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(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 3 May 2011**

**Mardi 3 mai 2011**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 3 May 2011

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 3 mai 2011

*The House met at 0900.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

*Prayers.*

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**TIME ALLOCATION**

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 21, 2011, on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 151, An Act to enact the Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, 2011 and to amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2011 sur la modernisation du régime de tenure forestière en Ontario et modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la durabilité des forêts de la Couronne.

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

Mr. Phillips has moved government notice of motion number 55. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be deferred to the conclusion of question period for deferred votes.

*Vote deferred.*

**FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2011**

**LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT  
LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION  
ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE**

Mr. Sousa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 181, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Debate?

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** I'll be sharing my time with the member from St. Catharines.

I'm happy to rise today to lead off on the second reading debate of the Fire Protection and Prevention Amendment Act, 2011, a bill to enact labour and employ-

ment amendments to part IV of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.

I'm also pleased to be joined in leading off today's debate by my colleague the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

I know everyone in this House will join Minister Bradley and me in expressing our deepest gratitude to the firefighters of this province, in saying thank you to Ontario's firefighters for their hard work yesterday, today and tomorrow. It has been said that when someone becomes a firefighter, their greatest act of bravery has been accomplished. What they do after that is all in the line of work.

As Ontario's Minister of Labour, my mission is to advance safe workplace practices that are essential to the well-being of Ontario's workers, including those like our firefighters who put their lives on the line every day.

Our government is committed to working with our fire safety partners to keep our communities and our firefighters safe. It is this concern for safety that was at the centre of the consultations with fire sector partners undertaken by both the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Ministry of Labour. This proposed legislation that resulted from these consultations will bring greater clarity and uniformity to the issue of mandatory retirement in the fire sector for the sake of firefighters, our fire services and the public they serve.

Speaker, you will know that prior to the introduction of Bill 181, a motion was passed in this House by unanimous consent on March 10, 2011. That motion, brought forward by our colleague the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, recognized the important role Ontario firefighters play every day in keeping our communities safe. The motion made mention of evidence of the increased health and safety risks to firefighters over the age of 60. It is also important to note that the motion reflects current practice and upholds a recent Human Rights Tribunal decision.

As I mentioned, that motion received all-party support in calling upon the Ontario government to introduce legislation to allow for the mandatory retirement of full-time firefighters who battle fires on the front lines. Today's proposed legislation under Bill 181 is the result of consultations that were initiated by request of this Legislature following unanimous consent to proceed.

The proposed legislation we are discussing today actually addresses two issues of concern to the fire community. The first is mandatory retirement, and the second addresses duty of fair representation. I will speak to both

this morning but will begin by addressing the proposed amendments around mandatory retirement for salaried firefighters regularly assigned to fire suppression duties.

In 2005, the Legislature eliminated mandatory retirement in Ontario for most employees with the passage of the Ending Mandatory Retirement Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005. That legislation amended the definition of age in the Human Rights Code to remove the upper age limit of 65 as it applied to discrimination in employment.

However, the Ending Mandatory Retirement Statute Law Amendment Act did not change the bona fide occupational requirement exception to the prohibition against discrimination in employment. To be clear, what this means is that the Human Rights Code continues to allow for mandatory retirement where age can be shown to be a bona fide occupational requirement. Importantly for the amendment we are discussing today, mandatory retirement at age 60 for firefighters engaged in suppression activities has generally been found by the Human Rights Tribunal to be a bona fide occupational requirement.

Tribunals have reviewed extensive medical evidence and have generally found that age is a very significant contributor to the risk of cardiac events among firefighters. There is a significant increase of cardiac disease around the age of 60, and the safety consequences of such an event for a firefighter, the public, and his or her colleagues may be grave.

Since its introduction, Bill 181 has received the support of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, who are here today. It acknowledges their concern for increased health and safety risks with age and demonstrates our collective concern for the well-being of Ontario firefighters.

We are all aware that firefighters engaged in active firefighting work under unique conditions. Their work is extremely physical and unpredictable. They contend with hazards such as intense heat, thick smoke and dangerous chemicals. They perform their duties under the most demanding and stressful of conditions. These are the reasons our bill would permit a mandatory retirement age of 60 or over for firefighters who are regularly assigned to fire suppression duties.

The retirement may be stipulated, however, in a collective agreement. If there is no such provision, however, in a collective agreement, or the provision that is currently in place provides for a mandatory retirement age younger than 60, the agreement would be deemed to contain the provision of mandatory retirement at 60 years of age.

In order to ensure a smooth transition for all parties, this deemed provision would come into effect two years after royal assent. This two-year period will provide an opportunity to negotiate provisions into a collective agreement that provide for retirement at an age of 60 or greater if the parties choose to do so. It also allows time for planning both by the municipal employer and by individual firefighters, prior to any new provision of their collective agreement coming into effect.

#### 0910

I would like to stress that our proposed changes on mandatory retirement generally reflect current practice in most municipalities. There are approximately 11,000 full-time firefighters in Ontario. We understand that only 65 of the 1,254 firefighters who retired between 2005 and 2009 were over the age of 60. We have also learned through our discussions that the average age of retirement for salaried firefighters in Ontario is 57.

In total, there are approximately 80 collective agreements in Ontario that cover firefighters under part IX of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. Of these 80 agreements, we know that about two thirds contain a mandatory retirement age. The vast majority of those already stipulate the age as 60. The amendment we are discussing today serves to reinforce what currently exists in the majority of firefighter collective agreements.

Also consistent with current practice is the recognition that salaried firefighters involved in fire suppression duties may continue to make a valuable contribution to their local fire service in other ways. To that end, suppression firefighters would not be compelled to retire if their employer could accommodate them by assigning them to other duties without causing the employer undue hardship. For example, front-line firefighters who have reached the retirement age of 60 might have the opportunity to be assigned to other duties in the fire service, like fire prevention, if such positions exist.

I would also like to take just a moment to speak to the important work done across our province by volunteer firefighters. First, I want to reiterate that this legislation does not impact volunteer firefighters. We are very aware of the crucial role that volunteer firefighters play, especially in smaller municipalities, and the necessary and vital contribution they make to the safety of those towns and villages. Our volunteer firefighters take time away from their families to keep us safe, and we rely on their selflessness and dedication. Our consultations with the fire safety community included meetings with the representatives of volunteer firefighters. The information we received was of great value in developing the scope of this proposed legislation. Importantly, we were told that age restrictions for volunteers would have a significant negative impact on the quality of service in some of the volunteer-serviced communities. In some instances, age restrictions such as those contained in this bill may even shut down delivery of fire services in smaller communities. We know that, roughly, only 11% of volunteer firefighters are over the age of 60, and that these individuals provide invaluable experience to their departments.

We are, of course, aware that some municipalities have composite fire services. These composite fire services are fortunate to have salaried and volunteer firefighters working alongside one another. The firefighters within these composite departments are already differentiated for labour relations purposes under part IX of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997. A firefighter under part IX of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act,

1997, is defined as “a person regularly employed on a salaried basis in a fire department and assigned to fire protection services and includes technicians but does not include a volunteer firefighter.” Overall, retirement is a concept related to employment and being an employee and would not generally apply to a volunteer.

It's with these considerations in mind that the decision was made to bring forward proposed legislation that addresses mandatory retirement for salaried firefighters, as defined in part IX of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, who are regularly assigned to fire suppression activities.

I know that there has been some discussion since the introduction of this bill about its potential impact on pensions. To be clear, we do not anticipate an impact on pension systems as the bill generally reflects current practice and allows parties to agree on setting an age of 60 or higher in their collective agreement. By reflecting general practice and allowing for a negotiated age of over 60 to be set, we are providing local flexibility in those few instances where a firefighter's pension planning is currently based on a retirement age of 65 rather than 60.

The second component of the bill that we are debating today concerns the duty of fair representation. The Ontario Labour Relations Act imposes a duty of fair representation on unions across this province. The duty of fair representation requires unions to represent employees fairly by not acting in a manner that is arbitrary, discriminatory or in bad faith.

This requirement provides most other unionized employees with a statutory right to fair representation. However, because the provision is not replicated in the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, firefighters do not have this privilege. Currently, firefighters in Ontario are denied access to the labour relations board for duty of fair representation issues. Because of this, they must go instead to the courts or to the Human Rights Tribunal.

We believe, as do our fire sector partners, that the labour relations board is the appropriate venue for these matters. In fact, in discussing this issue with the parties involved, it became clear that there is no good reason why unionized firefighters should not have access to the labour board in the same way as most other union employees do.

This amendment brings uniformity to the way that firefighters are treated, as compared to most other unionized employees, with respect to the duty of fair representation. Quite simply, giving firefighters access to the Ontario Labour Relations Board in matters concerning the duty of fair representation is the right thing to do.

In order to ensure a smooth transition, we are proposing that this amendment on duty of fair representation would not come into effect until December 1, 2011.

In conclusion, Ontario's firefighters keep our families and homes safe. They do so with great bravery and dedication, and deserve our utmost respect. We have listened to the firefighters of this province and to the key stakeholders in the fire sector.

I am pleased to be joined today by members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the

Mississauga Fire Fighters Association. Welcome to Queen's Park. I am pleased that our government—

*Applause.*

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** By all means, give them a round of applause.

I am pleased that our government has introduced this legislation that recognizes the years of selfless service that firefighters give us. Our bill recognizes the importance of their health and safety as well as the hazardous nature of their work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our firefighters—our firefighters' commitment to the public, to the fire service and to the communities they serve. They continue to serve as an example for all of us. Our firefighters face risks that so many of us never have to. Our firefighters protect us, and so they deserve our protection and our thanks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all of you who do the job every day.

**0920**

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Go ahead.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Mr. Speaker—in this case, Madam Speaker—welcome this morning. It is a privilege to stand in the House today and to demonstrate support for this legislation.

I think we all know that emergency responders are essential to keeping our families and our communities safe. Whenever and wherever Ontario's families are in need, Ontario's firefighters are there. Likewise, when those same firefighters are in need, we as a Legislature should be there.

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Ministry of Labour have an excellent history of working together with our fire sector and those fire sector partners to raise the bar for stronger workplace health and safety. We achieved this when the government introduced presumptive legislation to compensate firefighters for their fire-related illnesses. Presumptive legislation ensures that our firefighters and their families are shielded from personal and financial hardship should their ability to contribute to our safety be cut short by job-related disease or occupational hazard. By introducing presumptive legislation when we did, Ontario became a North American leader in addressing disease and illness unique to firefighting.

The story is continuing, and today we are building our support for firefighters. If passed, our proposed amendments to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act would provide for a mandatory retirement age of 60 for full-time firefighters and establish a statutory duty of fair representation that would allow firefighters to take unfair representation complaints against their bargaining agents to the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

I will begin by discussing the amendment to set a minimum mandatory retirement age of 60 for full-time firefighters. When the provincial government passed the Ending Mandatory Retirement Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005, we did so to end age discrimination in the workplace by removing 65 as the mandatory age of retirement. Ontarians now have the opportunity to choose

when they retire and not have that decision made for them by some arbitrary number pulled out of a hat 50 years ago.

At the same time, we recognize that with age come physical limitations that could be a barrier to fulfilling such a physically demanding job as fire suppression. For that reason, the government did not change the so-called bona fide occupational requirement that allows employers to set a good-faith mandatory retirement age because of the nature of the employment.

In the case of Ontario's full-time firefighters, as defined under part IX of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, more than 90% work under a collective agreement, under a fire protection agreement, that contains a mandatory retirement provision. For those municipalities that do not have a mandatory retirement age in the collective agreements, some have addressed the issue of mandatory retirement either through policy or bylaws.

Since the Human Rights Code was amended and mandatory retirement was eliminated in 2006, firefighters have been arguing that mandatory retirement policies should be permitted in their sector. It has come up in meetings that both my colleague the Minister of Labour and I have held with representatives of the firefighting community, and I'm sure with other members of the Legislature. It has been the subject of many letters we have received from members of this House.

Speaker, you will recall that last month, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin brought forward a motion calling on the government to introduce legislation allowing for mandatory retirement of firefighters involved in suppression activities. That motion was passed unanimously, demonstrating across-the-board support for action being taken on this important workplace issue.

If passed, the legislation will allow a mandatory retirement age no lower than 60 for front-line full-time firefighters but still permit the municipalities to set a mandatory retirement age above 60, provided that age is set out in a collective agreement. In cases where a collective agreement does not include a mandatory retirement age, these municipalities will have two years following proclamation to negotiate a new retirement provision before 60 becomes the age for mandatory retirement. Furthermore, firefighters would not be required to retire if the employer can accommodate them without undue hardship.

We believe that the best way to address the matter of mandatory retirement is through collective agreements, as they will codify what is already in practice in most cases. Indeed, our proposed legislation for mandatory retirement already reflects current practices. For example, the average age of retirement for firefighters in Ontario is 57. By the time they reach 60, most will have already been retired for three years. In short, the government is proposing to bring greater clarity on mandatory retirement for Ontario firefighters and drive consistency across the province.

It has also been designed to give the municipalities the transitional flexibility to sit down with firefighters to

negotiate a retirement provision. It will spare municipalities and unions the burden of defending their mandatory retirement policies as a bona fide occupational requirement in the case of a potential human rights challenge. For example, London spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on a case before the Human Rights Tribunal. The tribunal ruled that there is a significant increase in health and safety concerns with firefighters over the age of 60. The ruling stated that certain emergency duties were associated with a risk of death that was markedly higher than the risk associated with non-emergency duties. Fire suppression was associated with the highest risk: It was 10 to 100 times higher than for non-emergency duties.

At the same time, we have been asked: Why only firefighters? What about the 18,000 volunteer firefighters who are the backbone of fire halls across the province? The question is: This will affect full-time firefighters; why not part-time firefighters? In our consultation with the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, and others, indeed, we heard that there is a lack of support among the volunteer firefighter community for mandatory retirement. The mandatory retirement of volunteer firefighters could leave some fire services short-staffed and force others to close. The age of retirement for volunteer firefighters is more appropriately dealt with at the discretion of the municipality.

I would like to turn to the issue of the duty of fair representation for firefighters. As things stand today—the Minister of Labour made some reference to this—in cases where a firefighter believes his or her bargaining agent has acted in bad faith or contravened the duty of fair representation, that firefighter has few options for recourse. Unlike their friends and neighbours in most unionized jobs, firefighters do not have access to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for duty of fair representation complaints. By sealing off access to the Ontario Labour Relations Board, firefighters have had to take the fight to civilian courts, and in some cases to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. These routes are always more expensive and time-consuming than complaining to the Ontario Labour Relations Board, putting an unfair burden on the firefighter, the bargaining agent and the employer. And those routes do not always have the same legal and technical expertise in labour relations as does a labour relations board. We believe that when the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, came into effect, it was an oversight not to have granted this provision to firefighters. Therefore, we are looking to rectify this in our proposed legislation.

As with mandatory retirement, duty of fair representation is an important workplace concern for Ontario firefighters. It has percolated up from the floor at the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association's annual conventions—and I would like to note that Fred LeBlanc, president of the OPFFA, and Barry Quinn, secretary-treasurer, are with us in the gallery today. I know they've had many deliberations of this kind at their conventions and other venues. So this issue has been on the radar at

meetings with both the Minister of Labour and with me, and again has been the subject of correspondence by members of this House requesting action.

By introducing a duty-of-fair representation amendment to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, we are correcting an imbalance and ensuring that our brave firefighters have the same access to the Ontario Labour Relations Board as most other unionized employees under the Ontario Labour Relations Act.

**0930**

Specifically, the proposed legislation would do as follows: It would establish that a bargaining agent representing firefighters shall not act in a manner that is arbitrary, discriminatory or in bad faith in the representation of employees, and that a firefighter would have access to the Ontario Labour Relations Board in cases where he or she believes that a bargaining agent has contravened their duty of fair representation.

Fair and balanced labour relations are an important part of our government's Open Ontario plan to strengthen our economy and create more jobs for our families.

In conclusion, I'd like to say that the government is committed to working closely with our partners in the fire sector to prevent fires, promote community safety and support firefighters in the dangerous job that they do. These are important issues, and we feel it is equally important to respond to our fire stakeholders as soon as possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our fire safety partners, such as the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, AMO and the city of Toronto for taking the time to sit down with us and to discuss the issue.

I would also like to thank the Minister of Labour and his ministry, and staff at my ministry, for all the work that has gone into this bill. I think we recognize, as members of the Legislature, particularly when we've had the privilege of serving in government, that much of the work in actually crafting the legislation takes place under the auspices of the ministry officials, those who work on an ongoing basis in the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and, of course, in this case, where the lead happens to be, in the Ministry of Labour.

We're asking for the support of the proposal because by working together, we will continue to make Ontario a leader in community and firefighter safety.

I know that all members of the Legislature, at one time or another, have dealt with this particular issue. I think you've had meetings with representatives who have put forward the case for this legislation and have made a compelling case. While I could never speak for any other political party in the House, I have noted publicly that there has been some support for a proposal of this kind.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I thought you were on all sides.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** The member for Kenora is out of his seat and interjecting from a place out of his seat, but because of his longevity, he's allowed to do so.

I'm pleased to offer those remarks about this legislation. I'm pleased that the Minister of Labour has been able to indeed offer his particular comments on this legislation as well.

