get to that, I want to say that there was a previous regime here under the leadership of Mr. Harris

that attempted to deal with issues of violence in our schools and bullying, through a zero-tolerance policy. It failed. It does not work. It has never worked. While it might have made some politicians feel good, including making some teachers feel good about expelling students, it wasn't the answer, because when you expel the problem outside of the school, the problem still persists. The problem comes back into the school system, and they will repeat the same offences, if not different offences. The problem hasn't disappeared. We expelled thousands and thousands of students. The government was proud. It was a healthy record of expulsions. It was thousands. At one point, at peak, it was 14,000—at one point or another. That's a lot of pride that the previous government must have had about expelling students. The problem is, it didn't solve the issue. This government continued with that strategy for many, many years. I deplored it, because it wasn't the answer.

Eventually, this government introduced Bill 157 under the previous minister who is present in this Legislature. We now have mandatory reporting. In my view, that's not the answer. It's better than nothing, because it forces teachers and others to report incidents of bullying and abuse of any kind. That can be a good thing, but merely having a statistical number that says we've reported it doesn't solve the problem. It doesn't deal with the issues that Lesa this morning—or was it Katie, the young person who spoke this morning?—talked about getting at the root of the problem. Why is it that students do what they do? That's what Katie, the victim of bullying, was saying this morning. She talked about how she's been hurt, was hurt for years and years. She raises the question, "What do we do?" We have to understand why young people do what they do. But merely making reporting mandatory doesn't solve it. It simply gives us a statistical figure that we can be proud of, saying that we're now reporting, but it doesn't deal with the problem.

Now, some people conveniently and easily attack teachers. Some people conveniently and easily attack principals, saying they're not dealing with the problem. But I have to remind those critics that some teachers are afraid themselves of intervening. And the government is going to force them to obligatorily report, obligatorily intervene. I had to point out to the government—they changed it, mercifully—that teachers could put themselves at risk if they were forced by law to intervene. On matters where two people are fighting it out, and a teacher is supposed to go in there by law and intervene, you put yourself at risk as a teacher. That's not what the law should be doing. There have got to be different and better ways to deal with it. But to be fair to the government, they dropped it, and that was a positive thing.

Now, some principals had the solution, and have the solution, of continuing to expel students as the answer, and I suspect that many of them could do that. But given that the government now has moved in the direction of saying that the school has to deal with it, principals are wary of kicking people out without trying to deal with the problem. So my point is the following: Zero tolerance

doesn't work and did not work; mandatory reporting is better than nothing; an awareness week on bullying is good, and better than not doing anything. But in my view, we have to do a little more, and by the way, it's not for lack of ideas.

Some of you will remember Mr. Falconer, a very good lawyer who did a very good study of some of the problems that some of our schools face in terms of violence, homophobia in our schools and violence against those who are homosexuals in our system. They talked about young women being sexually abused, sexually intimidated, on a regular basis—a high number of young women talking about sexual abuse against them. Mr. Falconer talked about what we should do. He handed a thick report to the board of education. The Toronto board of education is strapped for money; they are entirely broke. Just the other day they said they needed \$20 million to deal with special education; otherwise, they can't serve kids who have special needs. They are broke. So the culture of inaction, for me, leads to the minister and the ministry, in terms that once you have a report of that nature with incredible insights about what to do, and the government sits by and does nothing, that is where the culture of inaction will hurt our system and our young people.

Mr. Falconer talked about establishing “school-based teams made up of social workers, child/youth workers and teachers to help family caregivers navigate and access the mental health services their children and youth require, and these teams should make use of the variety of treatment techniques, and work across disciplines.” Mental illness is a serious problem in our system. Sexual abuse happens, and that scars young people, and they in turn sexually abuse others. We need to deal with that.

Mr. Falconer proposed that we set up school-based teams, and we haven't done it since his report was released three years ago. He talks about the board hiring 20 new full-time social workers, that the board should hire 20 additional child and youth counsellors, that the panel recommends that the board should hire 24 additional attendance counsellors—the list goes on.

We also have a report by Mr. Curling and the Honourable Roy McMurtry. They did an extensive study of the problems our young people face, especially our racialized communities. They gave out a long list of things we could do, and we have not acted upon it. That's my frustration as an MPP.

So while we express platitudes about, “Yes, bullying happens. It's not nice for students, and we're trying to do some things. We've got Bill 157 and its mandatory reporting.” While we express such platitudes, the seriousness of the problem continues and young people suffer. I'm going to support this motion, absolutely; it's a good motion. But we need to deal with the reports that talk about how prevention happens and what supports teachers and principals need to be able to do a good job. Until we do that, we will not solve the problems of violence, sexual abuse and bullying in our system. Until the government actually addresses that, they're a part of the failure of our system and they're a part of an

extension of the bullying that goes on in our school system, and until they acknowledge and recognize that, we will not solve this problem.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I want to begin by sharing an old piece of wisdom from way back, which I think the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has always understood, and that piece of wisdom is this: We never pay our debt to the past until we've left a future indebted to ourselves. She has always understood that, the importance of passing on values at every different level, and most particularly in our school system, so I want to first and foremost put that on the record.

This is pretty basic. I don't know if it was Maslow who said that tolerance begins at the point of difference, not at the point of sameness; I think it was. He talked to us about a hierarchy of needs, and the very first and most fundamental need was what he called trust versus mistrust. When a young child is trying to take their first steps, they need assurance that mom and dad or whomever is going to be there to catch them. They don't just need it when they're infants, when they're taking their first steps. Students have a right to know that when they go to school, they're safe. Parents have a need to have the assurance that when their children are out in society, those who have some kind of authority or some kind of responsibility, including members of this Legislative Assembly, are there standing with them. I want to say that, because I think that's the fundamental value that we need to pass on from one generation to another if we're going to pay our debt to the past.