I anticipate that, as usual, we will have a debate of substance in this House, and if need be, there will be other opportunities to intervene in this. But I think the kind of representations we have all received on this and the kind of dialogue that we've engaged in have been helpful in terms of bringing the legislation to this particular period in this House.

I would lastly like to commend my colleague the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, who brought forward in private members' hour a resolution dealing with this matter. I was pleased to note that there was, I think, if I'm correct, unanimity in supporting that particular resolution that was before the House. It was yet another example of how, on certain issues—there are always issues where there are significant divisions, and that's part of the political process, but on this particular issue, I think there appeared to be a good deal of consensus.

The details always have to be worked out, the legislation has to be analyzed, and we will certainly endeavour to do that as the debate flows in this House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'm pleased to be able to add some comments to the speech from the Minister of Labour and also from the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on Bill 181, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.

One of the key things that this bill is doing is it's going to bring in a mandatory retirement age of 60 for professional firefighters involved in fire suppression duties. I must admit, I'm a little bit conflicted about that. I'll be looking forward to hearing from our critic; I believe he's quite supportive of the bill.

I'm just speaking from a personal basis. Having had my wife start a physically active second career at age 45, I'm not sure whether she would necessarily want to be forced to retire at 60. However, I do note that most professional firefighters at this time retire at age—the average age of retirement is 57 years of age, so it's not likely to affect too many people.

I guess I'm thinking about the situation of people who actually do want to keep being involved in an active duty—maybe not very many of them, but there will be some, I would assume. I would wonder, with those people who want to keep active and be actively involved in fire suppression, how this bill will affect them.

I'm also conflicted because, just in the last year or so, we passed legislation doing away with mandatory retirement, so this is kind of flying in the face of that.

I'm sure that, in debate, these issues will be dealt with. I look forward to hearing from our critic, the member from Simcoe North, who I know is extremely supportive of firefighters and the police.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further comments and questions?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I'll be speaking to this bill in due course. I'm honoured to have the opportunity to do the lead for the New Democratic Party.

Some of my colleagues have already mentioned that the standing orders, of course, require this House not to sit on federal election days. Some have reflected on the fact that maybe it should not be required to sit on the day after federal elections, especially when the polls are closing at 9:30 in Ontario and 10 o'clock our time in BC.

But I do want to say this, and I've been struck since last night: I want to thank and congratulate Bob Rae for finally doing to the federal Liberal Party what he did to the Ontario New Democrats 20 years ago. He has my regard for that remarkable achievement. Somebody who could take out two political parties in the course of two decades truly has talents that haven't been exploited fully yet.

I find it remarkable that the Minister of Community Safety, who, of course, I have the greatest regard for, refers to Ontarians being able to choose when they retire. Please, sir: There are members of this chamber who decline to retire because they don't have full pensions.

There are all sorts of Ontarians who would love to retire. There are workers at the now-demised Atlas Steel in Welland who thought they had a pension and then discovered that they don't. We know what happened in the auto sector. If my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek were in the chamber today, he'd be reminding the minister of the now US Steel-owned Stelco plant in Hamilton.

I'm looking forward to speaking to the bill. One of the things is that this has got to go to committee, I suspect rather promptly, because we don't want this bill to be killed by a prorogation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Comments and questions?

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I listened intently while the Minister of Community Safety spoke on this issue. I want to pick up where my colleague from Welland left off.

The reality in Ontario today is that fewer and fewer people can actually retire. In my part of the province, literally thousands upon thousands of workers who thought they had a pension plan discovered that, well, in fact, the pension plan was more than slightly underfunded, so they're not able to retire—and many of them need to retire. They have worked long and hard for many, many years but they are not able to retire. So they watch the want-ad pages, looking from job to job: temporary jobs, part-time jobs—whatever they can put together.

0940

We're always happy to deal with legislation that addresses issues of retirement and pension. We just wish that this government would recognize the full breadth of the issues that need to be addressed here. We're quite happy to deal with this legislation. We think it should go to committee. But we are wont to ask: Where is this government? Why has this government failed to address the issues of the millions of Ontarians who cannot retire now because they don't have the pension that they

thought they were going to have and that they were told they were going to have? Why is this government completely missing in action on that front?

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further comments?

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** It's my privilege today to get up to speak to this bill, the Fire Protection and Prevention Amendment Act, 2011.

I too would like to add my voice to those who have already spoken, in expressing our gratitude to those who serve us every day in our fire services across the province. I have a few great guys that I know on the force in North Bay, as, coming from a small community, you get to know your firefighters and you get to know your police service. Certainly, they do a great service for us in our community of North Bay, so hats off to the North Bay firefighters today. I know that some of them are watching and I know that they're very interested in this legislation.

This legislation is about recognizing and respecting the unique physical and hazardous work firefighters do to keep our communities safe, and that's what this is all about: keeping our communities safe. It's about recognizing the significant increase in health and safety risks for firefighters over the age of 60 because of the hazardous and physically demanding nature of the job. We are so proud, as part of the McGuinty government, to introduce this legislation that would, if passed, allow mandatory retirement at the age of 60 for the province's full-time firefighters.

My colleagues on the other side have taken the opportunity to talk about other aspects of retirement, mandatory retirement and pension legislation, which are not in fact in debate today. Today we're talking about firefighters; we're talking about fire prevention and protection, and we're talking about our respect for our firefighters across the province.

Most municipalities, as you know, already include a mandatory retirement age for firefighters in their collective agreements. Our proposed legislation would, if passed, provide other municipalities with two years to negotiate a new retirement provision. The changes will only apply to full-time salaried firefighters who respond to emergency calls.

We've spent a lot of time talking with the firefighters across the province. We know that this is what they're looking for, and we're happy to be participating—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you. The Minister of Labour has two minutes to respond.

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you also to the members who have contributed to the debate.

Let's be clear what it is we're debating. I know that the members from the NDP went on about pension reform. By the way, it is our government that has enacted and has stimulated the discussion on pension reform in trying to encourage, across the way, their cousins in Ottawa to do the same.

But today we're not talking about pension reform. In fact, this bill is in keeping with the existence of what



already happens in practice. This is about finding ways to protect our brave men and women who are fighting fires on the front line. Medical evidence has indicated that, at a certain age, they're susceptible to harm, and we have to try to safeguard their position as well. What we are offering in this legislation is a deeming provision that indicates that if nothing is indicated, it's deemed to be age 60, but the collective agreement still allows for firefighters and municipalities to negotiate the retirement age. Because of the duty of accommodation, should it be available, it enables them to protect pensions if necessary, but that is in existence. That's the current practice in place now.

I'd like to take an opportunity to reinforce with the members opposite why this is here, why we're discussing this. We're discussing it because the members in the gallery have asked for it. They include Chris Varcoe, Ryan Coburn and Mark Train from the Mississauga professional firefighters. They include Fred LeBlanc and Barry Quinn from the Ontario professional firefighters. I'm also pleased that we have members from Guelph: Colin Hunter and Chris Dixon, who are here with us today. Guys, thank you so much for all you do. We're here for you and we'll do our best to try to protect you as well as you protect us.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further debate?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I first ask unanimous consent to stand down our lead on this second reading.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** The member has asked for unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Durham.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Thank you. Just following up from the Minister of Labour's remarks, recognizing Fred LeBlanc and other members who dutifully protect our communities, I want to also recognize some of the leaders in fire prevention, fire protection and fire suppression in my riding. Certainly, the chief in Clarington, Gord Weir, is the fellow I know well. I know him to be a very respected citizen and a truly committed firefighter, professionally. As well, in Scugog, Richard Miller is the chief. For the most part, Scugog is serviced by a primarily volunteer brigade, but does comply with very high standards. In Uxbridge, there's Chief Scott Richardson.

These are the three communities that I represent: Scugog, Uxbridge and Clarington, Clarington being the largest urban area, made up of many smaller municipalities and, of course, many volunteer firefighters as well.

In that respect, I want to recognize Ron Cordingley, who just retired from the Uxbridge brigade. Ron had 40 years of service and served his community well. In fact—I'm just reading a little part here—"Ron Cordingley paused on April 12 to admire the roses, a gift from his wife, Gayle Cordingley, to mark his recent retirement after 40 years of service with the Uxbridge Fire Department. April 12, 2011."

Ron said: "When the pager goes off you never know what you're going to get. You've got to have a lot of trust

in your fellow firefighters because often your life is in their hands."

That's kind of the backdrop. I don't think I've heard anything critical. Everything I've heard, even from our member who responded to the opening day, Mr. Hillier from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington—he was very supportive, as I would expect from other members of our caucus as well, in their short, brief time to be able to respond. I know I often hear, in caucus, comments from the member from Simcoe North, Mr. Dunlop, who's also the chair of the committee that I was just on. He would speak very highly of Bill 181, the Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. In fact, I think it was a member from our caucus who initiated the option of dealing with the retirement issue.

If I look at the bill, I actually am quite surprised, and I might say supportive, that the bill, if passed, allows mandatory retirement at age 60 for the province's salaried firefighters. I guess the issue then becomes recognizing the unique, physical, hazardous work that firefighters do to keep communities safe. The proposed change to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act would standardize the retirement age across the province. That standardization, in a climate where people are living longer, being fit longer and having choices, freedom of choice—in fact, this very government was the one that ended mandatory retirement at 65. So you look at the individual choice in the overall scheme of things.

When we look at the issue before us, I think it's important to listen to and work with the association as well, and recognize that the work they do is physical, stressful and rather challenging in most regards. The average age of retired firefighters in Ontario is 57.

The proposed legislation would allow firefighters who believe their local association is not representing them fairly to take their complaints to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. So there is a provision for them to look for exemption.

Most municipalities today have a provision within their collective agreement to include mandatory retirement of firefighters. The proposed legislation would, if passed, give municipalities two years to negotiate new provisions to encourage mandatory retirement.

#### 0950

There's also a provision, I suspect at the individual level, to go to the labour relations board or, for that matter, the human rights board. I suspect that would happen. Look at some of the goalies playing in the Stanley Cup semifinals who are now over 40 years of age and doing a fairly good job, I would suggest to some. But I really believe that local councils are also concerned with this.

I put it right back to the front-line personnel in the service, effectively defending our community. They work in a team, as Ron Cordingley stated. Now, if someone on that team is unable to do their share fairly, I think there are questions that remain there. I suspect that's what this is about, ultimately: Is there a provision for physical ability to conduct the duties that you are charged to per-

form? Then you look at the differential tasks within firefighting. There are command posts, where persons certainly wouldn't be jumping up on roofs and jumping into the flames, I would hope—remember that fire last year in Toronto where the firefighter fell into the flames and was rescued, remarkably, off of the wall that was where they were charging the fire? So I think that group safety becomes an important part of it.

Then you look at what jobs people could do. Education and outreach is very important in fire prevention and education. I see it in my community. As I said, I recognize and commend the firefighters' educational function. One of the real issues on municipal measurements of performance function is to cut back on the number of fires, false alarms and all these other things, and their education serves a very important part of it.

But mandatory retirement does become controversial. I suspect that at the end of the day—I would wait for our critic to make that final commitment, but everything I've heard is that we would be supportive of this legislation. I suspect that if there's some need, we will hear from the association—Mr. LeBlanc and others are here—on what needs to be amended.

The bill is quite small. In fact, I have a copy of it here. It's really only one, two, three, four pages. Then it's half French and half English, so it's really two pages long. I can read the explanatory note here:

“The bill amends several amendments of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.

“Section 46.1, which imposes a duty of fair representation on bargaining agents for firefighters”—which I mentioned—“and sections 46.2, 46.3, 46.4 and 46.5, which provide mechanisms for enforcing the duty, are added to the act. These provisions come into force on December 1, 2011.” That's this year, obviously.

“Section 53.1, which deals with mandatory retirement for firefighters who are regularly assigned to fire suppression duties, is added to the act.” That's what I was talking about, the differential duties. Someone who's in fire education, fire inspections or stuff like that, I would suspect would want to stay working. With all the experience they've accumulated and insights, working in the fire marshal's office or something like that, I think, would be a first-class option for some of them. “A collective agreement may include a provision requiring such firefighters to retire”—so it's “such firefighters,” those on suppression duties—“at a specified age of 60 or over. Such firefighters shall retire at the age specified in their collective agreement, unless their employers can accommodate them without undue hardship.”

That's where it becomes kind of an issue. It depends on what class. If they're a chief, a captain or some other position within the fire force, I would think that they would want to—I mean, I'm over 65 and I have no intention of retiring. Now, I'm not climbing up on roofs, ladders, or doing anything else, but I walk up from the GO train, I walk up from Union Station every morning and I would like to think that I could run a marathon with a week or two of training. I have run them in the past—

I've done triathlons—and I think being active is extremely important.

Once you stop doing things—it's important; at my age, I look at this—you never do them again. That's a pretty serious fact when you look at it, and I've considered it. I say to my wife, “I haven't skydived since I was about 22, and I think I have to do that again.” Mr. Miller here regularly flies his airplane, and he would certainly have to get medical tests to do that. Would you want somebody to tell you that you can't fly your plane anymore? Mr. Shurman as well, I would suspect—with all due respect, I should mention their riding names. But they are both very qualified individuals.

It's the same thing. Professional firefighters today train to a very high level, and this section, section 53.1, clearly talks about those who are assigned to fire suppression duties. I don't want to in any way not inform the public. That's the real issue here: that those who are actually in front-line duties would be required to retire at 60.

As I've said before, the bill doesn't do a lot of other things. There's a two-year limit to get this thing fully enforced across the province. Now, if there's a suggestion that somehow—the wording is very important legally: It's the duty to accommodate. If this thing goes to the labour relations board, as suggested in some of my readings—considering that you haven't been fairly represented, the firefighter may appeal to that board. But I would hope the Ontario Labour Relations Board or any kind of mediated solution here would respect the wishes of the force itself. The people who are listening here today, in fact, should work with the profession. This is sort of like the armed forces. My oldest boy, of course, was in the armed forces. Years ago, there was a prohibition against women doing certain tasks within the armed forces. We've moved a long way in that world, and we need to make sure that individual rights are respected and that they have a process to resolve disputes that looks at individual conditions, not legislated conditions, i.e., some sort of magic age of 60.

I would suggest that will be dealt with, but the residual problem then becomes, for small towns like Uxbridge or Scugog, potentially even Clarington—for a time there has been plenty of pressure on municipalities to have full-time professional firefighters on duty all the time, which is the ideal goal. It's all predicated on the health of the local economy, I suppose, to make that happen.

Training is very important in this, and the whole idea of who the volunteers are. Are they appropriately trained? Maybe there's a role here for persons being deployed in a training role to make sure that volunteers have the tools and the skills to do the firefighting that's necessary in the community. I don't want to enter into the debate because, as I said before, there should be processes in place to resolve these disputes, certainly not me yammering on here in the brief time I've been allocated to speak to this bill.

I am interested—today is our caucus day, and I am certain that this will be caucused. I'm convinced. Our whip and I were just saying a few minutes ago that we

are supportive of the bill, from everything I see and everything I feel and everything I've heard from my community. I mentioned the chiefs. I want to hear from members, and I'm telling the members here that I do meet with association representatives whenever I'm asked. I see them out at every event that I'm at in the community, whether it's in parades or volunteering at other local events. They are the shoulders of our community, and I want that to be the final impression I leave here today. I'm proud to stand for them, whether it's the repatriation parades along the 401, through my riding. I'm usually there with the firefighters, standing on the bridge or bridges that I've attended, and they do that with the same sense of duty that they bring to the very profession they're in. It's a call to action.

It's an interesting read when you listen to Ron Cordingley's remarks, quite a lengthy report of his retirement. He was sad to leave. I don't think he really wanted to leave, from everything I read in there. He felt that his team—after 40 years, he certainly was 60, I'm sure, without attributing any age to him. But I'm sure he felt that his team and his function as a volunteer was that he'd still be an admirer of the team, and that's kind of how he left it.

#### 1000

I have heard comments from AMO on the firefighters' mandatory retirement. This is "To the Immediate Attention of the Clerk and Council." It says:

"(i) impose a duty of fair representation on bargaining agents for firefighters and as such sets out that the process for enforcing the duty and enabling complaints is to be addressed through the labour relations board, rather than the court system." I agree with that.

"(ii) authorize collective agreements to set age 60 or over as the mandatory retirement for firefighters who are regularly assigned to fire suppression duties and they shall retire at the age specified in their collective agreement, unless their employers can accommodate them without undue hardship." This is the duty-to-accommodate language. We've got to watch that one. "After two years from the date of royal assent ... collective agreements that do not contain a mandatory retirement provision or that provide for a mandatory retirement age under 60 ... will be deemed to contain a provision requiring retirement at ... 60. The bill's provisions apply despite the Human Rights Code." So there it is. "The legislation does not affect volunteer firefighters," which is clear. But it will certainly set a mandatory trend if the association feels that's the case.

"While the bill proposes that complaints about representation will be addressed through the labour relations board, rather than the court system, there are some unique elements about the process for firefighters. For example, if the labour board determines that the bargaining unit has violated their duty of fair representation, the employer can be ordered to reinstate the firefighter with compensation. It would seem that the municipality holds the liability if the fire association has broken the law." This is a letter I'm reading from AMO to councils. I'm sure the association is aware of it. It's dated April 19.

"The proposed legislation does not define fire suppression, but hinges on the phrase 'regularly assigned to fire suppression duties.' Does this include those who do fire suppression training? Does it include others? The bill, as constructed, means that this too is negotiated locally." I think there need to be standards there, and I again call on the association to bring that to the minister's attention. "It may become a patchwork of different 'definitional' approaches across Ontario.

"Setting aside the limited evidence that there is a health and safety risk due to the unique physical and hazardous work of suppression firefighters, the bill proposes that a municipal employer is to provide accommodation if they do not wish to retire. While the tests of undue hardship contained in the bill are those within the Human Rights Code, it appears that only the municipality has a role in the accommodation process and that the fire association and the individual firefighter do not."

This is downloading, ultimately, the responsibility to accommodate. In a small town—I see the minister is here from northern Ontario—the duty to accommodate becomes an issue—not out of disrespect, but out of trying to put this on the table and have the legislation. I see that the minister is listening; perhaps taking notes. That should be clarified, and this is something that will come up through ROMA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and Good Roads as well as AMO. I think it's a reasonable request, because many municipalities are struggling.

I know that some local service realignment funding has been done recently in the budget. But I looked at the numbers on OMPF money, the Ontario municipal fund—this is a bit of an aside—and they were uploading some of the services delivered by the province, but there is still a gap. All the OMPF money wasn't continued; it was pulled back to the province to offset some of the uploading that was done.

Municipalities aren't flush with cash. Their only source of revenue is to increase the MPAC tax rate. When I'm talking about municipalities in my riding, most of them—Uxbridge is a perfect example; a classic example. It has been greenbelted; it has no place to grow. It's like Toronto: Toronto can only grow by building up. It has filled up all the space, so now they buy a house, knock it down and build 50 houses on top of each other. Their source of revenue is very much a determinant of what your local taxes are, and that applies to small-town Ontario in a very profound way, because they have a problem with low industrial-commercial tax rates.

These are some considerations of the bill. Again, I just put them on the table. They are serious; they're raised by municipal leaders. They need to be dealt with within the bill or in the context of hearings, and I would suggest that's a good way to resolve it. The intent of the bill is quite idealistic and quite well supported. It is these little anomalies that need to be dealt with, and provisions to resolve issues other than an expensive legal route.

I say on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak: This is a good bill. It protects the public. It protects professional

firefighters. The duty to accommodate is the only little glaring example of how we need some fine-tuning before we make this a perfect solution to a group of individuals who defend and protect our communities. We completely thank them for the work they do on a daily basis in putting themselves at risk to save others. That's a noble cause, and I can tell you that we'd be the first ones in line to be there for you. This bill—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you. Questions and comments?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** It appears that if I get around—nah, I'm not even going to get around to starting my lead this morning, so we'll have to wait until next time.

New Democrats are going to support the bill on second reading, of course. We've agreed with firefighters over the course of years now, as they've come here on their lobby days and beyond those days, calling for a restoration of a retirement age for firefighters.

I've always been the beneficiary of good counsel from firefighters in my community. A dear friend and leader in the firefighting community, Mike Fowler, has always provided candid and capable advice on these sorts of matters, and for me, his say-so is good enough 99.9% of the time. Fred LeBlanc happens to join Mike Fowler; that simply reinforced the good judgment of Mike Fowler—or his predecessor, Henry Labenski. Andrea Horwath and I were down in Welland with Malcolm Allen, who of course got elected yesterday. We were down at the King Street fire hall, and who was there? Several firefighters, but Henry Labenski—the guy's retired, for Pete's sake, and he's still hanging around the fire hall. Trust me, steelworkers don't go back to the mill after they're retired to hang around the furnace. When they're fortunate enough to be retired, they say, "Enough is enough."

The bill has got to go to committee. I'm worried about this government proroguing before June 2 and this bill then dying. That would be a real setback, because the Liberals are scurrying right now. Make no mistake about it. After last night's federal election results, there are some very nervous people in the strategy rooms—if they have them anymore—of the Ontario Liberal Party.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further comments?

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words, and I'm pleased to see that there does seem to be strong support amongst all three parties for supporting this legislation. Ultimately, the legislation is about respecting and recognizing the unique physical and hazardous circumstances of professional firefighters to keep their communities safe. It also recognizes the significant increase in the health and safety risks to firefighters over the age of 60 as a result of the challenging work that they do.

Like almost everyone in the Legislature, I work very closely with the professional firefighters in my community—that's Thunder Bay—and I welcome all the firefighters who are here in the assembly today. Certainly, over the last number of years, the issues that are important to professional firefighters have been made well known to me and others. I've enjoyed the work that

we've done and the fact that our government has been able to be so supportive of a number of pieces of legislation that are so important to them.

In Thunder Bay, I worked closely with Eric Nordlund and Les Newman. I do want to send best wishes out to the past president of the Thunder Bay Professional Fire Fighters Association, Guido Nadin, who has some health challenges these days, but as all those who know Guido know, he is fighting back strongly and vigorously and is a remarkable fellow.

This is important legislation, and again, I am grateful that the Minister of Labour has brought this forth. Again, I think it does truly recognize the very unique circumstances that professional firefighters are dealing with. We often say that we cannot find the right words to thank them for the extraordinary level of dedication that they show towards all of us, but I want to say that it's appreciated by all of us here in the Legislature and across the province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further comments?

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I was interested in the comments of my friend from Durham, very particularly on what I'll call his "if you don't use it, you'll lose it" approach to the question of age, what kind of physical demands might be made on you and what you are capable of doing, and this in the context of a bill that pertains to firefighters.

I've had representations from firefighters in the municipalities that I represent in the riding of Thornhill. Those are two: one is Vaughan and one is Markham. These are not communities—I recognize that there are differences recognized in the bill, in fact, between communities that depend on volunteers and communities that depend on full-time, paid firefighters, which both Markham and Vaughan do. As a matter of fact, I ran into one of the representatives from the Vaughan firefighters, who is here to watch some of this debate today, outside the Legislature this morning. They have spoken to me over the past number of years about it, and in general terms I'm supportive.

What's interesting about this bill, and what will garner some public scrutiny and debate, is the issue of the 60-year benchmark for retirement that deviates so much from the norm, where we've come to believe in our society that a mandatory retirement age, regardless of what that age may be, is probably not such a good idea because, if you take a look, there are people who can't lift 10 pounds without huffing and puffing when they're 40 and there are other people who are doing cross-country skiing when they're 90.

That having been said, in the world of firefighting, which deals with public security, you do need a line of demarcation. I would like to think that there would be some aspect of the bill that addressed physical fitness, but if it's to be 60, I think we can agree with 60.

There is the issue of what happens—and it is also addressed in the bill and will need some debate—to somebody who wants to work but can't climb a ladder anymore after 60. That will be aired in due course, I'm sure.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further comments and questions? The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** May I have the other time? The other two minutes?

I'd like to thank the member from Welland as well as the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry and my good friend from Thornhill. I really believe that we've discussed this to the point where members understand it. We support it. We think there are a few tweaks that need to be committed to.

But I want to take the time and thank those also who serve our community, and more particularly, federally. I'd like to congratulate Chris Alexander from Ajax-Pickering; Bev Oda from my riding of Durham, who was successful last night, federally; the member from Oshawa, Colin Carrie; as well as the Minister of Finance for Canada, Jim Flaherty. So, Tory blue in Durham.

That being said, those are the municipalities—it's a growth area for the province of Ontario. It's an area that—Whitby, I believe, has all full-time and, I think, professional firefighters. I believe Oshawa has full-time, professional firefighters. I think Clarington has mostly full-time, professional firefighters. And certainly Uxbridge and Scugog have a large contingent. They have some full-time, mostly at the captain and chief level.

The issue that I felt was most salient to the discussion was being clear that volunteers are not impacted by this legislation, but I think it will set a certain tone that is applicable: meaning, perhaps, that there's a time and a place for even members serving the public to look to doing other things in their lives.

But when I looked at Ron Cordingley's remarks, it was clear that he took great pride in it, and it was representative, I think, of all firefighters. He said that he remembered that, one New Year's Eve, he and his wife were at a celebration in the community and his plectron or his pager went off. He was called out on duty to a vehicle accident, and she had to get home alone. So they do serve—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** It being almost 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

*The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.*

#### WEARING OF BUTTONS

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear buttons in recognition of Ontario Provincial Police Association day.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Agreed? Agreed.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I would like to recognize the following in our gallery: Jim Christie, interim president

of the OPPA; Karl Walsh, CAO; and the executive and members of the OPPA.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I would like to welcome Lise and Jean-Luc Cinq-Mars, their mother, Charmaine Cinq-Mars, and their friend, Taryn MacDonald.

**Mr. Monte Kwinter:** I'd like to introduce Irina Demitcheva, mother of page Amira, in the visitors' gallery.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** I'd like to welcome Cay and Jim Shedden from Community Living Toronto, who are here for Appetite for Awareness and will be distributing boxed lunches to all MPPs after question period in room 212A. I invite all the MPPs to join me in thanking Community Living Toronto for all their work and I also invite MPPs to participate in this year's Appetite for Awareness.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I want to introduce the father of page Jonathan Hampton, who is sitting here in his seat representing Kenora–Rainy River.

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce some firefighters to our Legislative Assembly today: from the Mississauga Fire Fighters Association, Chris Varcoe, Ryan Coburn and Mark Train; and from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, Fred LeBlanc and Barry Quinn.

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I would like to introduce a former student of mine and now an OPP officer in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry: Greg Smith, sitting up in the gallery.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I would like to introduce, in absentia, a new member of our PC family, Jack Jason Paul Flippance, born April 23 to proud big sister Olivia, mother Natasha and dad Josh.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Further introductions?

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome a number of guests of mine from the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London today seated in the Speaker's gallery: Edith Auckland, Karen Auckland, Alex Fife, Micheala Fife, Megan Fife, Margaret Lackey, Ron Lackey, Stephanie Lackey, Diane Macpherson, Don Macpherson, Brenda McArthur, Jamie McArthur, Eric McArthur, Janice Fisher, Randy Fisher, Thomas Fisher, Adam Fisher, Meredith Fisher, Geoff Auckland, Leanne Lackey, and a former teacher of mine, Lloyd Auckland. Welcome to Queen's Park.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### HYDRO RATES

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My question is to the Premier. Premier, Ontario families are being squeezed financially. Last night's election shows that families were voting for a Prime Minister and a party who will give them relief, will give them a break. But Premier, it's a lesson that you just don't get. You refuse to learn that families are at a

breaking point. At a time when Ontario families feel that they are a bill or two away from making it, you raised hydro bills yet again yesterday morning.

Premier, why do you keep raising costs for families? Why are you jacking up hydro rates when Ontario families clearly are looking for relief?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm grateful for the question. I want to say a couple of things at the outset, if I might.

First of all, I want to take the opportunity to congratulate Prime Minister Harper on the re-election of his government and to say on behalf of all of us here, I'm sure, that we look forward to working with Prime Minister Harper.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank each and every Canadian who chose, as an act of faith and commitment, to put their name on a sign and their reputation on the line—not an easy thing to do. I thank them all, of whatever political stripe, for strengthening our democracy.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Premier, you may have seen the results last night, but you just didn't understand the reason why. Ontario families are getting squeezed. You've increased hydro bills through the roof, your HST tax grab, the eco tax—the list goes on and on. You have raised hydro bills eight times already, and we know you will raise them again—as sure as Premier McGuinty will raise taxes again on hard-working Ontario families. You do this because of the contracts you signed for 20 times the market price of power in your expensive energy experiments. You raised hydro rates to pay for subsidies for families in Quebec and New York while Ontario families get dinged.

Premier, why are you hitting Ontario families when they're coming and going?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this very important issue. I would encourage my honourable colleague to refer to a document put out by the Ontario Energy Board. It's a sample bill comparison, comparing bills in May 2010 to May 2011. For a typical household where there is no smart meter, the bill last year was \$107.82; the bill this year is \$107.74—it's a reduction. For a household equipped with a smart meter, last year the bill was \$109.01; this year it's \$109.35.

They're essentially flatlined. That is the result of our clean energy benefit, which reduces electricity bills by 10%—a provision, by the way, which the honourable colleague does not support.

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

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Well, the Premier must live in the only house in Ontario where hydro bills are going down. How out of touch have you become that you say hydro bills are coming down across this province? It is the complete opposite, Premier. Hydro bill rates are up 84% during your time in office; if you have a smart meter tax machine, 150%. Families cannot afford it.

Last night, they voted for relief. They voted for a break. They want a chance to make ends meet, and all you're going to do is jack up their hydro bills and increase their taxes once again. Families want change, Premier. Why don't you get it?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, I thank my honourable colleague for his intervention in this, but I can't agree with his creative interpretation of what's happened to electricity bills.

I would refer all Ontarians to an independent authority, a third party source: the Ontario Energy Board. I will remind my honourable colleague that in addition to ensuring that we have reliable electricity, they tell us that it's the most reliable system we've had in place for the last 10 years. We're also delivering cleaner air: Coal use in Ontario is down 90%. That's not a matter of concern to my colleagues opposite, but I think reducing the amount of coal our children are breathing is very important to families.

Beyond that, we are building an exciting new clean energy industry in Ontario. So far, we have more than 20,000 new jobs benefiting our families.

That's more than just rebuilding the system; we're cleaning up our air and creating thousands of new jobs.

## HYDRO RATES

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Back to the Premier: Premier, I don't know what channel you were watching last night, but families in Ontario clearly voted for relief, and high-taxing, runaway-spending Liberal candidates were shown the door. October 6 is next.

**1040**

Yesterday, you increased hydro bills once again. In your seven years in office, you've jacked up hydro rates eight consecutive times. You threw the HST tax grab on top of that. You brought in this billion-dollar smart meter tax machine experiment that is driving up the bills, and you're subsidizing power users in New York and Quebec to the tune of \$1 billion to take Ontario power.

Premier, why is it that the only way you can get a break in Ontario is to move to New York or Quebec, where the bills are lower?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, I congratulate my colleague opposite on his fanciful interpretation and the creativity that he brings to the facts. But I think that we should focus on the facts, because I think that's what families want us to focus on.

I'd ask my honourable colleague: Why is it that, for example, when we moved ahead with the clean energy benefit to reduce the impact of our electricity changes on families, they voted against that? Why is it that when we put in place a new tax provision that's reducing income taxes on our families by \$355 this year and every year going forward, my honourable colleague voted against that? Why is it that when it came to particularly needy families and we put in place the Ontario child benefit, benefiting some 1.2 million children, \$1,200 a year, my honourable colleague voted against that? Each and every

time we put in provisions to benefit families, they vote against them.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Clearly, the Premier must have turned his TV off last night to save on his skyrocketing hydro bill. You just don't get it, Premier. Families need relief. They need life to be more affordable. Premier, the first rule when you're in a hole is, you stop digging, but you're digging families—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. The Minister of Energy will withdraw the comment he just made.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** The first rule, Premier: When you're in a hole, you stop digging. But Premier McGuinty is doing the exact opposite. Premier, you keep digging deeper and deeper. You're raising hydro bills. You slapped down the HST. You're blowing \$7 billion on a sweetheart Samsung deal. Waste, bloat and salaries at the OPA are through the roof, and contracts for power are at 80 cents a kilowatt hour when the price of power is four cents in the marketplace.

Premier, how out of touch have you become that you don't get the lesson that Ontario families need relief? Life needs to be more affordable for average Ontario families.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, I certainly hear my honourable colleague, but I can't agree with his own particular interpretation of the federal election results yesterday.

I think Ontarians have an interest in some of the things and they offer some support for some of the things that we've done on their behalf, and I'll just list a few of those things. The fact is that now Ontario is first in Canada and second in North America in attracting new job-creating investments. Our schools are now among the best in the world. We are first in North America in college and university attendance. We are first in Canada when it comes to having the shortest wait times. We are first in the world to replace polluting coal-burning electricity with cleaner electricity.

We admit that there is more to do. We are not going to do what my honourable colleague would advocate, which is to turn sharply to the right and depart from the distinct path of progress that we're on.

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

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Sadly, the Premier continues to demonstrate just how out of touch he is with what is happening in Ontario homes and at kitchen tables. There's no doubt that's why the Premier has increased hydro bills eight times in his seven years in office.

We would take a different path. An Ontario PC government would give Ontario families the relief they need, the relief they deserve. We will bring change to the province of Ontario. We will pull the plug on your mandatory smart meter tax machines and give every family a choice in our province. And we will sign contracts—no

more 80-cent power, Premier—that are affordable to the actual families who have to pay the bills.

Premier, why don't you get it? An Ontario PC government will give the relief that Ontario families deserve.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** As they say, everybody is entitled to their own opinion but not their own facts. The facts are the facts. Again, I'd refer my honourable colleague to the Ontario Energy Board information about what has in fact happened to electricity bills.

Here are a few other facts. When my honourable colleague was in government, there was no investment in new generation or new transmission, and that led to an unreliable system with electricity shortages and black-outs. From 1996 to 2003, generation capacity in the province of Ontario fell by 6%. At the same time, demand grew by 8.5%. Dirty, coal-fired generation increased 127% from 1995 to 2003, and we were importing electricity like crazy.

We have turned all of that around. We have a reliable system, we have clean air and we're creating thousands of new jobs. That's exactly what our families want us to do.