I'm an educator by training. I picked up an old educational psychology textbook this morning just to go through some stuff on bullying and violence. There was an interesting quote that I found that I wanted to share: “Researchers have consistently reported a negative correlation between virtually every aspect of school achievement and bullying.” If you get bullied and you're afraid and you're anxious, you don't do as well as if you're encouraged to be confident and to express the giftedness that you've been given at birth and that has been nurtured by those responsible others that you come into contact with.

I want to say that and I want to just go, for what it's worth, to the very heart of it, and that's the trust versus mistrust part. That includes being able to trust Legislative Assemblies to try to do the right thing. I know that there was some reference to zero tolerance. I think we need to have infinite tolerance when it comes to kids who, for whatever combination of reasons, may feel that the most appropriate thing they can do in their lives is bully somebody else. That's a problem that needs to be dealt with. That's why I'm pleased that the previous minister, with her culture of action, actually moved forward with the Safe Schools Act. I want to say respectfully that there's much more than mandatory retirement in the Safe Schools Act. I see the member from Kitchener–Waterloo—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There's nothing in there.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Let me tell you what has happened. Since that act has been passed, our government has invested \$178 million, new dollars—I know some may say that's nothing—in new programs; major investments in additional professional resources, enhanced community partnerships. We've been—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You forgot about those, Rosario.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Yes, you left that part out—specific training of 7,500 principals and 25,000 teachers; the newly established kids phone line, which I know the member from Kitchener–Waterloo knows and appreciates, where young people can talk to other young people about their concerns is a very liberating thing for them. In addition to that we have the safe schools action teams that are there and our government has continued to press.

I didn't want to make this political. By the way, I thought the member from Kitchener–Waterloo should be particularly complimented for not making this a political issue.

We continue to press the federal government to ensure that handguns are taken off the street as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this chance to speak in support of the motion brought forward this afternoon by my friend, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

This motion, this legislative achievement today, follows a long list of accomplishments for the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. She supported the new cardiac centre at St. Mary's hospital. She supported the new cancer centre, dialysis unit and MRI at the Grand River Hospital. She supported childbirth and children's services at Grand River. She helped to expand emergency department care at local hospitals. She supported the University of Waterloo's school of pharmacy. She helped to rebuild long-term-care homes, including Parkwood Mennonite, Sunnyside and Trinity Village.

She introduced Telehealth Ontario. She introduced free flu shots for Ontarians, which have saved many lives. She introduced the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program for new mothers, and I was glad to support her work on this. She supported KidsAbility, the children's treatment centre in our area; and the list goes on and on.

The foregoing shows that the member for Kitchener–Waterloo is here for a reason. Good people in her riding worked hard alongside her so that she would take her seat in this House. She has been elected and re-elected to the Ontario Legislature five consecutive times. Through her work, she demonstrates her idealism, tempered by the realism of her experience. Her community has extended its trust time and time again and has given her this privileged position to effect positive change for everyone in Ontario. This she has done, and all residents of Ontario have been the beneficiaries. I believe that there is no MPP in this House who does a better job than Elizabeth

Witmer; she's simply the best. Ontario has had many fine political leaders in her history and I think Elizabeth Witmer ranks as one of the finest. I feel very fortunate to have had the chance to work with her.

She once said in a summary of her political philosophy, “We need to embrace a conservatism that is caring—not narrow, but broad; not harsh, but kind; not divisive, but inclusive. Help me show Ontarians that common sense and compassion go hand-in-hand.”

That common-sense, compassionate approach is the basis of her resolution today, for each and every child in Ontario deserves a safe school in which to learn. Making sure we create those conditions is a responsibility not just for educators, although they obviously have a very significant role. It is, I believe, our collective responsibility, whether as parents, students, or even elected representatives as we are here, to ensure that our children are safe and free from bullying, and intimidation.

Bullying in any form, whether in person or online, is totally unacceptable. That's the message I hope we can help to send by supporting this resolution this afternoon. It's a serious issue with far-reaching consequences for children and youth, their parents, their families, their peers and their communities. Anxiety, loneliness, withdrawal, physical illness and low self-esteem are just a few of the problems afflicting those who've been bullied. They can develop phobias, they can take on aggressive behaviour themselves, they can slide into depression, they miss school and, of course, bullies themselves begin to lose their sense of right and wrong. How serious is this problem? It's very serious.

I want to read a few facts provided by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo in preparation for these remarks this afternoon. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, roughly 315,000 students in grades 7 through 12 reported being bullied in 2007. In the same year, roughly 90,000 students in grades 7 through 12 reported being bullied on a daily basis. One third of students experienced bullying at school while almost a third has bullied someone else. In 2008, the CAMH study found that bullying and harassment can lead to depression, substance abuse, anxiety and academic failure.

Research from the Ministry of Education tells us that bullying prevention can work. In fact, clearly articulated, school-wide bullying prevention policies are one of the foundations of effective bullying prevention programming. To that end, we have a great start with this resolution. By supporting this resolution, we are calling on the government to officially recognize the third week of November as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in Ontario. Secondly, we are calling on the government to have every safe school team in the province direct development of activities for their schools during Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

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Sam Hammond, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, supports this resolution, saying, “Activities related to an annual focus on bullying awareness would naturally fit the role of the new safe

school teams.” Good advice from the teachers. Let’s work together. Pass this resolution—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Mrs. Witmer, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to thank my colleagues, the members for Newmarket–Aurora, Ottawa Centre, Trinity–Spadina, Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale and Wellington–Halton Hills. I do appreciate the support that has been provided for this motion. I talked earlier today to both the Minister of Education and the Premier, who have also indicated their support. I do thank you for it.

I want to again thank Katie, Sunnie and Lesa for being here today. If it wasn’t for those people, I wouldn’t be here with this resolution. I was inspired by their stories and I have many more stories contained in files in my office from parents and students who suffered at the hands of bullies.

Today we have an opportunity to make a difference—all of us. We have an opportunity to support the resolution. We have the opportunity to ensure that this year in November, the third week, we can officially recognize Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

We can make sure that all of the safe school teams in the province of Ontario are ready to go with activities that are going to ensure that all of the students throughout this province, if they’re bullied, know that they can go and get the support and help they need.