#### HYDRO RATES

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. Ontario families desperately need a break, especially from sky-high utility bills, bills that are eating up more and more and more of their household budget. I hear of their struggles everywhere I go in Ontario.

Why is this Premier stubbornly refusing to give families the break they so desperately need?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I welcome the question from my honourable colleague. A couple of things that I want to say: First of all, I would ask my honourable colleague to stand and support the change that was recently made, so that if you are enjoying the benefit of time-of-use rates in the province of Ontario, the discount period no longer begins at 9 o'clock in the evening; it now begins at 7 o'clock in the evening. That's 10 more discount hours every week. That's in combination with the full discount period throughout the entire weekend. The discount period is now from 7 in the evening to 7 in the morning.

I would also remind my honourable colleague that when we move ahead with our clean energy benefit, which reduces the bill by 10%, my colleague had been asking that we reduce it by 8%. We took it two points higher than that. Again, I would ask of her that she lend her support to an important provision which is helping Ontario families right now.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The fact is that the Premier just doesn't seem to get it. He remains out of touch, and he ignores the realities that are being faced by struggling Ontario families on a daily basis. When can those families expect the Premier to finally understand exactly what it is that they're struggling through?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** We feel that we have a heavy responsibility to ensure that when Ontarians, whether in their homes, in their schools, in their hospi-

tals, in their factories, in their office towers or in their barns—when they flick that switch, we'd darned well better make sure that the electricity is there and that the lights are coming on.

The first thing that we're doing is, we are rebuilding 80% of our electricity system over the course of the next 20 years. It turns out that those wooden hydro poles don't last forever; every once in a while, you've got to rebuild those things. That's exactly what we're doing. It turns out that our nuclear plants don't last forever, and to keep them safe, we've got to invest billions of dollars to ensure that we retrofit those in an appropriate and responsible way. Those are the kinds of things that we are doing.

There is a cost associated with this. My friend says that she can do all of this and there will be no costs associated with that whatsoever. That's magic. We don't have magic here; we just have a sense of responsibility. We're doing the right thing for Ontarians.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Ontario families are sick and tired of a government that just doesn't seem to listen to them. They're sick and tired of a government that continues to make the wrong choices, a government that has made life more and more expensive.

What will it finally take for this government and this Premier to realize that Ontario families need help?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I guess maybe it's in terms of how we interpret the kinds of help that families want.

I think the first thing they want us to do is to make sure we have enough electricity not only to power our homes but also to power the growth in our economy. The fact of the matter is, we are coming out of this recession much stronger than many other parts of the world.

Secondly, they want to ensure that we can find a way to invest in electricity that both cleans up our air and leaves a foundation for an exciting new industry. That's what we are doing. I thought I would have my honourable colleague's support when it came to shutting down coal-fired generation in Ontario. It's not an easy thing to do, but we think it's a very important thing to do for our families, especially our children and our seniors.

I thought as well that we would have her support when it came to building an exciting new clean energy industry with wind turbines, solar panels and the like. I thought that we would have her support in this regard, but we don't. Again, she has an opportunity to reconsider; we would love to have that support.

## TAXATION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is again to the Premier, and it's about helping Ontario families make ends meet. They've seen good, well-paying jobs simply disappear, and they're seeing the costs of just about everything go up.

The Premier can continue to bury his head in the sand, or he can finally do something to ease the burden faced by families. Which is it going to be?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I would remind my honourable colleague of some good news that is out there. She may not enjoy it, but it's there nonetheless.

**1050**

For example, we've learned that in 2010—that's before, by the way, we put the HST in place—economists predicted the economy would grow by only 1.2% to 1.4% for 2010. We just got the number. The actual economic growth for Ontario's GDP for 2010 is 3.3%.

We now know as well that, for the latest quarter, GDP has grown 3.8%, which is higher than the Canadian average. We've recovered, so far, 93% of the jobs that we lost during the recession, which is significantly more than the US, which is 15%; the UK, 44%; or Germany, 35%.

Always more work to do, and we look forward to keeping doing it.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** New Democrats have been very clear: We're on the side of Ontario families. We'd take the unfair HST off of hydro permanently and off of heating. That's precisely the kind of break that Ontario families need and deserve. Why won't the Premier support that?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** We've had the opportunity to speak to this before, and it's something that continues to puzzle me. My honourable colleague stood in her place on several occasions and repeatedly asked that we reduce the cost of electricity by 8%. We have reduced it by 10%. I'm hoping that at some point in time, my honourable colleague will acknowledge that we've in fact trumped her, but more importantly, we've done what is right for the people of Ontario. We're reducing their bills by 10% over the course of five years as a clean energy benefit, and the net consequence of that has been that we have effectively flatlined electricity bills, according to the Ontario Energy Board.

Again, I would ask my honourable colleague to acknowledge that at some point in time.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** This Premier's temporary rebate scheme doesn't fool anybody, and that's the fact. He likes to pretend that everything is still okay, but outside of his bubble things are far from okay. Ontario families are looking for solutions, solutions that are going to help them make life more affordable.

New Democrats are offering those very solutions, and that is exactly what we want to see more of, but the Premier and his government unfortunately refuse to support the kinds of solutions we're bringing forward. Why won't the Premier just take a moment to listen to Ontario families instead of pretending that everything remains A-okay in this province?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, with respect to energy, we just introduced a new measure which will increase the discount period by two hours every day. That's 10 more hours a week, in addition to the full discount period available on weekends.

My honourable colleague says that she's concerned about some of the economic burdens borne by families,



especially as they struggle to emerge from a very difficult recession, and I understand that. So again, I've got to ask myself: Why does she not support our Ontario child benefit, which is benefiting 1.3 million Ontario children? Why didn't she support the 215 new drugs that we've added to the public drug plan? Why doesn't she support our reduction in income tax for the average Ontario family by \$355? Again, why does she not support our measure to reduce electricity bills by 10%?

Each and every time we extend an opportunity to my honourable colleague to support a measure that benefits families, she turns us down, and she effectively turns down Ontario families when she does that.

### ENERGY POLICIES

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My question is to the Premier. The lesson from last night's election and the municipal elections last fall is that Ontario families are voting for a Prime Minister and mayors who will give them relief. It's a lesson that appears to be lost on Premier McGuinty. He's gotten so out of touch that last week, he defended his policy of selling power to New York and Quebec at a financial loss. He told the media that we've netted \$300 million from power sales to New York and Quebec, but the C.D. Howe Institute says that's not right. Your power exports have cost \$1 billion since 2006. What made you think you could get away with making Ontario families pay 80 cents for power that you sell for two cents and then you claim that you made money on the sale?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Sometimes telling a very small part of a very large story can be very challenging for people to understand when it's put like that.

The facts are that now that our energy system is actually in a positive surplus situation, energy consumers here in this province have benefited to the tune of \$1.5 billion since 2006. We can compare that to their approach, where energy consumers lost through their nose just about a billion dollars in their last two years in office alone because they couldn't produce enough power to meet the demand and they had to rely on expensive imports just to provide power to Ontario families and businesses.

I look forward to the supplementary because I want—

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

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Ontario families know that only a change to a PC government will give them the relief they need on hydro bills. Premier McGuinty is so out of touch, he thinks that hydro bills have flatlined. He is so out of touch, he keeps signing contracts that pay 80 cents for power that costs four cents in the marketplace. He's so out of touch with Ontario families, he thinks they can afford to pay billions for expensive energy experiments even when they don't need it and won't use it. He says that they prefer to pay the hydro bills of New York and Quebec residents.

How soon before you hit Ontario families with the next hydro increase which you will spend on more ex-

pensive energy experiments in the mess that you've created?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Let's go back to the days when a member of this House, a member of the opposition, was sitting as Minister of Energy. The member for Simcoe-Grey said this in those days: "If we can make money on surplus power in the United States, we're damn well going to do that." Well, they couldn't do that because they weren't producing enough power to be able to export power, because they weren't producing enough power to meet our needs.

He went on and said, "This summer when we didn't have enough electricity"—

*Interjections.*

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

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** We used to make money, Brad.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member from Simcoe-Grey.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. Minister of the Environment, member from Ancaster.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Minister of Community Safety, member from Nepean, government House leader, member from Leeds, member from Thornhill, member from Nepean for the second time.

Minister?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Let's go back to what they were saying back then, because I think it's very telling. The member for Simcoe-Grey said in this very Legislature, "This summer when we didn't have enough electricity in this province because we hit peak high temperatures and all the air conditioners were running, we had to buy power.... I had to pay \$7 million one day to keep the air conditioners on in our hospitals. That was highway robbery."

That was your system. Our system has surplus power; our system is—

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

### LABOUR UNIONS

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** To the Premier: Why does the Premier persist in denying farm workers the right to join a union and bargain collectively?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** I believe the member opposite is addressing the Supreme Court of Canada decision, which, after careful deliberations to the matter, has reaffirmed that the agricultural act we have in place allows for our farmers to be represented. The Supreme Court of Canada says the Agricultural Employees Protection Act provides "farm workers in Ontario ... meaningful processes by which they can pursue workplace goals."

This decision protects farm workers with the constitutional right to free association. The right guarantees that the farm workers can form free associations to collective-

ly represent and communicate their interests to their employers. Employers, by the way, are also obliged to address the farm workers.

Our government, the Supreme Court—

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

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** The ball is in the government's court. It's now up to the government to ensure that agricultural workers in this province have the same rights as any other worker. Why does this Liberal government persist in denying agricultural workers the same rights that other workers have in the province of Ontario?

1100

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** Our government and the Supreme Court of Canada are satisfied that the act that now exists provides the industry with the best means to resolve issues. But let me say, more importantly, we appreciate the work of our family farms and recognize that the short planting season and harvest season would in this case be controversial. We appreciate the harmonious relationship we have with our work farmers and between employers and employees.

*Laughter.*

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** I'm surprised they're laughing, because when that party was in power and the other party was in power, we had the worst of our work relationships in this province. We now have harmonious relationships. We value our relationships with our employees. We will continue to support them. We don't have the worst options. We are proud of our record, and, more importantly, our act supports—

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

#### POLICE SERVICES

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I have a question for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The Ontario Provincial Police is an exceptional police force. The women and men of the Ontario Provincial Police serve their communities with distinction. Every day, they face difficult and dangerous situations in order to keep Ontario families safe.

Just recently, OPP Constable Dell Mercey received international recognition for his work with the Ontario Provincial Police when he was named trooper of the year by the International Association of Chiefs of Police. OPP Constable Mercey was the first Canadian to ever earn this distinction.

Can the minister explain what the Ontario government is doing to support the Ontario Provincial Police and their remarkable officers, such as Constable Mercey, in their work to protect Ontarians?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** That's an excellent question, I must say as well. We've invested in Ontario's police services and developed a strong working relationship with Commissioner Lewis as well as the Ontario Provincial Police Association, Jim Christie and Karl Walsh.

We've invested to ensure that our police partners have the resources they need to keep our streets safe. Here's

what we've done: put 2,300 additional police officers on the street across the province; increased the budget of the Ontario Provincial Police by more than 50%; and stood as the only Canadian province to dedicate every penny from the federal police officer recruitment fund to front-line policing, including 125 new front-line OPP officers. We've also invested over \$90 million to construct approximately 30 new OPP detachments, communications centres and forensic identification centres—

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

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** Not surprisingly, the ability to live and raise a family in a safe community is a top priority for my constituents. In the wake of the global economic recession, Ontarians are slowly but surely getting back on their feet and putting their finances in order. Similarly, municipalities in the province are working to balance their budgets. My constituents are concerned that the province's and municipalities' focus on eliminating their deficits will reduce their commitment to public safety.

Can the minister explain what the Ontario government is doing to ensure the continued safety of my constituents?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I can assure the member, first of all, that deficit reduction will not be at the expense of public safety in this province. We have made significant investments in Ontario police services since 2003 to ensure our police partners have the resources they need to keep our streets safe.

As a result of our investments in policing, the Ontario Provincial Police is one of North America's largest police services, with more than 6,100 uniformed officers, 2,700 civilian employees and 850 auxiliary officers. The OPP work is to ensure that communities across the province are safe. Currently, more than 300 Ontario municipalities have chosen to have the OPP deliver their local police services.

Your constituents in Algoma-Manitoulin are benefiting directly from our investment. As of February 26, the request from the municipality of Wawa, for instance, has been complied with, and—

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

#### ENERGY POLICIES

**Mr. Steve Clark:** My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, as of yesterday, nearly 1,000 people in my riding were still without power as a result of damage from last Thursday's windstorm. They spent the weekend in the dark, not only because their lights went out but because they couldn't get important information from Hydro One about what was being done to resolve the problem. When they did get through to a real person, they were given updates that later proved to be inaccurate. Municipal officials had the same experience, hampering their ability to help residents.

Minister, we all applaud the Hydro One crews working around the clock to fix the damage, but now I want to

know what you're going to do to fix the obvious communications breakdown.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** It's always regrettable when circumstances happen, in particular bad weather, bad winds and things like that, that sometimes will impact the flow of electricity. That's something that, indeed, at times is beyond our control. We count on Hydro One and all of our energy partners to get the power back on as soon as possible.

Critical to getting that power back on is investing in a modern infrastructure system, something that that party has fought us on every step of the way.

One thing I can tell you: As we bring in the modernization of our energy system and smart meters, our local distribution companies can get right to those power outages as quickly as possible. It's a great advantage to energy consumers, something we support by making those important investments, something that they've rejected every step of the way.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Minister, forget your spin that everything worked as planned. The people who needed information couldn't get it. That's what you need to know. This is just one more proof that this government doesn't have its priorities right. Instead of investing in maintenance to prevent these power outages in the first place, you wasted billions on your smart meter tax machines and your other failed energy experiments.

Minister, this is Emergency Preparedness Week but clearly your ministry isn't prepared. Will you commit to review maintenance and communications programs to prevent a repeat the next time a storm rolls through Leeds-Grenville?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Maybe the member should think about this the next time he votes against the investments we're making in building stronger infrastructure in this province, in modernizing our infrastructure, in moving towards a smart grid, in bringing forward 4.5 million smart meters, all of which are critical in our efforts to get power back on when things like bad storms occur.

That's the difference between our time in office and yours. In your time, power was going out because you weren't producing enough of it to provide to Ontario families. We have enough power in the system now. We have a reliable system. When storms happen, we do our utmost to get the power back on.

We'll always look to improve that service. We'll continue to work with Hydro One to provide better and better service. But it's a heck of a lot better today than it was in those dark days of blackouts and brownouts when they were in power.

#### NUCLEAR ENERGY

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Premier: The Ontario government plans to build a new nuclear power plant at Darlington. It has a responsibility to ensure that Ontarians are fully aware of the risks and dangers of nuclear power. Why, then, is the Ontario government allowing Ontario Power Generation to withhold

information about health and environmental dangers of accidental radiation releases at the Darlington and Pickering nuclear plants?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I'm mildly surprised that the NDP would be raising this issue. Our nuclear safety experts have clearly stated that releasing this information that Greenpeace has indeed requested would pose a threat to the safety of our nuclear facilities. I really find it surprising that the member wouldn't be aware of that. I think, frankly, it's a bit ironic that Greenpeace and the NDP would be requesting information under the guise of public safety when the information they want would actually put our citizens at risk.

The NDP and Greenpeace: We know they don't support nuclear power. However, one would expect that the NDP and Greenpeace would understand the importance of putting the safety of nuclear facilities ahead of politics. Apparently not.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Interesting response, Minister. As you probably knew before you stood up to answer that question, in March a senior adjudicator from Ontario's Information and Privacy Office urged OPG to release information on potential radiation releases should an accident occur at the Pickering or Darlington nuclear plant. I actually don't have any control over them. You should be aware of that. The adjudicator said that "events now unfolding in Japan ... underline the vital necessity for informed public debate about nuclear safety issues"—not our party, not any environmental group; the Ontario information and privacy office.

When will the Ontario government, as sole shareholder of OPG, order OPG to stop hiding information about the risks of nuclear plant radiation?

1110

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** All issues surrounding radiation are on the websites of federal agencies, 24 hours a day, that residents of Ontario can refer to at all times. That information is available.

But I believe what the member is asking for is a request for information that Greenpeace has made to Ontario Power Generation. They've been advised that that information would present a public safety issue with regard to ensuring that our citizens are protected. In light of what's gone on around the world on the weekend alone, one would think that the member would understand that these public security issues are important to respect.

I'm going to ask the member again: Give some thought to where your priorities lie. Do they lie with public safety or do they lie with trying to play politics with a very important issue?

#### YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. David Zimmer:** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. College students and university students are finishing up their exams right

now, and they're embarking on the next chapter in their lives: finding a career. Ontario's economy has recovered 93% of its jobs. It continues to turn the corner. The province as a whole is in a good position to offer students and graduates summer and long-term employment as they start their lifelong work careers.

Minister, what is our government offering the newest members of Ontario's workforce so they can start their career journeys confidently and successfully?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I'm delighted to answer this question, because it is important for us to be able to turn to our young people and say, "You have a future here in Ontario and we want to help you, even while you're in school and finishing your education."

We heard, in the last budget, about \$22.5 million being set aside for summer employment programs; three that my ministry is managing. One is called Summer Company, a terrific program that allows grants up to \$3,000 for young people to actually start a business. And I have to say that those companies that end up staying as companies, where the student goes back again the next summer and picks it up again, are really tremendous. The success rate there is terrific.

Another great program: the global entrepreneurship program. We actually organize young people to go and have mentorship programs in other countries and bring that experience back to Ontario.

We want everyone to go to [ontario.ca](http://ontario.ca) and—

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

**Mr. David Zimmer:** Young graduates in your riding and in my riding of Willowdale—indeed, right across Ontario—have a great future as they complete their studies. It's all based on the strong economic infrastructure here in Ontario. In particular, the Ontario summer jobs strategy will help graduates prepare for their future careers in a whole lot of different sectors here in Ontario.

But what about today? What about tomorrow? What do these graduates who are completing their studies, as we speak in this chamber—what are they going to do tomorrow? What are they going to do today? Where are the jobs coming from once they are no longer eligible for the summer jobs strategy programs?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I know so many people were heartened to see that Ontario ranked tied with California a couple of weeks ago in garnering the most foreign direct investment of any other jurisdiction in North America. They scored jurisdictions by how many jobs come into those jurisdictions with that foreign direct investment.

But here on the home front, just as a budget initiative alone, pouring millions of dollars into our own economy, our businesses are creating jobs in partnership with the Ontario community and the Ontario government. Let me give you a couple of examples: Silfab, a solar-based company creating jobs here in the greater Toronto area; Digital Extremes, in the information, communication and technology hub, creating jobs right here in London,

Ontario. Great examples in different sectors, but huge opportunities for young people to stay in Ontario—

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

#### DISCRIMINATION

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. Mayor Rob Ford showed strong leadership recently when he took a principled stand against discrimination. He took a clear stand against city resources being used to fund the activities of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid in any way. In contrast to the strong leadership and clear stand of Mayor Ford, the McGuinty government turned its back on the Jewish community. Your government handed out \$400,000 of Ontario taxpayers' money—no strings attached, no conditions, no assurance that the money would not be used to fund the hateful and hurtful activities of this group.

How do you justify Premier McGuinty's shameful and weak leadership on a matter of such importance to the Jewish community?

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** I thank the member opposite for asking this question, but I have to respectfully disagree with his characterization.

I'm aware that Queers Against Israeli Apartheid has decided quite certainly not to march in this year's Pride Toronto parade. Instead, they will be moving in a different direction. I think this is a positive development for Toronto, for Pride and for the Ontario community.

We recognize the efforts of Pride Toronto to also actively fight discrimination and create a comprehensive process which will avoid any type of conflict, and I want to reiterate that Ontario is absolutely committed to fighting all forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** Not marching doesn't mean they're not represented. This House was clear in its view on the use of the word "apartheid" being applied to Israel. The resolution I brought 15 months ago, condemning the insulting and hateful use of "apartheid," was debated and it was unanimously adopted. But in the face of a clear statement and the will of this House, the McGuinty government did its own thing. You increased funding for activities that include Queers Against Israeli Apartheid by \$100,000, and that's the same amount the city of Toronto may withhold if this group is supported in any way.

How dare you go around the principled stand taken by this House and Mayor Ford by handing out money with no assurances that my resolution and the Jewish community will be respected?

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** Again, I respectfully and emphatically disagree with the characterization provided by the member opposite. Queers Against Israeli Apartheid has stated clearly that they have decided not to march in this year's Pride Toronto parade. Ontario is absolutely committed to fighting all forms of discrimination.

I agree with the member opposite on this respect: that last year this Legislature unanimously condemned the

term “Israeli apartheid.” This term is disgusting and divisive, and does nothing to encourage constructive dialogue.

I should add that we expect all individuals and organizations in Ontario to fight all forms of discrimination and hate, including, in particular, anti-Semitism. The McGuinty government stands with Ontario’s Jewish community and all diverse communities in fighting all forms of discrimination and hate.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. Niagara region families are reeling from the latest news of what this government is planning for local health care. The Niagara Health System is looking to slash anywhere from 75 to 120 long-term-care beds. Will the Premier tell us exactly how many long-term-care beds his government plans to cut in Welland?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Let me just say to my honourable colleague that I think she has a good understanding of where we’ve been coming from on the matter of health care for the last seven-plus years, now.

She will know that we have increased operating dollars by close to 50%. I think she’s aware that we’ve hired some 11,000 more nurses and some 2,900 more doctors. We started from zero; we now have 200 family health teams treating some three million patients. We’re going to have 25 nurse practitioner-led clinics, the first of their kind in North America, I think treating some 30,000 or 40,000 patients. Some—what is it?—94% of Ontarians now have a family doctor; that’s 1.2 million more than before. We’ve done a lot by any objective assessment. There’s always more to be done. Again, I could add that we now have the shortest wait times in the country; we didn’t even measure them before.

So, again, there’s real, objective, measurable progress, but there’s always more to be done. I certainly acknowledge that.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, one of the things the Premier needs to do is fulfill his own promises about things he plans to do in places like Welland. Right before the last provincial election, the McGuinty Liberals announced the construction of a new long-term-care home in Welland. It hasn’t materialized. They promised the community would see about 100 new beds, but now, not only did that not materialize, but there are plans to cut long-term-care beds despite the fact that at least 500 seniors are on long-term-care home waiting lists.

For months, local municipalities have called for an independent investigation of the Niagara Health System. Why has this Premier ignored these pleas from the community, and why has he now decided to put much-needed long-term-care beds on the chopping block?

1120

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I want to restate something that has been said several times before by myself and my honourable colleague the Minister of Health, and that is,

we’re not cutting health care. We keep finding ways to invest more dollars in health care, and we keep finding more ways to do it in as efficient and as effective a way as possible.

One of the things that we want to take up with the new federal government is a new 10-year health accord. I’d ask my honourable colleague to join us in that regard. We think we can complete that new deal by the end of 2012 rather than by the end of 2014, as originally was planned. We’re convinced that we can get it done in a way that secures medicare for the future.

The issue, to my mind, is not where we’re going to cut; it’s what are we going to do smarter and better than ever before as we invest new dollars to ensure that we get the best possible results for the people of Ontario?

#### RENEWABLE ENERGY

**Mr. Rick Johnson:** My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, there’s been a great deal of interest in green energy and, in particular, microFIT programs in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Many farmers in the riding have installed solar systems and are participating in our government’s green energy plan. It has been a tremendous success, and I’m told by my rural caucus colleagues that this enthusiastic participation is happening across rural Ontario.

Could the minister provide this House with a status update on the number of microFIT projects providing clean energy into the grid, as well as on any economic benefits that have been created as a result of this program?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I’m happy to do that, and I want to thank the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes for his question.

Our microFIT program has indeed been a tremendous success, and I’m pleased to hear that so many of his constituents are taking an active role in helping to grow Ontario’s clean energy economy and build a clean and healthier future for our kids at the same time.

I can tell the member right now that over 5,000 small renewable energy projects are feeding clean energy into the Ontario grid. An additional 5,000 projects have been green-lighted for connection as soon as their installations are ready. These projects are earning local farmers up to \$10,000 a year. Not only are these projects creating additional income for farmers, they’re helping to create thousands of jobs across the province as part of our clean energy economy.

We’re going to continue to stand up for clean energy, we’re going to continue to stand up for Ontario farmers, we’re going to continue to stand up for a healthier future for our kids and we’re going to—

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

**Mr. Rick Johnson:** Minister, I’m encouraged by the level of interest and the success of the microFIT program. I know it’s creating good-paying jobs in my riding.

Minister, I know that some members in this House do not believe in this important government policy and they

do not support the clean energy economy that it is creating. My constituents fear that the lack of support for the microFIT program will lead to instability in our new clean energy economy and will kill countless jobs in my riding and in the province.

Can the minister please tell me, my constituents and microFIT participants in rural Ontario: What are the impacts of ending such an important provincial policy?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Indeed, this is a critically important program for our economy, and ending the microFIT program would have a devastating effect on Ontario's clean energy economy. Thousands of Ontario jobs would be lost and it would send a hugely embarrassing message to the world that now that Ontario has become top in the world and we're a global-leading clean energy economy, we no longer want to take leadership in this area. It would be devastating to your community and communities across the province.

But candidates from the PC Party continue to say that they want to rip up these contracts. I want to quote one: "We will shut down all of the planned expansion of that unaffordable, unworkable microFIT plan. There will be no new contracts." That's the candidate from the member's riding, Laurie Scott, who said that. The Conservative Party continues to show disrespect for Ontario farmers and for Ontario families, and—

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

#### COMMUNITY SAFETY

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** On behalf of Tim Hudak and our caucus, we'd like to welcome the OPPA here today to the Legislature.

My question is to the Attorney General. The Minister of Community Safety said that the reason that he and Premier McGuinty are refusing to apologize for passing the secret G20 law is because there are a number of ongoing court cases out there at the present time.

The minister sits right in front of you. Why don't you just lean forward and tell him about the Apology Act you passed in 2009 so that apologies aren't taken as an admission of liability in legal proceedings?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** It may well be that my colleague wishes to comment on the supplementary. We would like to thank former Chief Justice McMurtry for his advice and his recommendations with respect to the PWPA. My colleague the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will be speaking to this matter more in the future. He has already indicated the government's intention.

My friend opposite knows full well that it's just one of the characteristics of Attorneys General that whenever there's an ongoing court case, we don't comment. We just sort of treat it as something that we don't comment on. That's to protect all parties to the court case, to ensure the fairness of proceedings. We just don't do it because what the AG says can be used in different—

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

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** You don't comment and you don't answer questions. It's a sign of just how out of touch and out of gas the Premier and his McGuinty Liberals have become.

You insulted Ontario families by passing the G20 law in secret. The OPP opposed your secret G20 law as well, but you did it anyways. You insult them further when you try to blame others for the law you and a bunch of your other McGuinty Liberals decided to pass. Then you outdo yourself by refusing to be held accountable using phony excuses: that it would affect legal cases when it won't. You won't take accountability, so every man and woman in uniform gets blamed.

How many more ways will you insult Ontario families just because you refuse to admit the colossal mistakes you've made as a government?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** I thank my friend very much for the supplementary that had been written before he actually heard the answer.

But we do want to thank again former Chief Justice McMurtry for his very important advice and recommendations. My colleague the Minister of Community Safety is committed to this.

It's just one of those characteristics of Attorneys General that we always, regardless of how tempting it might be to intervene, to make comments, to respond to the temptations—and there are many—stand back and accept the slings and arrows. We say, "You know, we're going to protect the process. We're going to protect rights to fair trial. We're just not going to engage in the back and forth, and we won't comment on ongoing proceedings."

#### NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour le premier ministre. My constituent Monsieur Michel Chevrier has been referred by his physician and accepted at a bariatric centre of excellence in southern Ontario, since we don't have one in northeastern Ontario yet. Since last fall, he has had to travel to Guelph for numerous appointments, but the northern travel grant program has refused to cover his costs. Why is it that people in northern Ontario do not get equitable access to health care services?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** What I can say is that we've built 15 new hospitals. I think there are three more on the go. I think four of those new hospitals are in northern Ontario. We're very proud of that. That was an area of the province which went underserved by any objective definition, so we've made those investments.

I know that they have new nurses in northern Ontario. We have a new medical school in northern Ontario which is designed to ensure that we draw more young people from the north into medicine so that they can return to the north and practise there. We've made some real steps forward. There's always more that we can do.

I know that we have made some changes to the northern health travel grant to ensure that it is broader in terms of its scope and provides more relief to Ontario families. I look forward to hearing more in the supplementary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Well, we don't have a bariatric regional assessment and treatment centre in Sudbury yet. We are talking very few people, for a limited period of time, just until such time as Sudbury Regional Hospital is ready to go. It is on the way; it's just not there yet. But for those people, those few people, it is a huge financial strain.

I would hope that you would do the right thing and cover the travel expenses for northern Ontarians, the few of them who qualify, travelling to southern Ontario to get health care services that are not available in northern Ontario.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I want to say a couple of things on this. First of all, we have improved the northern health travel grant. I know that. My colleague—I get the sense she's raising something here which might serve as interim support until something is finally in place. What I'm prepared to do is to undertake to review this, in keeping with the request put forward by my colleague, and to see if this is something that is sensible for us to do. We don't want to leave people in the lurch as we're trying to complete progress on a program that would meet their needs there, so I will give this very careful consideration.

1130

#### ENDANGERED SPECIES

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, I realize that the protection of threatened and endangered species in our province is an important endeavour, but I am concerned that the Endangered Species Act places too many restrictions on businesses. I'm worried that these restrictions may discourage businesses from engaging in projects that will create jobs in our province. In Guelph, the possibility of the presence of an endangered species actually delayed development of a new industrial park for over a year, and of course, in the end it turned out that the particular salamander wasn't present at all.

Minister, what are you doing to help businesses deal with these restrictions?

**Hon. Linda Jeffrey:** I'd like to thank my colleague from Guelph for asking the question. The job of my ministry is to balance the economic development of our natural resources with environmental protection. Our government's Endangered Species Act includes strong provisions to protect the recovery of the species and their habitats.

We have to find the right balance to strike in order to protect endangered species in a way that still leaves Ontario open for business. That's why my ministry recently announced that we will streamline the permitting process for developers and landowners who want to work in areas where endangered species live. The proposed initiatives include a five-month service guarantee for a permit, which would begin once a proponent has finalized a

complete application package with the ministry, and accelerating permit timelines with earlier permit posting while providing better access to information online.

We believe these proposed initiatives respond to the needs of our stakeholders, they're good for business and they strike a balance between species protection—

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

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** I'd like to thank the minister for explaining the streamlining of the permit process, but I'm also concerned that even with these permits, many businesses are unsure exactly how to operate under the Endangered Species Act without committing any violations. For example, I've heard from a property owner who has chimney swifts, which I actually didn't realize were covered under the act. He has chimney swifts in an abandoned industrial chimney, and of course it's an abandoned chimney, so it's deteriorating. But it seems that the birds actually still love this particular chimney and can be seen up there circling around the old industrial chimney.

Minister, what is your ministry doing to provide clarity to businesses that are operating in the habitats of threatened or endangered species?

**Hon. Linda Jeffrey:** I'd like to thank my colleague for this timely question on policy clarity for the Endangered Species Act.

Last week my ministry posted a draft policy proposal on categorizing and protecting habitat under the Endangered Species Act on the Environmental Registry. This policy will provide greater clarity and provide certainty for industry while ensuring the consistent application of the high standards of species protection guaranteed by the Endangered Species Act. This policy will ensure consistency in the enforcement of the Endangered Species Act across all provincial districts. It will also help inform businesses of exactly how they are expected to operate within the Endangered Species Act, particularly when they are operating in the habitat of an endangered or threatened species.

By placing the policy on the Environmental Registry, we hope to get feedback and input from all major stakeholders. I'm confident that these measures will help attract more business to our province as we continue to turn the corner—

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

#### ORGAN DONATION

**Mr. Frank Klees:** My question is to the Premier. There are 1,500 people on a wait-list for an organ in this province, and one person dies every three days waiting for an organ transplant. While many jurisdictions across North America have a registration rate of some 85%, Ontario lags at a registration rate of 17%. For some four years now, we've been calling on the government to implement an online organ donor registry. We still don't have one. Can the Premier tell us when we will see an online organ donor registry in this province?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** My honourable colleague raises a very legitimate issue. It was brought home to me recently when I tweeted about the fact that it was national organ donation week, and some people tweeted back and said, “If I could register online, I would have done it right away.” The fact of the matter—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Order.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** If I might, Speaker—I think that’s a real issue. I hope to have some good news for my honourable colleague, who I know would support this initiative, in the not-too-distant future.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I want to take this opportunity to welcome some constables from my own riding: Jeff Grey from Middlesex county; James Morrow from Elgin county; and also Janet Balch, a civilian from the Ontario Police College.

Also, on behalf of the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, we welcome Constables John Riendeau, Denise Green and Pearl Lariviere from the Upper Ottawa Valley OPP. Welcome to the Legislature.

## DEFERRED VOTES

### TIME ALLOCATION

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** We have a deferred vote on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 151.

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

*The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** On April 21, Mr. Phillips moved government notice of motion number 57. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

### Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dickson, Joe	Moridi, Reza
Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldeep	Smith, Monique
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Sorbara, Greg
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sousa, Charles
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Van Bommel, Maria
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Wilkinson, John
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Those opposed?

### Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	O’Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Shurman, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 56; the nays are 27.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I declare the motion carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. John O’Toole:** I’m expecting in the chamber here today Doug Lewis, who is from the Ontario Provincial Police Association. He’s a director in that capacity, and he’s also a constituent living in Kendal. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

## MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

### FEDERAL ELECTION

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I rise today to congratulate the Right Honourable Stephen Harper on his re-election as Prime Minister of Canada and achieving a majority in the House of Commons.

It was very clear yesterday that the message that Canadians accepted was one that Prime Minister Harper was delivering, one that our leader, Tim Hudak, continues to deliver here in the province of Ontario.

We must remember that the Liberal Party of Canada was reduced to third party status for the first time in Canada’s history because they weren’t listening. It is a message to the Liberal government in the province of Ontario. Last night should show the Liberals that families want relief and want government to focus on their priorities. That’s what they voted for last night in electing Stephen Harper to a majority government.