We will have an opportunity to help bullies learn different ways of dealing with their anger and their aggression. We’ll have the opportunity to make sure that teachers have the opportunity for in-servicing.

Together we can make a difference, but it’s going to mean that each one of us needs to make a concerted effort. We can’t just say that bullying is bad, bullying is happening, bullying is serious. Each one of us in our own communities can participate in ensuring that within our schools there is a safe, caring and inclusive culture.

Again, I want to summarize with Mike Neuts’s message: Bullying is wrong. People get hurt. People die. It must stop, and it’s up to everyone in the community to stop it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will vote on Mrs. Witmer’s ballot item in about 50 minutes.

SUSTAINABLE WATER
AND WASTE WATER
SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT
AND MAINTENANCE ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LA VIABILITÉ
ET L’AMÉLIORATION DES RÉSEAUX
D’APPROVISIONNEMENT EN EAU
ET D’EAUX USÉES

Mr. Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 237, An Act to sustain and encourage improvement in Ontario’s water and waste water services

and to establish the Ontario Water Board / Projet de loi 237, Loi visant à assurer la viabilité des services d’approvisionnement en eau et des services relatifs aux eaux usées de l’Ontario et à favoriser leur amélioration et créant la Commission des eaux de l’Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member, Mr. Caplan, has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. David Caplan: At the outset of my remarks, I’d like to introduce Mr. Chris McNally, director at large of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association.

I had established at first reading that sustaining and improving our water and waste water systems while retaining public ownership of our water utilities is fundamental to protecting our drinking water. I’m concerned about the condition of our water and waste water systems.

One of the challenges is that many Ontarians today have an inadequate knowledge about the condition of their water systems. Indeed, decades of underinvestment and planning have threatened the future of water services. Essential investments have been neglected and we are now at a detrimental stage. In many cases, the water pipes have surpassed their maximum life expectancy.

In some municipalities, including certain areas of Ottawa, for example, parts of water systems date back to the 19th century, as early as the 1870s. Here in the city of Toronto half of the water network is at least 50 years old and almost 10% is more than 100 years old. This aging system is vulnerable to increasing breaks. It’s estimated that the city of Toronto now has more than, on average, 1,500 water main breaks per year. That’s over four per day.

Well-maintained and well-functioning water and waste water systems underpin our very quality of life. For far too long, we’ve failed to give water its full value. Changes need to be made in the way Ontario’s water and waste water systems are organized, governed and regulated. If gone unnoticed, I believe this will pose a major threat to our public health and safety, environment, and will cause economic hardship.

With regard to human health, toxic lead pipes, corroded water pipes and broken sewer pipes are a potential source of drinking water contamination. With regard to the environment, broken water and waste water pipes can contaminate rivers and lakes, making such sources detrimental for drinking and recreation and threatening wildlife and fish stocks. Regarding the economy, broken water mains often cause disruptions in traffic, significant property damage and substantial costs to our cities and to our society at large.

For all of those aforementioned reasons, this act is important to all Ontarians. Clean, safe drinking water ensures that Ontario is strong, healthy and prosperous.

This bill, Bill 237, evolves from Justice O’Connor’s recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry, which provide the regulatory aspects and steps needed to prevent similar events from occurring elsewhere; and

from the water strategy expert panel's report—and I thank Dr. Swain for his work—which makes recommendations on all aspects of organization, governance, investment, financing and pricing related to Ontario's water and waste water systems.

This year, in May, marks the 10th anniversary of the Walkerton water tragedy, when 5,000 residents of the town of Walkerton, Ontario—when their water system became contaminated with *E. coli* bacteria. By the end of the tragedy, at least seven people had died from drinking water with *E. coli* contamination and over 2,500 people became sick.

By enacting this bill, we will be taking the necessary measures to ensure that safe, reliable and sustainable water and waste water systems are available to future generations in Ontario.

I'd like to outline what's in the act. The purposes of the act are several-fold:

- to ensure that public ownership of water and waste water systems is maintained. If implemented, this bill would completely rule out private ownership. It's imperative, in my opinion, that we keep water and waste water systems in public hands;

- to promote financial stability. This bill would promote full cost accounting and full cost recovery of water and waste water services. And I want to give credit where credit is due: A previous government did introduce, in Bill 155, these very same measures. It would encourage an increase in scale and capacity in the provision of water and waste water services to minimize costs to the ratepayers, both business and residents;

- to improve transparency in the provision of water and waste water services to the public. This would be done through the establishment of publicly owned municipal corporations;

- to create an independent economic regulator, the Ontario water board. The Ontario water board will have the expertise and authority to administer the act. The responsibilities of the board: It would exercise its powers and duties in the public interest and in accordance with the principles of honesty, integrity and social responsibility. So it would be responsible for, amongst other things, protecting the interests of consumers with respect to pricing and reliability and the quality of water systems; promoting economic efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the provision of water and waste water services; facilitating the maintenance of a financially viable water and waste water industry in our province; promoting water conservation in a manner that is consistent with the policies of the government.

There are other benefits, and I'd just like to highlight one in particular, and that is energy savings. Besides the significant public health benefits of the legislation, the act will result in major energy savings for communities.

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Water is the number one energy user in municipalities around Ontario. It's a fact that across Ontario, most of the energy is often wasted due to the leakage and other inefficiencies contained within our system. Many drink-

ing water distribution systems have leakage rates ranging from 10% to 50%. The average: 25% of every drop of water that is purified and sent through the system is lost through leakage in the system. That is incredibly inefficient, and the people who pay for it are the water users and ratepayers themselves. This legislation would help reduce the burden of wasting energy as a result of more reliable and more environmentally sustainable water and waste water systems.

Lastly, many citizens have an inadequate knowledge of the condition of our water and waste water systems and are thus operating with an inadequate plan for long-term sustainability. If implemented, this act will reveal the “out of sight, out of mind” aspects of our water and waste water system by bringing often-hidden vital services into broad daylight. In turn, this will provide our citizens with the peace of mind that safe, reliable and affordable water and waste water systems are in place. In fact, I believe it will encourage economic development and activity by providing that peace of mind to our business communities as well.

But others have written to me and have commented about this legislation, the Sustainable Water and Waste Water Systems Improvement and Maintenance Act, or SWIM, as it has become known. I quote:

“The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario believes that Bill 237 contains a number of important elements that lay the groundwork for creating truly worthwhile and transformative legislation that will provide the necessary guidance to municipalities to provide for ‘full-cost recovery’ for both the capital and operating elements of public water and waste water provision.... The adoption of this bill will be integral to the successful implementation of regional economic prosperity efforts, and to the goals envisioned in the ‘Places to Grow’ legislation where growth is directed to priority areas.... This model for water and sewer services has been on the Queen's Park ‘to do list’ for many years.... Will our collective patience finally be rewarded?” That's Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario.

I quote: “By passing this bill, the provincial government will ensure effective delivery and maintenance of water and waste water services that will ensure the success of Ontario's growth plan.... We look forward to working with Mr. Caplan and the provincial government to help inform and educate the public of the need for legislation to ensure the sustainability of our greatest provincial resource.” That was Greg White, president, and Joe Accardi, executive director, Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association.

“The creation of an Ontario water board will serve as an independent economic regulator that will provide and promote financial sustainability and transparency, and safeguard the quality of Ontario's water for future generations.... We are proud to support your legislation, and look forward to working with you on this significant and progressive piece of legislation.” That was Leith

Moore, chair of the Building Industry and Land Development Association here in Ontario.

“Your bill will compel municipalities to create realistic infrastructure investment and maintenance plans, while ensuring that citizens are not overcharged for services. Protecting our sewer and surface water systems is crucial for protecting public health and private property. The Insurance Bureau of Canada ... fully supports your efforts, and will watch the progress of this bill with great interest”—from Ralph Palumbo, vice-president, Ontario, the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

I have as well: “There are two things in life which we cannot do without—one is air to breathe, and the second is water to drink; these are essentials to life. Your bill picks up where the Walkerton report stopped. It builds a responsible structure in which we can be the stewards we need to be for this precious” yet “finite resource. A system whereby the responsible decisions, infrastructure and monetary support for clean water is essential for the survival of our civilized society. We are blessed” and must “have access to the Great Lakes, and as such we must show leadership and water stewardship. Thank you for taking that leadership.” That was Jennifer Mossop, former MPP and co-chair of Aquafest eco-festival on Lake Huron.

In conclusion, water and waste water infrastructure in Ontario have been on a steady decline for decades. It is clearly time, in my opinion, to take action. With the recommended changes in Bill 237, most water services in Ontario can become sustainable with neither undue financial burden on ratepayers nor threats to our public health. The sooner we act, the sooner we start to save costs and the sooner we can start to maintain a strong water sector in Ontario that will be sustainable for decades to come. I strongly believe that Bill 237 is the right legislation at the right time for a problem that will not go away without attention.

Water is an essential part of life for all Ontarians, and we have taken it for granted for far too long. Clean, safe drinking water ensures that Ontario is strong, healthy and prosperous. It’s time to make a change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: As I review Bill 237, the Sustainable Water and Waste Water Systems Improvement and Maintenance Act, I get a sense of déjà vu. We have been here before, and history is indeed repeating itself this afternoon with the introduction of this bill and many of the concepts inherent in this bill.

We all know it’s a private member’s bill—it’s not a government bill—but we’ve got concepts like water waste reporting and commitments to full cost recovery, which is very important. It builds on work from legislation that was actually passed by this House in 2002, when the previous government worked through Bill 175, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act.

We know that imitation is one of the more sincere forms of flattery, but the truth is that like any sequel aiming to echo the strength of its predecessor, this

legislation really doesn’t reach the bar of the original. It’s true that, here as well, there are some striking similarities between this private member’s bill and the government bill that’s sitting there now. As the member opposite pointed out, nothing was done with it for the last seven years, but there are some similarities.

But the question is, what happened over the past seven years? Where are the regulations? We haven’t been in government in seven years. What happened to Bill 175? It was designed to achieve the kinds of goals we’re talking about this afternoon. What happened to that legislation? It received royal assent in 2002. Why do we have to go through all of this all over again, close to eight years later? We had the report, the plans, the entrenched notion of full cost recovery for waste water and water services. It passed third and final reading and received royal assent on December 13, 2002. What has happened in the past seven years? Obviously not too much.

It has been pointed out by Joe Accardi, executive director of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association—I know his name was mentioned just a few minutes ago—that the guts of Bill 175 were never enshrined in regulation, certainly not in the last seven years, leaving it in limbo. Today, Mr. Accardi continues to advocate for “legislation and regulation to be in place at the provincial level to ensure dedicated reserve funding through a full cost recovery model.” They’ve been waiting on this government for seven years to do something. What do we get? A private member’s bill. It’s a frustrating thing.

I’ll read this in a second, but these concepts are already in place and ready to be enshrined in regulation, and there they’ve sat for close to eight years. The precedent from our previous government was set with Bill 175. I’ll just go back to that original eight-year-old legislation. I quote from the law:

“Regulated entities”—municipalities, for example—“are required to prepare and approve a report concerning the provision of water services and waste water services.

“The act specifies that the full cost of providing services includes source protection costs, operating costs, financing costs, renewal and replacement costs and improvement costs. The full cost may also include other costs specified in the regulations,” which have never come forward from this government.

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“Each regulated entity is also required to prepare a cost recovery plan describing how it intends to pay the full cost of providing the services

“Once a cost recovery plan is approved, the regulated entity is required to implement it no later than the date specified by regulation.

“The regulations may also specify the maximum amount of any increase in the amounts payable by customers.”

This was enshrined in the legislation. Some of these points will be raised by the member from Simcoe North. We’ll give you four minutes at the end to kind of wrap that up, if that’s okay.