Dalton McGuinty has good reason to be concerned. His brand of tax-and-spend nanny-state government was firmly rejected by the people of Canada and the people of Ontario, where the Conservatives elected over 70 members in the province. A message to the Liberals: It’s time to change tactics. You are not resonating with Ontario. You’re old and tired and out of gas, and on October 6 we hope they’ll make the same change here.



## FEDERAL ELECTION

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** On a slightly less partisan note, I rise today to just thank the hundreds—in fact, the thousands—of volunteers who worked so hard for all of the candidates in the federal election. I know that our constituents often don't know this, if they're not one themselves, but it takes an army of folk to elect anyone. They are volunteers, tireless ones, who, just because of passion and conviction, actually get out in the rain—many of us were very soggy last week—knock on doors, pull the vote, stay up late, make sure the counting goes correctly, inside and outside scrutineers; in fact, a vast array of volunteers goes to every one of the positions that we enjoy here and every one of those who were elected last night.

For all the parties and all their volunteers, we just want to say thank you; it's very rarely said, and usually only for a minute on election night. Whether you won or whether you lost, you did not do it alone; you did it with the help of legions of Canadians. This is truly democracy in action, to see the level of wonderful volunteering that's happened. So to all of our volunteers, a huge and a well-said and well-felt thank you.

## POPE JOHN PAUL II

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Two days ago, on May 1, 2011, in an historic event in the presence of millions watching, Pope John Paul II was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican in Rome.

He was born as Karol Józef—

*Applause.*

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Yes, go ahead. You can applaud.

He was born as Karol Józef Wojtyła on May 18, 1920, in Wadowice, Poland. Ordained as a Catholic priest on November 1, 1946, he began his papacy on October 16, 1978, lasting more than 26 years until his death on April 2, at age 84, in 2005.

He would acquire the title of “the pilgrim Pope,” visiting 129 countries, including Canada three times—1982, 1987 and World Youth Day in 2002.

Yes, indeed, Pope John Paul II was a pilgrim of God. He became the first Pope to enter a mosque and the first to ever enter a synagogue in over 2,000 years. He championed human rights and promoted and encouraged open communication, improving relations with Judaism, Islam, the Eastern Orthodox church and the Anglican Communion.

Pope Benedict XVI said that we remember him as a great witness of God and Jesus and a man filled by the Holy Spirit in our own times.

## LANDLORDS

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I stand to inform the House of a very serious issue. I'm referring to the current Landlord and Tenant Board filing fee. Currently, tenants are required to pay a \$45 filing fee, while landlords are

required to pay a \$170 filing fee. This is almost four times as much for the same fee. This is bias. This bias particularly affects small business landlords. It is time that this government reduced the filing fee so that both tenants and landlords have the same fee.

A couple of weeks ago, I read into the record a petition—all of whom supported an adjustment that would see the filing fees set at an equal amount.

I have continuously cautioned this government about the increasing risk they are creating in our rental housing stock. The end result may be that small business landlords are getting out of the business altogether. We simply cannot afford to lose any more of Ontario's valuable rental housing stock.

The current dispute system is broken. Some 142,000 Ontarians are on the social housing waiting list. Landlords are challenged to keep up with rising costs like HST, high filing fees, hearing delays and several other barriers. I encourage this government to level the playing field, make the necessary changes, fix the dispute process and create a balanced process both for tenant and landlord.

## GERRY ROSENQUIST

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I rise in the House today to congratulate a medical professional in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry who has been honoured for his service in the community. Dr. Gerry Rosenquist was recently recognized for his 50-year career, not only at Winchester District Memorial Hospital but in the local region.

Dr. Rosenquist graduated from the University of Alberta in 1960. Upon receiving a letter from his uncle Reverend Blackwell, Dr. Rosenquist travelled to eastern Ontario to see what the prospects were in the area. He found there was a need for doctors, so he established a home and practice in Williamsburg township, now the township of South Dundas. Not only did he establish his practice, but he and Dr. Don Robertson, who practised in Morrisburg, got together to establish the St. Lawrence Medical Clinic.

Other milestones in Dr. Rosenquist's career include becoming a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in 1974, being Winchester District Memorial Hospital's chief of obstetrics from 1975 to 2003 and chief of staff from 2003 to 2006, and being a lecturer for the faculty of medicine at the University of Ottawa in 2007. Another honour for Dr. Rosenquist was the announcement of a new scholarship in his name. The Winchester District Memorial Hospital created the scholarship as a reflection of their recognition, respect and affection for Dr. Rosenquist. And this afternoon, I would like to say hello to my mother, who is a patient at that hospital.

I am honoured to have Dr. Rosenquist in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and I thank him for his 50 years of service in the medical profession.

### HUCK FINN YOUTH FISHING DAY

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Each year in the community of Uxbridge, in my riding of Durham, we welcome the start of spring with the Huck Finn youth fishing derby. This past Saturday, I once again threw my line into the Elgin Pond to try and catch some of the elusive trout, along with the children and their families. This was the eighth annual event. Hundreds of families and children came out to enjoy the beautiful sunshine and just generally share fun with the community.

The day was sponsored by Canadian Tire in Uxbridge, featuring a parade, free lunch, rod and reels to borrow, free bait, and prizes for all participants. I want to thank the Ministry of Natural Resources for stocking the Elgin Pond, and I want to thank the organizers—Pat Higgins, who is often called Huck Finn and is the manager and owner of the Canadian Tire, regional councillor Jack Ballinger, and Amanda Ferraro from Uxbridge township—for making the day a success for the kids and their families. I also want to thank Dan Pollard, a well-recognized MC, for being the spokesperson for the day, along with Mayor Gerri Lynn O'Connor, as well as Gord Hight, Jacob Mantle and other councillors who had joined us that day.

1510

At the end of the day, the winning fish was measured at just over 17 inches, but the real winner were all the children and their families.

This is an excellent event that gets kids and families outdoors, and teaches the values of conservation and environmental awareness to the next generation. Congratulations on a wonderful event and I look forward to it next year.

### ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** It was a great privilege for me to attend and speak at an event on April 23, 2011, to commemorate the anniversary of the Armenian genocide. Members of all levels of government from all three political parties were present at the Armenian Youth Center in North York.

The genocide is known to have started on April 24, 1915, the day that some 250 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders were arrested in Constantinople. From then on, Armenians were uprooted from their homes and forced to march for hundreds of miles, while being deprived of food and water, to the desert in what is now Syria.

The year 2011 marks 96 years since the terrible atrocities that occurred between 1915 and 1923, when more than 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children were massacred. The Armenian genocide set the stage for other genocides and human tragedies. Although many countries around the world refuse to acknowledge the horrific events that took place, we here in Ontario choose to recognize this tragedy and take the time to mourn the lives that were lost.

The Armenian community has made many significant and enriching contributions in Canada and in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. I offer my sincerest condolences to the families of all those lost. By honouring these victims, we also remember to cherish our freedom and the sanctity of human life.

### ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

**Mr. Dave Levac:** Today I wish to recognize the good work that was done by our government and my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The announcement in this year's budget of a permanent risk management program is good news for Ontario's farmers and farm families, especially those in my riding of Brant. However, the real credit for this program goes to the farm groups that put the proposal together. This was farmer-driven; programs by farmers for farmers.

I had the great pleasure of welcoming Minister Mitchell to the riding of Brant a couple of weeks ago when she visited a Bite of Brant in Burford. There, she met with local farmers and leaders of the Brant County Federation of Agriculture. Farmers like Larry Davis, a dairy producer and Brant's director of the OFA, said that the RMP is a good initiative for the newest generation to enter the business of farming: "It gives them a bit of stability that they can see into the future."

We think it speaks not only to our commitment to the family farm, but also to the understanding that the family farm serves as the cornerstone of a healthy and vital rural Ontario. We're pleased that we have done that.

Today, we commit to the farmer and we have a commitment from the provincial government, but there's one partner that we have to invite to be at the table: We need the federal government to come to the table. Agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility. Farmers are in, the province is in and now it's the federal government's time to get her done.

### PATRICK CHAN

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** It is my pleasure today to rise in the House and congratulate one of Ontario's finest athletes, Patrick Chan.

This past week at the World Figure Skating Championships, Chan exhibited the perfect balance between grace and athleticism, setting three new world records in the process. The 20-year-old Ottawa native's short program, which included two extremely difficult quad jumps, scored 93.02 points and gave him an 11-point lead over the next-closest skater.

Chan didn't let up. He set another record in his free skate of 186.96, and his total combined score of 280.98 was another record. The record-breaking performance allowed the four-time Canadian champion to rise to the number one ranking in the world.

Hard work and determination, values that Chan shares with all Ontarians, were the key to his success.

After an Olympic performance that saw him finish fifth, Chan renewed his focus and added two quadruple

jumps, the most difficult jump in the sport, to his routine. This allowed him to rise above the competition and achieve his long-held goal of being the best in the world.

All Ontarians are proud of Patrick and his accomplishments.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### McMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

#### LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA COLLECTION McMICHAEL D'ART CANADIEN

Mr. Chan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 188, An Act to amend the McMichael Canadian Art Collection Act / Projet de loi 188, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Collection McMichael d'art canadien.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Hon. Michael Chan:** I would like to make my statement during ministerial statements.

### IMITATION FIREARMS REGULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

#### LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA RÉGLEMENTATION DES FAUSSES ARMES À FEU

Mr. Dickson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 189, An Act to amend the Imitation Firearms Regulation Act, 2000 with respect to the sale of imitation firearms / Projet de loi 189, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur la réglementation des fausses armes à feu relativement à la vente de fausses armes à feu.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** The bill amends the Imitation Firearms Regulation Act, 2000, with respect to the sale of imitation firearms.

Currently, the act prohibits the sale of an imitation firearm unless the purchaser is at least 18 years old and presents specified identification. The amendments impose additional conditions on the sale of imitation firearms. These conditions include that the purchaser must provide a description of his or her intention regarding the use of the imitation firearm and that the purchaser must not have been convicted of a criminal offence.

The amendments impose a requirement on a person who sells an imitation firearm to keep a record of the sale

for five years, and the amendments increase the maximum fine to which a person who contravenes the prohibition regarding the sale of the imitation firearm may be liable.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### McMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

**Hon. Michael Chan:** Before I begin, I would like to welcome Lynn Bevan, close family friend to the McMichaels; the chair of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Upkar Arora; board trustees Jamie Cameron and Wenda Yenson; and CEO Victoria Dickenson. They join us here at Queen's Park to observe today's important introduction.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I am pleased to introduce amendments to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection Act. Our government knows how important the McMichael is to Ontario. It celebrates our heritage, it promotes our culture and it helps drive our economy. We, as a government, want to ensure the McMichael's future success.

The McMichael's current legislation confines the agency's mandate, limiting its collection to artists who are specifically named in the legislation or approved by an art advisory committee. Unlike other public art institutions, the McMichael's ability to renew its exhibitions is quite restricted.

#### 1520

The amendments we are proposing today, if passed, would help revitalize the McMichael, giving it the flexibility it needs to renew its collection and exhibitions. These changes, if passed, would:

- provide the gallery with the flexibility to develop diverse, innovative exhibitions;

- make it easier for the McMichael to build its collection;

- ensure the collection continues to focus on the Group of Seven, their contemporaries and the aboriginal peoples of Canada;

- enhance the McMichael's appeal to a broader audience.

These changes, if passed, are in line with our government's Open Ontario plan, a plan to support economic growth and jobs in Ontario.

The proposed amendments, if passed, would increase cultural tourism and economic activities in our great province. The McMichael is world-renowned for its extraordinary collection, attracting almost 90,000 visitors a year to the Kleinburg area. Yes, these are visitors who come to enjoy art, but they also come to shop, dine and explore all that Kleinburg and Ontario have to offer. This means more business for local shops, restaurants, hotels and attractions.

Across the province, spending by overnight cultural visitors generates over \$3.8 billion for the economy, supporting over 64,000 jobs. The McMichael Canadian Art Collection contributes to that success. But for it to continue to grow, compete and remain sustainable, the McMichael needs our support. This is why, last year, our government—together with the federal government—invested over \$4 million to help the McMichael complete renovations and upgrade its grounds. It is also why we are introducing amendments to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection Act today.

We are pleased to have the support of the Fenwick family and the McMichael board for the proposed changes. Our government is a proud partner of the gallery, working in concert with the board to advance and enhance this important and invaluable cultural institution and to ensure that the legacy of Robert and Signe McMichael is protected so that future generations may continue to enjoy these generous gifts. The amendments are about helping the McMichael continue to grow and to influence and inspire visitors as one of Ontario's most beloved cultural treasures.

#### GOVERNMENT SERVICES

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I rise in the House today to talk about our ongoing efforts to deliver faster, easier and better government-to-business services. It's our Open for Business initiative, and it's saving businesses both time and money, helping them focus on what they do best: growing our economy and creating jobs for Ontario families. As Minister of Economic Development and Trade, I've held many round tables and consultations with business leaders, from the very largest of corporations to the very smallest of mom-and-pop shops across Ontario—entrepreneurs and small business owners from right across Ontario.

One area where the business community has consistently asked for improvement is in service standards, and based on their direction and input we've improved the consistency, quality and accessibility of more than 500 business service standards across 17 ministries. These enhanced services came into effect April 1, 2011—this past month—and they're now available in one easy-to-access place. Businesses can simply go to [Ontario.ca/businessstandards](http://Ontario.ca/businessstandards) and search by ministry, keyword or category.

Here's something pretty exciting: We posted them April 1, and since that time we've had 1,000 hits to the website. I've got to tell you, most of the time it doesn't get that kind of action, but we know that people are very interested in how we're changing government to accommodate businesses. So we're pretty excited about that.

It may seem like a small change, but let me give you an example of how this is making a big difference for business. When a company applies for, say, a permit to take water, their completed application will be confirmed as received and assigned a unique reference number within five business days, and the Ministry of the

Environment will provide a decision on the complete application within 90 calendar days.

Businesses will also now receive government information in plain language, providing more clarity and certainty when they apply for approvals, funding permits and licences. We've also improved our business service standards for customer service and information requests.

Now businesses will know exactly what to expect when dealing with a government of Ontario office or applying for a government program or service. Next spring, we're going to publicly report on the results of meeting our service standards.

We have to tell people what the service standards are so that everybody knows that we're in fact meeting them. It sounds a lot like our Ministry of Health waiting lists. No one in the past had decided to even match what you're doing to know if you're meeting any standards, and that's what we've done here in our government. Already, we're hearing great things.

Ian Howcroft, vice-president of the Ontarian division of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters has this to say of our improved business service standards: "The Ontario Open for Business service standards initiative is making a real difference for Ontario businesses. By posting the business service standards in plain language and in a centralized location, our members can easily identify the timelines for hearing from the government on applications for a host of government services. This makes it easier for our members to plan projects, saving them time and money." Thank you, Ian. We agree.

Our efforts are making things easier for businesses in Ontario. We know there's more work to be done, and that's why we keep working to improve business service standards and the way we deliver the services to businesses.

Over the next year, we're going to continue to engage the business community and work to expand the initiative to include all ministries, not just those 17; improve service efficiency to provide even faster service in all areas, with a focus on those areas that matter most to business; streamline the review processes to speed up the approval timelines for a business when they're applying for permits or licences from more than one ministry.

And just as importantly, we're going to continue to listen to business about what they need from us. In June, staff from across the OPS will hear first-hand from business stakeholders about what they expect from government services, helping to further drive improvements in how we deliver our services to businesses.

Through our Open for Business initiative, we have delivered results that have saved businesses time and money. You know who's saying that? Businesses. Businesses are telling us that we're seeing the results we're looking for.

We're going to carry on this work as we continue to improve government-to-business services, help our economy turn the corner and make Ontario truly open for business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Statements by ministries? Responses?

## GOVERNMENT SERVICES

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** Just because a hapless minister or a dying government say something is open for business doesn't necessarily make it so. If this government were serious about standards, why did the Liberal government abolish the PC government's Red Tape Commission? Why did it take seven years in office for this government to develop service standards in the first place?

The Progressive Conservatives established the Red Tape Commission in 1995, 16 years ago. Under our government, we oversaw the passage of 15 red tape reduction and government efficiency acts. These acts helped repeal over 80 outdated statutes and amend well over 200 other acts. In addition, the commission worked with ministries and their agencies to remove over 2,000 outdated and unnecessary regulations—and we're hearing about what is going on now. In contrast, Open for Business is the Liberals' weak attempt to reduce red tape. To be talking about service standards now is too little, too late. It's hypocritical, but don't worry; we'll fix it next session.

The minister likes to talk about all the jobs they have created. She is forgetting—

*Interjections.*

**Interjection:** Stop the clock.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** No, I'm not stopping the clock. The honourable member made a comment that was unparliamentary, and I would ask him to withdraw it, please.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** Withdrawn, Speaker.

The minister likes to talk about all the jobs they have created; she is forgetting a few important details when she does. You can't just talk recovery and ignore what you have done to create the mess that we're in.

1530

What did the Liberals do before the recession? The answer is, nothing. In fact, they hurt Ontario so that we became a have-not province. This government has not created private sector jobs; in fact, they led the decimation of the Ontario forestry and manufacturing sectors, and there is no recovery to date.