“The minister is authorized to make orders requiring regulated entities to do, or refrain from doing, such things as the minister specifies in order to ensure”—again, here’s the important phrase—“that the entity pays the full cost of providing the services.”

That was eight years ago. This brings us full circle to where we are today—not quite full circle, because, as I noted earlier, the member from Don Valley East made what I consider a noble attempt at imitation, but there are some differences that trigger a number of questions. Before I get to them, I’ll read from the new explanatory note from this proposed bill, Bill 237. There are some alterations.

“The bill establishes the Ontario Water Board as an” agency “of the crown.” Sounds like another crown agency. I don’t know whether we’re going to need this. The Ministry of the Environment is the lead on this stuff. I ask the member opposite to think back to Walkerton. I don’t know whether you want to hand over that kind of responsibility to an unelected, unaccountable board.

At any rate, there are some questions out there. Do we need a whole other level? Do we need another crown corporation to deal with an important issue like this?

“Regulated entities that provide water services or waste water services to fewer than 10,000 customers are required to amalgamate those services with the services of one or more other regulated entities....” It goes on and on. That idea has gone over like a lead balloon in rural Ontario.

“Regulated entities must prepare business plans”—there’s nothing wrong with that—“for the provision of ... services.... The plan must contain, among other things, an assessment of the full cost of providing water services or waste water services....” Again, we agree with that. That is all to the good.

Just to fast-forward here, I’ve given you a bit of an overview, comparing both pieces of legislation, and the concerns we have about calling for municipalities to amalgamate services, particularly among far-flung communities and in the north, where you’re dealing with remote communities that would have to link up with other organizations miles away.

One example: information from North Grenville; 2,000 users on service. It may take three or four other municipal partners to amalgamate services under this plan. I don’t know whether that’s realistic or whether that would be doable. Some of these people in the rural municipalities are a little nervous about that one.

I received a copy of a letter addressed to the Premier of Ontario. This was dated February 10. It came from AMO, and I quote: “AMO does not support this bill or the process that a private member’s bill brings;” calling it “one of the most significant changes to municipal water and waste water systems and governance.”

Also, AMO President Hume goes on to address another concern, and he states: “This bill would significantly restructure municipal water and waste water services, a core municipal responsibility, without consul-

tation....” It’s too bad there wasn’t some consultation on this legislation.

I would like to pass my time over, down the road, to the member from Simcoe North.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It’s a privilege to be able to address this private member’s bill today.

I have no doubt, and I would say that most people in this Legislature would agree, that we have problems with water infrastructure in Ontario. If a doctor diagnoses pneumonia, I think we can agree that there’s pneumonia. I just don’t like a prescription for leeches. That’s essentially what has been presented to us today.

Bill 237 is based on the key recommendations of the report of the water strategy expert panel which was submitted to Mr. Caplan when he was minister of the former Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. In fact, as minister, he had a fair amount of power in his hands to act in a previous capacity. Key recommendations of this report are reflected in Bill 237, including the proposed amalgamation of smaller water and sewer systems that serve fewer than 10,000 customers, full cost recovery for this infrastructure and the establishment of a regulator at the proposed Ontario Water Board for water rates and services.

When I got this bill, I checked around and asked others their opinion. The Council of Canadians, which has done a large amount of work on water in this country—in fact, it’s seen as a leading advocate for the protection of Canadian water and Canadian water systems—summarizes the bill as follows: “The act will result in the forced corporatization of municipal water and waste water services, the loss of public control and steep increases in tariffs for Ontarians, and absolve the provincial and federal governments of their responsibilities to address Ontario’s water and waste water infrastructure deficit.”

I would say that is not a particularly promising kind of bill; I think they have summarized it well. There are quite a few people who don’t like this bill. Clearly the Council of Canadians doesn’t. I don’t like this bill. Simply based on their assessment in that one paragraph, I would say that I don’t think this Legislature, and you as legislators, should be voting in favour of this bill.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association does not like this bill. They have a very solid reputation for action on water issues, and they have tremendous credibility in their assessment of these issues. You should know that they acted as counsel, representing concerned citizens of Walkerton—a group of 500 local residents—in the inquiry following the water contamination incident. CELA prepared reports in relation to the provision of safe drinking water, which were submitted to the Walkerton inquiry during phase two.

The organization has considerable experience and expertise in relation to the issues that were addressed in the expert panel’s report. In fact, they wrote a document: Comments of the Canadian Environmental Law

Association Regarding “Watertight: The case for change in Ontario’s water and wastewater sector.” In their review of the panel report, they found that a number of the panel’s key recommendations were fundamentally at odds with Justice O’Connor’s recommendations. CELA expressed great concern “that the governance model and the institutional arrangements recommended by the expert panel would significantly erode public accountability and transparency over the operations of water systems in the province.” Based simply on that statement, I have to say that one should not be voting in favour of this private member’s bill.

They went on: “Furthermore, it would unnecessarily divert a substantial amount of the provincial government’s resources and staff time to establishing new institutional structures and operations which will be largely redundant, costly and unwarranted. It is CELA’s view that the provincial government’s efforts should instead be directed to abiding by its commitment to implement all the recommendations from the part two report of the Walkerton inquiry.”

They note that the panel that wrote the Watertight report cited a company called EPCOR, which is owned by the city of Edmonton, as a model example of a corporatized utility, exactly what is being promoted in this bill. The well-respected Parkland Institute raised serious concerns about EPCOR’s accountability. The Parkland Institute comments:

“On EPCOR’s board there is a lack of participation and oversight by city council and other stakeholders. The utilities EPCOR controls are no longer the subject of democratic decision-making and there is no requirement for public transparency. The city cannot set the operational priorities like environmental protection or wisely managed, cost-efficient development. Finally, direct accountability to the public has been curtailed. The corporatized utilities model is no longer subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Key documents governing EPCOR’s accountability with the city are unavailable to the public.”

You have the Council of Canadians and the Canadian Environmental Law Association—nationally recognized organizations and advocates for clean, safe drinking water—saying that the basis for this bill is not the basis for protection of the water supply of Ontarians. I think on that basis alone, we in this chamber should be setting this bill aside, voting against it today, and moving on to actually dealing with the substantial problems we do have with water in this province.

1550

Now, the speaker from the opposition noted the opposition of AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I just want to read comments from their statement on January 5, 2010. They say, “The bill could result in the most significant restructuring of the governing, costing and operations of water and waste water services across Ontario. Restructuring of a core municipal government service to the degree that this private member’s bill proposes runs counter to the principle of building a

fully informed piece of legislation through a consultation process.... If the government’s intent is to pursue such a significant reform to municipal water services, then it should come forward with a white paper and undertake a full consultation with the municipal order of government.”

On the website cottagecountrynow.ca, in the area of Muskoka and Parry Sound, there’s commentary from East Ferris mayor Bill Vrebosch, who sits on the board of AMO. “I don’t understand what Caplan is doing,” he said, stating most bills are brought forward to the AMO before being presented in the House, but as a private member’s bill [it] doesn’t have to go through this process. ‘It’s kind of a backdoor approach.’” He noted the requirement for a minimum of 10,000 users in a system. He said that in the north this can be massive, saying “the water corporation’s expense would be massive potentially running from Burk’s Falls to Temagami.”

In North Grenville, there were comments in the Kemptville EMC by reporter Ashley Kulp that CAO Andy Brown had reported to the Committee of the Whole on January 18 that if the bill should pass, it would “drastically change the way North Grenville residents receive and pay for waste and waste water services.” In addition to a variety of changes he cites, it says that “the complete cost of the water will include source protection costs. However, Brown outlined that the province is fully funding these costs currently and ‘it is clear that this bill could end that practice and pass it on to the water users.... In the end, the proposed bill will remove decision-making for water and waste water from municipal councils,’ Brown explained.”

Now, I want to say to MPPs in the chamber who represent rural and small-town areas, those from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Oxford, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, those who deal with the problems that we face in Ontario in rural and small-town areas, that you have a responsibility to look out for the interests of your constituents, and if you fail to do so, you should be considering a career change when the next election comes, because this will not be a popular bill. This bill will not protect your residents. This bill will be a download. This bill will be stage two of the amalgamation process that many communities went through so painfully. So if you want to follow Mr. Caplan in his efforts to help you move on out of political life, then so be it, but if you want to protect your constituents, defeat this bill today.

I want to say to the Premier’s office that if, in fact, you want to say to your candidate in Leeds–Grenville that that candidate shouldn’t be respecting the interests and needs of those constituents, then turn your back on the people and have your ministers support this bill. If you want more amalgamation, more privatization and more downloading, then the vehicle to do that has arrived in this chamber, and today we have the opportunity to discuss it.

I find it very strange that the member is bringing this bill forward. As has been said, he was the Minister of

Public Infrastructure Renewal for a number of years; he was in place when the recommendations came forward. He could have acted then. Frankly, if he wanted to move forward on a Conservative piece of legislation, he could have, within cabinet, moved forward the regulations that would have allowed implementation of the earlier model of this bill.

I know that there's a significant problem with water and sewage services in this province. There is a figure being used of \$700 million a year that's being lost in water that is leaking out of the system. Even if that's an estimate that's double the value, \$350 million a year is a huge volume of cash that is being lost to the people of this province.

If we want to deal with that, what we need is a partnering between the provincial government and the municipalities to provide the funding to make sure that that infrastructure is corrected with the repayment coming from the savings. That is a lot of money to be, quite literally, running it into the earth—a lot of money. That approach, I think, can work.

We have seen a downloading to municipalities that has strangled infrastructure investment. That downloading has not been corrected, and thus we continue to see an underinvestment in our infrastructure. We will pay for that.

But to bring forward something that is not a solution and use the problem as a cover for passing these kinds of measures is a mistake. I call for everyone in this House to vote today against this bill and stand up for the environment and for public ownership of water systems.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I'm not sure what province the previous speaker lives in, but it can't be Ontario.

I read the Council of Canadians' paper as well. It was a fascinating piece. What are they opposed to? They're opposed to metering and cost recovery. The alternate of that is called perverse subsidy; it's what most environmentalists, like most of us on this side of the House, believe is wrong. You don't raise people's other taxes to use water and sewer to subsidize sprawl, because in addition to the problems that we have had in Canada with broken water and sewer systems, it's a massive subsidy because people don't pay their own way, because we've put sewer and water in places it doesn't make sense to do. Taxpayers can't sustain it.

This government, quite frankly, has done more than any other I can find in the country in the last seven years: Places to Grow, the greenbelt. Tax reform is repricing and replanning urban development to powerfully reinforce the containment and more efficient use of our water system. Far from being johnny-come-latelies, this is the next logical step in this process. Quite frankly, if previous governments had committed to the land use, transportation and sustainability strategies and the fiscal policy to support them, these kinds of policies would have had traction.

The other thing I find disappointing from my friends in the NDP is fear-mongering, because I'm happy to take

this bill to the honourable member's constituents in Toronto Centre, Toronto–Danforth and Trinity–Spadina and all my neighbours in downtown Toronto and talk about the values that are in this. This is about sustainability. This is a reward for people who are making environmentally positive choices, and it ends perverse subsidy. This is exactly what the member, in my mind, from Toronto–Danforth should be standing up and voting for in this House because this is advancing the values of his constituents.

What are those values that this bill is actually trying to achieve? This is a bill that moves us from living off the interest, understanding the scarcity of water in our watersheds—we are, in Toronto, in one of the most important watersheds in this country. All that you have to do is look at the ravines that bisect most of our constituencies to understand the powerful nature of water and its importance.

We need to have collaborative planning—hardly a threat to rural communities. I came from, as some of you have pointed out today, a part of the country that has low levels of population. We may want to look to our friends in Manitoba and the NDP government there that introduced watershed planned regional collaboration. Far from being something that didn't get them elected, it got a lot of New Democrats elected because there was a collaborative model around funding and planning, because this also brings to the table data, financing strategies and the kind of knowledge resources we need not only to protect our water supply and ensure we're living off the interest and not diminishing the principal of our water supplies; it allows to us do something that we Liberals believe in, and it separates us from the Tories and New Democrats.

The Tories who hacked and slashed and gutted infrastructure and downloaded created a crisis that led to water conservation problems and an enduring infrastructure crisis. The alternative is actually to build the tax burden, to continue to support policies of perverse subsidy or simply raise everyone's taxes, which seems to be the NDP's solution to most problems, and have everyone pay through the nose to deal with it.

1600

What planning does—and it's a system that started in Europe, called value planning—is it allows you to understand the return on investment, because we all understand that well-planned, efficient, environmentally sustainable water in cities builds the tax base. When you coordinate transportation and land use planning, you get and cluster development. You organize your resources so you are using less pipe and less infrastructure to serve people than you otherwise would. You not only save money on the cost side; you increase property values, you increase asset values and you create a growing tax base. Every time you put in efficient, well-planned streets, transit and water, you build the value of property, reducing the overall tax burden, because you raise your revenues from a growing tax base rather than a growing tax burden, consistent with the HST and our tax reform.

It's amazing to me the selectivity of some of my friends in opposition about who they listen to. I've heard New Democrats almost worship at the foot of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and all of a sudden this is an organization that has no value to them when they come out and endorse the HST. I hear them worship—I have acute respect for Jim Stanford and the CAW. As soon as the CAW comes out and says the HST will actually create hundreds of thousands of jobs and will continue to help sustain our auto sector, all of a sudden those folks are nothing but Liberal supporters' daily food bank.

I have a lot of respect for the Council of Canadians. So let's look at what they talk about. Forced amalgamation: There's no forced amalgamation. This is a choice-based system. Quite frankly, when you've spent as much time as I have in northwestern Ontario—I was mayor of a city, as was mentioned earlier, called Winnipeg. We took garbage from northwestern Ontario and brought it to Manitoba and put it in our landfill, because it was leaching into the watershed and the water supply of many municipalities in northwestern Ontario and destroying the quality of life, which undermined their tourism and their economic base.

Far from being a horrible thing that rural members and remote members should be afraid of, the local leadership of an MPP in working with mayors, community leaders, non-profit environmental groups and residents' groups to look at how we can get efficiencies of scale, protect our environment and secure our water resources for the future is exactly the kind of thing that you would expect the NDP to support, not be against. I'm quite happy to go out and knock on doors in any community, with any rural or remote member and not only defend this; I'd love to have the debate with the local New Democrats or Conservatives who would like to make the case against this. Because it's ironic to me that where the great water crises have been, for those of us who have proudly been Ontarians for a good chunk of our lives but are no less proud Canadians because we've lived in other places, are places like the Battlefords.

All of these horror stories that are being whipped up have actually been happening often at the hands of democratically elected municipal councils. That's not to diminish the role or importance of municipal councils. Simply to say that the construct of a local governance model is inherently the causal effect of a system of water failure is completely spurious, not really worthy of debate, in my mind.

I want to just conclude by saying that one group of people I like is Pollution Probe. They talk a lot in their last report on water management about something called "jurisdiction best-placed." They talk about the need for provinces and municipalities to create collaborative partnerships, to align resources, to get into better planning and to use data better. This comes pretty darned close. As far as AMO, this is the beginning of a consultation process. Even as a newbie here, I know a little bit about the legislative process. I know my friend

Mr. Caplan, the member for Don Valley East, is one of the most consultative people I've ever worked with, coming from the non-profit sector. We need not fear that, and I'm sure my friends at AMO don't.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the time to speak today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to join in the debate this afternoon on Bill 237. I want to go back to what my colleague Mr. Barrett was saying when he mentioned Bill 175. When the member originally stood up today, he mentioned the Walkerton inquiry. That's now 10 years—10 years in June. We promised the citizens of the province of Ontario that we would move quickly on those recommendations. That's why the previous government, the Progressive Conservative government, brought Bill 175 forward; and since that time, since the bill was proclaimed, we've had actually no action. There have been no regulations brought forward. This House has passed it. In fact, the government, right today, could bring regulations forward on Bill 175.

However, I understand that the bill will be controversial. I've got letters here from the Council of Canadians. There's a form letter being sent out to a number of people who are objecting to the bill. They're asking us to vote against it, and I can sympathize with them. But this is the first step. It's a step where we debate second reading here in the Legislature, and if this House passes the bill or it passes second reading today, we have the opportunity to go to committee. That's how this process works.

You know what? The Council of Canadians can come and bring their points forward. The environmental law association can bring their points forward. Some of our constituents—even AMO can bring their concerns forward. We can make amendments to the bill.

I recall being part of the Bill 175 hearings. Some of the folks came from the Ontario Sewer and Water Main Construction Association. You know what? I remember they brought in a cross-section of a 16-inch cast iron pipe that they'd had cut out. Right in front of our eyes they showed us a pipe that had been cut out, and it was down to four inches in the centre. That's how much iron had built up inside the pipe.

We need do something. Sitting back and complaining and saying that this legislation is no good or that Bill 175 is no good is not good enough. We have to make sure those pipes are repaired in an orderly fashion and in a fashion that will be good for the environment, as well as for the citizens and their drinking water in Ontario.

I don't have a problem, as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party, seeing this bill go to committee and listening to AMO, listening to our constituents and the Council of Canadians. I've had a great deal of work with the Council of Canadians just this year with the site 41 issue up in Tay township. They were strong

advocates and helped us a tremendous amount—Maude Barlow and her group.

When we look at this, we have to keep an open mind. The bill does cover full-cost recovery, which is something Bill 75 did as well. However, you know what? This doesn't prohibit municipalities in Ontario from getting grants like the stimulus package or from some of our infrastructure programs or the Canada-Ontario infrastructure programs. Those are all programs that will still be available for municipalities.

I understand there is an impact on rural Ontario municipalities, the very small water systems, but you know what? I'm sure we can work around that with proper regulations and proper input. But I think to sit here and just to flatly turn down this kind of bill is no better than having no regulations for Bill 175. We brought that bill forward. We're disappointed that Bill 175 was never acted upon.

I think we should keep an open mind here. If the government will vote in favour of this and we can get it into some kind of committee hearings, I don't have a problem with that. I'd look forward to having those hearings, hearing the debate take place and moving forward with a clear vision for our water and waste water systems here in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: First of all, I want to congratulate the member for Don Valley East for having tabled this bill. It is a very, very important bill. I am a strong believer in water conservation.

I'm just going to speak about two issues that are contained in this bill: first of all, water metering and the second one is the regional system.

First of all, water metering: Way back when I first got elected on council and I became mayor in 1976, there was a public utilities commission in place. At that time, they were an elected body, and they came out with the issue of having metering for all households in the town of Rockland.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I was against it completely. We used to take one million gallons—not litres—a day of water, and after we got those meters in, we cut it down to 250,000 gallons a day. Three quarters of the water consumption was cut. This is why I'm a strong believer in water metering.

First of all—besides that—when the government is allowing municipalities to go ahead with projects for which we are giving them grants, no grants should be given to any municipality that does not have water meters in operation. I have a municipality that did purchase water meters, but they're not in operation. They have water meters at the filtration plant, but they're not operating in every home. So, really, there's no gain there because from the tap it goes to the waste water, and again it becomes very expensive.

1610

Secondly, the regional water system—way back in the late 1980s, there was J.L. Richards engineering in

Ottawa, a well-known engineering firm that came out with a proposal down in my area of having a regional water system. It would have cost us \$31 million to serve nine different municipalities. We didn't get the support of the government at the time, and one municipality said, "No. Do you know how much this is costing up to now, and we're not finished yet?" We're up to over \$80 million just to install the water system in those municipalities.

I have a good example here at the present time. They will all be meeting the minister next week. North Glengarry needs the water. They were going to connect to St. Isidore, and it would have cost \$27 million just to service 380 households. I said, "It's impossible, \$27 million. Even if you get one third-one third from the feds and the province, it's not enough." Now they're going to go to Cornwall and the St. Lawrence Seaway and they will service six municipalities at the cost of \$52 million. I fully support that one because it is going to be a regional one, but all the others—I'm looking at the municipality of Russell right now—\$23 million. They could have been part of that \$31 million, but the government at the time didn't push any municipality to go for regional. This is why it's very important.

The minister mentioned all the leaks or the breakage here in Toronto. We have a system in place in Ontario now where you could repair all the water mains without digging any trench. It is available. The first project was done in Hamilton, I believe, and it happened to come right from my riding. Caesar's Plumbing is in place right now to fix all those leaks without having to do any trenches and digging in the street that would disrupt the traffic or any business.

I really strongly believe, like the member from the other side said, that we should pass the second reading, and if there are amendments, let's do it at their hearing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Caplan, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. David Caplan: First of all, I'd like to thank all of my colleagues who took the time to comment on Bill 237. The members from Haldimand-Norfolk, Toronto-Danforth, Toronto Centre, Simcoe North and Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, I thank you very much.

I agreed with many of the comments; I disagreed with others. I must say that the member from Toronto Centre particularly impressed me. I think he showed why the people of Toronto Centre have wisely sent somebody who has a tremendous, broad sense of public policy and understanding of these kinds of matters, and will bring that wealth of experience to matters that bear here in this Legislature. I thought he made tremendous sense and brought a great deal.

My colleague from Toronto-Danforth, unfortunately, did not add much of substance to this debate. I say to the member from Toronto-Danforth, I would be happy to debate you here or in any place around the province of Ontario when it comes to water conservation, when it comes to infrastructure investment, when it comes to

regional planning. Sir, I know that I could beat you hands down any day of the week and twice on Sunday.

I say to my friend from Simcoe North, I know that he has fought battles around water, and I give him a lot of credit because it is a tremendous resource and it is of tremendous importance to the people whom we represent. I do know that he has tremendous understanding and is wise in these matters.

The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell I think spoke from very practical experience about the nature of water metering, conservation and the level of investment that’s required.

My colleagues here in the House, this is incredibly important not only for today but for the Ontario that we want tomorrow, the Ontario that will be strong and prosperous, that will have health and safety available, because water is one of our most precious resources. It is something that we have treated with disregard. It must end and it must end now. I do urge you to pass Bill 237 so that we can get on with the job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members’ public business has now expired.

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DES PETITS IMMIGRÉS BRITANNIQUES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 58, standing in the name of Mr. Brownell.

Mr. Brownell has moved second reading of Bill 241, An Act to proclaim British Home Child Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Brownell?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I ask that Bill 241 be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy? So ordered.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We’ll now deal with ballot item number 59.

Mrs. Witmer has moved private members’ notice of motion number 127.

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

Motion agreed to.

SUSTAINABLE WATER AND WASTE WATER SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA VIABILITÉ ET L’AMÉLIORATION DES RÉSEAUX D’APPROVISIONNEMENT EN EAU ET D’EAUX USÉES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Our final ballot item is number 60, standing in the name of Mr. Caplan.

Mr. Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 237, An Act to sustain and encourage improvement in Ontario’s water and waste water services and to establish the Ontario Water Board. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some nays.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The bill is carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Caplan?

Mr. David Caplan: I move that it be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government? Agreed. So ordered.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I move adjournment of the House.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Ms. Jeffrey has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 am.

The House adjourned at 1617.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Leeds–Grenville	
Vacant	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Eric Hoskins, Pat Hoy
Norm Miller, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziatti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, Reza Moridi
David Oraziatti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Yasir Naqvi, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Michael Prue
Khalil Ramal
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
France Gélinas, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Sophia Aggelonitis, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qadri
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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