The fact is, Ontario is still not recovering at a rate that is comparable to the rest of the country, and this government's irresponsible spending, scandals and economic policies are hindering economic growth even further. I don't even apply the term "open for business" to what this government is doing. The McGuinty government has not done nearly enough to create the conditions for a speedy and true economic recovery; Dalton McGuinty has done just the opposite.

McMICHAEL CANADIAN ART  
COLLECTION

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** First, I want to offer a few words about the process. I want to express my appreciation to the government House leader, who today hand-delivered a copy of this bill to our House leader. This morning, I

received it for the first time at 11:15. Expecting to receive only the text of the minister's statement, I was pleased to see the actual text of the bill. Still, it would have been more helpful to have had it last week so that I would have had the chance to consult with stakeholders before preparing my response today.

I look forward to what they'll say about this bill, including its provision removing the requirement for an art advisory committee to be established. I wonder why the government would think that an advisory committee isn't a good idea, but we'll find out. We'll approach this bill carefully, with an open mind, as we always do.

Returning to process, I want to suggest to the House that on a bill like this, here's the way it should work: If the government introduces a bill, the opposition critics should be informed that same day, as I was today, and on that same day, the critics should also be offered a briefing, which didn't happen. I would say that this would be a constructive idea perhaps for the future.

I'm privileged to serve as the opposition critic to the ministers of culture and aboriginal affairs. The McMichael exhibit showcases both. When I became the critic, I knew that one of the first places I wanted to visit was the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, and in September 2009, I did just that. It's still one of my favourite art galleries—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** No. I'd been there before, probably 20 years before, when I was still in university, and I think when I was in high school. But certainly I've had the opportunity to visit on a number of occasions. In fact, I was here when A.J. Casson received his Order of Ontario in 1991 and was pleased to be present on that day. Obviously it was well deserved.

The last time I spoke to this House about the McMichael, I said that it showcases much more than art; it showcases the very best in our province and our country.

The McMichael exhibition highlights some 40 living Canadian artists using the traditions, forms, styles and materials of west coast First Nations art. But more than that, its collection is known worldwide as the spiritual home of the Group of Seven, and it's open to the public for all to appreciate.

The collection is the inspiration of the founders, the late Bob and Signe McMichael, whom I was also honoured to know. I admired their commitment to ensure that the collection would be enjoyed not by a select few but by all Canadians and indeed the world. Their generosity has fostered culture and creativity in our province. For that, the cultural history of Canada is enhanced.

I want to welcome the representatives of the McMichael who are here today. We look forward to the opportunity to debate this bill.

McMICHAEL CANADIAN ART  
COLLECTION

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I want to say very briefly that I've had an opportunity to visit the McMichael collection

myself. It's an impressive place, an impressive collection, one of the premier art institutions in this country. I've taken a quick look at the history over the last decade or so of the McMichael and understand the difficulties that have been faced by those involved with the collection. I look forward to reviewing the bill, talking to stakeholders and determining the position of our caucus on this legislation.

I would say to the minister, though, that it was a bit unfortunate that he linked this bill to the Open Ontario slogan of his party. I didn't see any need for that sort of partisanship.

That being said, I look forward to the discussion on this bill.

### GOVERNMENT SERVICES

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Responding to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: I'm the critic for small business, and I can certainly say that the McGuinty government is no friend to small business in this province. It may be a friend to the mall, but it's not a friend to Main Street. From pharmacists to butchers, family business has been under attack by the McGuinty Liberals ever since they were elected. In fact, the HST alone got the back up of the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas. They were here to lobby, and not one minister came to meet with them—that was outrageous—to meet with an organization that represents some 30,000 mainly small business owners in and around the GTA. To ignore them is uncalled for, and not only is it uncalled for, but the fact is, they don't even have a minister in charge of small business anymore. They have eradicated the small business portfolio from their area of concern.

In Ontario, we are dealing with a situation where the major engine for new job creation, small business, is under attack. Small business is responsible for about 90% of all new jobs, and yet we know they're suffering. We know the HST is hurting them. We know legislation—and as my colleague from the Progressive Conservatives said, red tape is hurting them. We know we've lost hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs and replaced them with jobs just slightly over the minimum wage. This is not recovery.

This is a government that can't manage its own books. This is a government that has not only got the highest deficit of all the provinces in Canada—in fact, more than all the other provinces combined—but it has actually doubled our real debt. Since Confederation, we've had about \$130 billion in real debt. This government, in eight years, has doubled that figure. This is a government that can't manage its own books and has the pretense to talk about helping somebody else manage theirs. That's the reality.

The very arrogance of saying that a website is somehow going to save somebody who is drowning in red ink in a small business is exactly what the McGuinty government and Liberals are famous for. Where real action is needed, instead we get a website. Where real action is

needed, instead we get a minister standing up and pontificating. Where real lives are being affected, we get photo ops.

I don't think Ontarians are buying it anymore; in fact, we got a very good indication yesterday that they're not. Small business knows what's really happening. They know who's really on their side, and they know who's really not on their side. That's what we saw yesterday, and that's what we'll continue to see until this government takes some action.

I didn't even mention, by the way, the so-called—the stupid meters—smart meters that are a direct assault on small business because most of them are open during the day at peak hours and they have to pay peak prices for a system that doesn't save energy and that's simply a tax grab. It's a move from big business to small business. That's what this government has done consistently: favour big business over small business. We're tired of it, Ontario is tired of it, and we're not going to stand for it anymore.

### HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in memory of Holocaust Memorial Day, following which a moment of silence will be observed.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Agreed? Agreed.  
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** I rise today to mark a solemn occasion of remembrance, Yom ha-Shoah, or Holocaust Memorial Day. I was honoured to attend the Yom ha-Shoah Holocaust commemoration at Earl Bales Park here in Toronto this past Sunday. I have to say that it was a deeply moving and very meaningful commemoration.

This is a time when we remember the six million European Jews and all the victims who perished at the hands of the Nazis and reaffirm the message of "Never again." Countless words have been written on the impact of the Holocaust, but perhaps no words capture the scale of the loss better than ones that date back about 1,500 years. The Talmud, the Jewish book of rabbinic commentary, teaches that whoever destroys a soul is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. Think of each victim of the Holocaust, each man, woman and child. Imagine entire families made extinct or branches broken forever—six million worlds destroyed.

Holocaust Memorial Day is a time when we pay tribute to all those who fought, all who suffered, all who died. It's also a time when we remember all who survived, many of whom made their way to Ontario to build a new life.

Every year on Yom ha-Shoah, the air raid sirens sound in Israel and all the country comes to a stop. People stand, wherever they are, in silent devotion and reflection.

In Ontario, and the world over, we stand together with the Jewish community to reverently mark Holocaust Memorial Day. Our government recognizes the opportunity and necessity to teach Ontarians about the enduring lessons of the Holocaust. We recognize that we must

never take the rights we enjoy and the way we live together in harmony for granted, for we know from history, and from modern events too, how easily hatred can lead to terror and horror. We must ensure that our young people in particular, for whom World War II and the Holocaust are distant events, understand what transpired and understand that racism, inequality and intolerance can yield evil. That is one of the ways we pay tribute to those six million who were lost and to survivors: by being vigilant against discrimination and by not tolerating it in any form, anywhere.

**1540**

On this Yom ha-Shoah let us pledge to always remember that and to never forget the victims or the lessons of the Holocaust.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I'm privileged to rise this afternoon on behalf of the PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to recognize Holocaust Memorial Day, or Yom ha-Shoah.

Across Ontario and Canada, people are participating in solemn ceremonies to honour and remember the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, that most horrific of chapters in our human history that's rife with evil. We will shed many tears as we pause in silence to remember the terrors inflicted on those men, women and children in their final days. For many, including some of my colleagues here at Queen's Park, those tears flow for family members, lost because of the hatred that fuelled Hitler's final solution. For those, such as myself, without a personal connection to the Holocaust, our tears flow for the senseless loss of so many innocent lives.

On this day, against the flickering backdrop of candles lit in remembrance, we all set aside our religious, cultural and political differences to come together as one society to mourn the millions of lives snuffed out too soon. Generations were exterminated, and entire communities vanished at the hands of the butchers who operated those concentration camps with frightening efficiency. The sickening toll included 1.5 million Jewish children. Even today, their innocent faces haunt us, staring back into our eyes from family photographs that are often the only memories of their all-too-brief lives. Our hearts break and our minds struggle to comprehend how a society could turn on its most vulnerable with such ruthlessness.

As a father, it is those children I think of today. Their voices long ago fell silent during the murderous rampage that Hitler unleashed in Nazi Germany and eastern Europe between 1933 and 1945. When we look at their faces in those photographs, they shout out to us, compelling us to do more than simply remember them; they shout those two powerful words that say so much: "Never again." Those words demand that, as we stand silently today in mourning, we also vow never again to let our silence allow the evil that they fell victim to be unleashed in our world.

We know that Canada, and Ontario in particular, became a refuge for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in the years after the war. Today, the descendants of those Jewish immigrants flourish in our free society, and we are much richer for their contributions in our province.

But we also know that Canada could have done more to be a safe haven as the Nazis were setting their murderous plans in action. As those Jewish families pleaded for our help, we chose to close our doors. We carry that guilt with us still, which is one reason I believe this nation has been so quick to respond to pleas of help from the victims of brutality in the decades after the Holocaust. Canadians know that the surest way to prevent the rise of hatred is to create a democratic society where freedom, justice and tolerance can flourish. It flourishes here because of moments like this afternoon, where we all in this House stand in solidarity to condemn hatred. At the same time, our very presence in this democratic institution sends a powerful statement that the darkness of evil that gave rise to the Holocaust could not eclipse humanity's enduring desire to hold tight the bright light of freedom.

But we must remain vigilant, because the shadow of anti-Semitism haunts us still today, not only around the world but in our own country and our own province. The best weapon against the ignorance that lies at the heart of all racism is education. That's why I'm so proud that in 1998, this House passed a private member's bill introduced by my colleague the member from Halton to proclaim that Ontario would recognize Holocaust Memorial Day. We were the first jurisdiction outside of Israel to do so.

This province is committed to ensuring that future generations know the meaning of those two words calling out to us since the concentration camp gates were torn open: "Never again."

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's my honour to rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to make some comments on Yom ha-Shoah, on this Holocaust Remembrance Day.

One of my favourite political philosophers, Elie Wiesel, commented about what was called the banality of evil. Sometimes it's just a little too easy for us to blame a handful of psychopaths or sociopaths for what happened in a place like Nazi Germany, when we all know very well that it was an entire populace that was also implicated. There were clerks who signed the death warrants. There were townspeople who turned a blind eye. There were soldiers who carried out their duty non-thinking, without looking to what was truly ethical or moral.

There is a wonderful film, and I certainly advise every parliamentarian to watch it, called *Conspiracy*, which is a re-creation of the meeting where the Nazi leaders discussed the possibility of a so-called final solution. There were jurists there, there were clergy were there, there were engineers there, there were politicians there, there were military there. They all had their own agendas; they were sometimes competing agendas. There were all sorts of politics played around that table. But one question was never asked, and that was about the ethicality or the morality of what they were actually doing, which was that they were about to execute six million men, women and children. It was like, in other words, any other bureaucratic meeting where the morality or the ethicality



that should have been central to the discussion was notoriously absent.

Really, what all of us need to do on this day is to say and to mean, “Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa; my sin, my sin, my most grievous sin.”

I can tell you, as a Christian minister, that the Christian church was also implicated in those deaths; that only about 3% of active Christians in Germany came out—it was called the Confessing Church—in opposition to what Hitler did. Many of them were executed, many of them also ended up, like the famous Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in concentration camps—hung, killed, for standing up. Only 3% of Christians stood up against the horror.

The question for us living now is, what would we do? What shall we do? What would we do? How would we search our own souls? How would we know, if put to the test, what we would do for our brother and our sister? Would we put our own lives on the line?

The lessons of Yom ha-Shoah, the lessons of Holocaust Remembrance Day, really are still to be learned in our world, are still ours to learn in this world. Certainly, it’s a time for soul-searching, not finger pointing. It’s a time to think about our own relatives from whatever background and what they did or didn’t do, what we could do or can’t do, what we will do or won’t do to combat the kind of anti-Semitism, the kind of racism, the kind of prejudice, bigotry, and the banality of evil itself, that passive going along with inequality, the passive watching as oppression happens, the passive listening as the joke is told that we know is offensive yet we say nothing—to look at all of these actions, to look at them in light of something so terrible that, really, it defies imagination or description. Six million dead—children, Jews. Roma were killed too; socialists were killed too; activists were killed too; people of faith were killed too, faiths other than Judaism. It was a world that died in the concentration camps across Europe, and it certainly was a world born, in terms of the way we look at how human beings interact.

1550

So, my friends, we too recognize; we too pause; we too pray; we too hope that the words “never again” actually mean, for us, for our children and for our grandchildren, truly never again.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I’d ask all members and our guests to join me as we observe a moment of silence in recognition of Holocaust Memorial Day.

*The House observed a moment’s silence.*

## PETITIONS

### WASTE DISPOSAL

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** I have a petition of 716 signatures of concerned citizens of Russell and the surrounding area.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the undersigned residents in the constituency of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell in the province of Ontario, draw to the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario the following:

“Whereas the petitioners have serious grievances with the proposed development by Taggart Miller Environmental Services, proponents of the Capital Region Resource Recovery Centre (CRRRC) planned for the old Russell shale pit and surrounding properties between Eadie Road and North Russell Road, between routes 100 and 200 in the township of Russell;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ... to take action to cause an absolute cease and desist order for this proposed CRRRC development by Taggart Miller Environmental Services on this site of the old Russell shale pit and surrounding properties in the township of Russell in the province of Ontario.”

I do fully understand the concern of those people.

### HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I have more petitions in support of Bill 100, paved shoulders on provincial highways. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

“Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

“Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

“Whereas” the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka’s “private member’s Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

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

“That” the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka’s “private member’s Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

I’ll hand these to page Viktor.

### DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have this petition from the people of Capreol, in my riding.

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

“Whereas” since October 2009 “insured PET scans” are being 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 ask our new page Kyla to bring it to the Clerk.

#### MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, regarding denial of angioplasty and subsequent follow-up treatment of multiple sclerosis sufferers:

“Whereas it is estimated over 75,000 Canadians, of whom many thousands are from Ontario, suffer from MS; and

“Whereas chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, or CCSVI, has been found in a high percentage of MS sufferers and is accepted in 47 countries worldwide; and

“Whereas a treatment for CCSVI known as angioplasty has been proven to improve many of the symptoms of MS, vastly improving quality of life and productivity; and

“Whereas in Canada, angioplasty is an effective, low-risk procedure that has been used as a treatment for various medical conditions on veins safely for many years, such as kidney disease, superior vena cava syndrome and liver disease; and

“Whereas over 12,500 procedures have been carried out globally, with many reports of improvement in mental functioning, circulation and mobility and, over time, marked improvement to quality of life; and

“Whereas any medical procedure incurs risks and is not always successful. CCSVI angioplasty risk in controlled trials is negligible; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario with MS are being denied access to this simple procedure, are being forced to leave the country at their own personal expense and are denied proper access to follow-up care and testing; and

“Whereas progressive MS sufferers beyond pharmaceutical intervention have an increased risk of morbidity and mortality when a simple, safe and effective procedure is available;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain angioplasty in their own province and in their own country;

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario insure payment of such treatment; and

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow post-procedure testing and follow-up consistent with any other disease.”

I shall sign this and send it to the clerks' table.

#### DOG OWNERSHIP

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** My petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

I affix my name in full support.

#### REPLACEMENT WORKERS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have this petition that has been collected by Mr. Bruce Knox, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Rachel to bring it to the Clerk.

#### PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It has been brought to me by Ruth Anne and Harold Jacques of Farmstead Lane in Meadowvale. I'd like to read it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas many seniors, visually impaired persons and other non-drivers do not need or are not eligible for a driver's licence; and

“Whereas many day-to-day transactions such as cashing of cheques; opening a new bank account at a financial institution; returning merchandise to a retail store; boarding a domestic flight; gaining admittance to bars,

clubs and casinos; checking in at a hotel; obtaining a credit card, and even renting a video require government-issued photo identification; and

“Whereas Ontario’s Photo Card Act, 2008, sets the legislative framework required to deliver a non-licence photo identification;

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

“That the province of Ontario develop a government-issued photo identification card and deliver, in 2011, an Ontario photo card identification for residents of the province over the age of 16 who cannot or choose not to drive.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature, to support this petition and to ask page Andrew to carry it for me.

1600

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Mr. John O’Toole:** I’m pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham, and it’s from a number of people: Murray Patterson, Dave and Pearl Rickert, Earla Jose, Lou Speciale, Melanie and Rod MacArthur, amongst others. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the greenbelt; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and provincially sensitive wetlands; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier governments to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

“Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Minister of the Environment to initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the greenbelt, specifically at 4148 Regional Highway 2, Newcastle, and Lakeridge Road in Durham.”

I’m pleased to sign it and present this petition to Erica, one of the new pages here.

#### OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have this petition from the people of Hanmer and Val Caron.

“Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies and retirement homes; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

“Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

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

“Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies and retirement homes.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my favourite page, Jonathan, to bring it to the Clerk.

#### ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario’s economy, and strong, prosperous farms mean a strong, prosperous Ontario; and

“Whereas the establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action the provincial government could have done to help ensure the economic success of Ontario’s non-supply-managed commodities; and

“Whereas agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility, and yet the federal government has refused to act and come to the table with their support;

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

“We applaud the Ontario government’s support of risk management programs and encourage the federal government to partner with the province and its farmers to support the risk management programs put in place by the province to bring much-needed stability, predictability and bankability to Ontario’s agricultural sector.”

It’s signed by folks from the GTA who understand how important this is, and I’ll give it to Viktor.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Mr. John O’Toole:** I’m pleased to present—I’m getting thousands of these petitions, so I hope the minister is listening. It reads as follows:

“Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the greenbelt; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and” indeed “a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and provincially sensitive wetlands; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier governments to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Minister of the Environment to initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the greenbelt, specifically at 4148 Regional Highway 2, Newcastle, and Lakeridge Road in Durham."

This is signed by Tammy St. Martin, Sandra Goding, Jeff Groen, Veronica Goding, and the list goes on. I support this and present the petition to Kyla.

#### ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I'm getting thousands of petitions with regard to the risk management program. This one came in from Rosemary Fyfe, a family farm operator from the great area of Orangeville, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy, and strong, prosperous farms mean a strong, prosperous Ontario; and

"Whereas the establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action the provincial government could have done to help ensure the economic success of Ontario's non-supply-managed commodities; and

"Whereas agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility, and yet the federal government has refused to act and come to the table with their support;

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

"We applaud the Ontario government's support of risk management programs and encourage the federal government to partner with the province and its farmers to support the risk management programs put in place by the province to bring much-needed stability, predictability and bankability to Ontario's agricultural sector."

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Jonathan.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I would look to present more petitions on the greenbelt, but there's one here that's pressing and people have asked me to present it.

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses" are struggling;

"Whereas, by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services;

veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

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

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and present to it Andrew, one of the new pages here.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### BUILDING FAMILIES AND SUPPORTING YOUTH TO BE SUCCESSFUL ACT, 2011

##### LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT LA FONDATION DE FAMILLES ET LA RÉUSSITE CHEZ LES JEUNES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 20, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 179, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and the provision of care and maintenance / Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne l'adoption et les soins et l'entretien.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further debate?

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Indeed, it is a pleasure to speak about Bill 179, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and the provision of care and maintenance.

Maybe I'll just take a few minutes to talk about the intent of this particular piece of legislation and review what the bill intends to do.

This legislation is the next step in our improvements to the Ontario adoption system. If passed, it will allow more kids the chance to succeed with a forever family and improve outcomes for kids who may not have adoption in their future.

This is really, really important, the intent of the legislation. Whether we're children, whether we're husbands, whether we're wives, the sense of family is, I think, what makes our country, our province, our communities as strong as they really are.

Just to talk about the adoption piece a little bit, we saw an increase of about 21% in domestic adoptions last year alone. We'll continue to build on the work of the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare and strive to increase adoptions.

Just to give some sense, right now there are about 9,000 crown wards in Ontario and only about 10% of them are adopted each year.

**1610**

The current legislation is one barrier to some of these children finding their forever families. Currently, crown wards are not eligible for adoption if they are subject to an access order, and approximately 75% of crown wards have access orders, so that puts a huge restriction on moving about 75% of the cases forward. This legislation, if passed, will mean that an access order will terminate automatically when a child is placed for adoption. This means the children's aid societies can plan for adoption of crown wards even where an access order is in effect. So it opens up that spectrum.

In cases where it would be in the child's best interest to maintain contact with their birth families or other persons after adoption, the courts could make an openness order, making the system somewhat more flexible. Kids in permanent homes are almost 25% more likely to complete high school and 50% more likely to continue school at the post-secondary level.

To sum that up: As we provide a stable environment for children and young adults, they'll succeed. I just commented on how they succeed in school, but it also provides them with a better understanding of life learning and integrating with society, even past school. For those kids who weren't adopted, these kids are our collective responsibility. This is not to divulge the responsibility of government for kids who are in the custody of the system.

Right now, when a youth leaves the care of a children's aid society before age 18, they cannot continue receiving the supports they had in care. Some of that includes financial supports, social worker assistance, and the social and emotional support of a foster or group home. If passed, these changes will allow youth whose care arrangements ended at age 16 or 17 to return to CAS to receive both financial and non-financial support until the age of 21, because in many cases when these kids leave the system, they really fall between the cracks, even in the larger sphere, which sometimes make it even more difficult to bring them back into society.

This piece of legislation would only move the yardstick further ahead to give a stable home—frankly, I'm going to say to those kids who need it the most. They live in a very unstable environment. They probably find themselves in a situation where they come from a home that wasn't a very pleasant place to be. I know in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West I have a very good relationship with the CASs, and although we don't speak about particular cases, I get the sense of the work that they do and how important it is to look after these kids. The more we can place them in home settings, the better, not just for the children and young adults but society as a whole.

I look forward, as we debate this piece of legislation, to the opposition parties supporting such a move because it's certainly a move in the right direction. But having said that, sometimes I worry about getting their support—although I think in general they say they will support this—from the lack of support of other initiatives

where this government tried to support families and kids. For example, they voted against new funding for the Ontario child benefit. They voted against the help to support crown wards. So what does this mean? This means that they voted against recreational, educational, cultural and social opportunities for kids in care.

This also means that they voted against an opportunity to help older youth in care requiring savings and financial literacy skills to support the transition to adulthood.

For example, one of the opposition leaders called full-day learning, which we think is a piece of education that certainly is supported across the world, and Ontario is a leader—one of the leaders of the opposition referred to full-day learning as being like a shiny new car, as a frill.

They voted in general against recent increases to child treatment centres. That means that about 3,000 children and youth with special needs would still be waiting for treatment if they were in office.

So I think we need to, hopefully, overcome this sort of non-support from the opposition to move this forward.

For example, when the present federal government—the federal government that just got re-elected yesterday—took over \$1 billion away from Ontario families for child care, none of the opposition made any attempt to lobby for Ontario's families, Ontario's kids.

They failed to support 22,000 new child care spaces.

As you can see, we have things, for example, like the Ontario child benefit, which will assist more than one million kids. These are kids who are also under the support of children's aid societies. There's the investment in autism that we almost tripled under our present government to move those yardsticks forward.

Let me just talk about something that I think is very important. We're here in this place, and frankly, I will admit that sometimes we think we know best. I know that, regardless of party stripes, we are all here for the right reasons, but sometimes we forget the folks in what I call the trenches, and it impacts them the most. They're the ones delivering those services that the governments need to support. We forget and may not do a very good job of listening. So I just want to take a minute to quote some of the things, for example, that people said when this piece of legislation was introduced. Some of these folks, frankly, I believe, without going into a lot of detail, were the ones who advocated for these changes, because they care so much about the challenges that we face. I'm just going to take a minute to quote some of these folks. I think it's very, very important to hear what somebody outside of this place would have to say.

"The minister's action today"—this was the day that the legislation was introduced. I had the privilege of being in the media studio when the minister announced this piece of legislation, and a huge number of supporters were in the media studio there in support of this. I'll just read some of those quotes:

"The minister's action today shows an impressive grasp of the issues facing prospective parents and kids in care. This package of legislative changes and other supports for prospective parents and children will result in

better outcomes for crown wards and help make it possible for families to open their homes and hearts to waiting children.” That’s Will Falk, co-chair, Adoption working group, Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption, and adoptive father of two boys.

“OACAS applauds Minister Broten and the McGuinty government for this comprehensive and thoughtful announcement. These changes, taken collectively, are important steps in making ‘family’ a reality for many, many children and youth in CAS care. We look forward to working with the government on the details of the proposals and putting Ontario on the map as a leader in supporting children and families.” Mary Ballantyne, executive director, Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies, made that particular statement.

**1620**

Another quote, from Pat Convery, executive director of the Adoption Council of Ontario: “The Adoption Council of Ontario is encouraged by Minister Broten’s comments today. The leadership, reform and supports proposed will greatly assist the adoption community—professionals and adoptive families—in finding permanent homes for more children. We have a lot of work to do and today we are affirmed that the government is part of the team—we will accomplish so much more when we work together.”

Let me tell you what Adam Diamond, YouthCAN coordinator, said: “If you were in a family and left home at 16, you could go back. Kids in care can’t—once they leave, the door is closed. It’s great that government is making sure the door is kept open so that youth who need help can go back to their children’s aid society for support.”

I am the proud father of four children and nine grandchildren. We always kind of wish—and this is on the side—that as your kids grow and they go on their own, they don’t come back. But they do come back, and they bring grandkids back with them. We had a simple policy at home: that our door was always open, not only to my kids but their friends. I must tell you that some Sunday mornings we were kind of—not worried, but as you walked downstairs, especially if you had a late night on Saturday night, “So who’s sleeping on the couch tonight? Or who did they pull the blankets out for and is sleeping on the floor?”

Sometimes it was their friends, because they stuck around and they knew that our door was always open. Not that those kids didn’t have a place to go, but they knew that when they came to our place, the doors were always open and breakfast would be on. Mom and Dad would do the dishes afterwards and everyone would have a good time. So to deprive some of these kids of that kind of life, who, through no fault of their own, ended up where they are—I think we, as a society, need to do more to try to achieve that.

I’ll carry on with some of the things that some folks said. Jade Maitland, another YouthCAN coordinator: “This special support for crown wards attending post-secondary is fantastic. It puts youth in care on the same playing field as other youth.”

We were marginalizing some of these kids—once again, through no fault of their own—because they felt into that bracket of not having a stable home. They were different than other kids. They have different abilities. And we were the ones who would say that that was okay.

Let me tell you what John Beaucage, aboriginal adviser to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, had to say: “As aboriginal adviser to the minister, I am pleased to see there is a strengthening of customary care as an option for permanency. There are also a number of provisions that allow for a greater reliance on traditional values and cultural sensitivity to work with First Nations and aboriginal communities. All of these items together mean that there will be more positive outcomes for our people in the future.”

I have Alderville First Nation in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West—an excellent group of folks that I visit on a regular basis. As a matter of fact, Chief JimBob Marsden and I correspond through Facebook sometimes. Having visited their homes in Alderville, they are—we’re all Canadians, but they bring some traditions that we need to cherish and nurture. So anything we can do under this particular file of adoption to keep that torch burning, to protect their culture—it’s really what a lot of it is about: their traditions. This piece of legislation certainly addresses that.

Cheryl Appell, co-chair, adoption working group, Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption: What did she say? “These changes have been advocated for many years....” As I said before, these are things that these folks on the ground have been telling governments for a long time. I’ll go on with her quote: “And it is wonderful to see that, finally, there has been the courage to put this plan forward. This legislative change will be a powerful and welcomed tool in the hands of children’s aid societies, who bear responsibility for finding a permanent home for children who cannot return to their family of origin, and it introduces new judicial responsibility, which I believe will also be welcomed.”

Ene Underwood, chair, Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare: What did she have to say? “The commission is very encouraged by these important new measures. They are child-focused and will open new doors to permanency for children who are currently crown wards. They make room for maintaining connections with birth families while removing barriers to connecting kids to adoptive families. The change to allow 16- and 17-year olds to return and receive CAS support is an excellent measure and reflects what all of us as parents would want to do for our children.”

I could go on with some of these quotes. What this really tells us, I believe, is that Bill 179 is in the right direction. It’s moving forward. If this piece of legislation goes to committee, we’ll have an opportunity for people—once again, I’m referring to the people on the ground, dealing with issues—to give us, and the opposition, of course, more suggestions, more ideas on how we can make this better, knowing that there are some restrictions and barriers that we have to work around.

I think any time we're dealing with children, we have to be very, very cognizant of some of those restrictions—well, I'm going to use the word “restriction,” but maybe that's not the right terminology—that we always face. They're vulnerable, and I guess we want to make sure that the vulnerable, these children and youth, are not endangered or that people take advantage of those circumstances.

As I wind down my time here, I strongly encourage members of all three parties to really get behind this. This is to improve the welfare of our children—children that, frankly, are most in need, as we nurture them through these challenging times. They'll each make contributions to our society as they grow older. And as we get older, these kids will hopefully look after us.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak about Bill 179 today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'm pleased to respond to the speech from the member from Northumberland–Quinte West on Bill 179. As was mentioned, the PC Party is supportive of the bill. Our critic, the member for Dufferin–Caledon, has spoken to it.

The member, I have to point out, talked about and listed off some things that the opposition has voted against, and he's correct. Often, there are things we'd like to vote for but, unfortunately, they bundle things that we have to vote against. A good example right now is Bill 173, the budget bill. It has some 41 schedules. Well, there are some things we do like in the bill, but they usually have a couple little nuggets—hidden tax increases or another tax increase—that we don't agree with. You get one vote for or against, so that means we end up voting against that. If they would stop putting aspects of the bill in that we just can't support, that might change.

1630

But this bill we do support. It's about taking kids who are crown wards, who are not eligible for adoption, and allowing more of them to be adopted, and that is certainly a positive thing where there are a lot of families out there that would like to adopt. More importantly, for those children, it provides a chance for them to have a family and, of course, all the benefits that go along with that, in hopes that that will bring positive change and benefits, as the member talked about, like finishing school and having more opportunity to succeed in life.

We look forward to this bill going to committee after second reading debate and to getting some input on the technicalities of the bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further questions and comments?

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I listened to my Liberal colleague across the floor, and I think he recited the speech he was given fairly well.

But there are a couple of issues in this bill that I think need to be addressed. When the government introduced this bill, I called around to three or four of the First

Nation child and family service agencies in northern Ontario to ask if the government had sat down and consulted with them on this legislation. I was shocked to learn that that hadn't happened.

Now, as most members of this Legislature would know, issues of crown wardship and issues of placing children for adoption are very, very big issues for First Nation communities, First Nation families, and the child and family service organizations which serve First Nations. These are big issues because we unfortunately have a sorry history where children's aid societies would go into First Nation communities, take children and then place them for adoption with non-native families. This was all done very, very quickly.

This legislation, at least on its face, would provide for very quick and speedy adoption, or could be taken that way. So while New Democrats support the general intent of this legislation, we're a bit shocked and surprised at the lack of consultation with First Nations, and we want to ask a lot of questions when it goes to committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further comments? The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex.

**Mr. Pat Hoy:** Thank you, Speaker. Chatham–Kent–Essex, and perhaps someday it will be known as Chatham–Kent–Leamington.

I'm pleased to rise and make some comments on what we just heard from my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West, but first I just wanted to mention that many, many years ago, my mother's family adopted a little girl. There were five little girls left without parents; their parents were killed in a car accident. The community felt that those five little girls should not be placed in homes far away from each other.

Now, I suspect—I don't know, but I suspect—that the rules in place at that time were very simple, if many rules over adoption existed at all. But you could see where the community came together and decided that these five little girls, who were very, very young, should stay in the community, and indeed they did. They were adopted by five different families, and they got along extremely well. Now we're in an age where we have oversight and rules and ideals and ideas. The member from Northumberland–Quinte West went through a lot of that and explained it quite well.

I think a very important part of this bill is that right now there are 9,000 crown wards in Ontario and only about 10% of them are adopted each year. Clearly, we can do better, as a society and as a government, to ensure that these young people, and into their teenaged years, have an opportunity to find what we have called a “forever family.” Currently, legislation is a barrier to some of these children ever finding a home, and this bill talks about changing that, so they can find a life with a family that will love and cherish them.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further comments?

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I'm pleased to add a couple of comments to the speech given by the member from Northumberland–Quinte West on this bill, which in prin-

principle our party supports. It's interesting, in looking at bills like this, to consider what has happened in a world like the world of adoption over the course of the past 10 or, need I not say, 20 years. Things have changed. There are too many children who don't have parents; there always have been. There are too many parents who want children for us to have legal obstacles in the way to prevent that.

This bill, if it's passed, deals with two issues: access orders to make it easier to adopt children who are crown wards, and making it easier for children between the ages of 15 and 16 who have left care to return to the care of the children's aid societies. That's a really important aspect because, let's face it: As aware as we know children of 15 to 16 may be in today's world—because that's something that has changed as well—they're not aware enough to be on the street taking care of themselves with any real hope of amounting to what becomes a responsible and independent adult going forward. So I'm happy to see that this was contemplated in the creation of the bill.

As far as an access order is concerned, an access order allows parents and siblings and other family members or close friends to have access to a child while they are a ward of the crown. Many of these access orders go unused. Crown wards are unable to be adopted if they have an access order attached to them. So again, this is an issue of taking the legalities and simplifying them so that children who are prevented from being available for adoption, who desperately need a good home, can be adopted by a good, loving set of parents at any given time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** The member for Northumberland—Quinte West has two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I want to thank the members for their comments. I sense in general that there is support. Yes, it will go to committee and we will have some public consultations. As I said in my remarks, that's always to strengthen it.

I just make a comment to the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka. By the way, I have to be somewhat nice to him because my son is in his riding. He was down here the other week, and they had a good chat. He made mention of my comments about the other parties not supporting some of the legislation because of other things in those pieces of legislation. Maybe not all of them who are there, but certainly he was here when omnibus bills were the order of the day—and I see that my good friend from Durham is here, and he would know that—when there was no consultation; none whatsoever. So it's kind of rich to hear those kinds of comments when we are debating these bills, but I certainly appreciate his comments.

It's the same with the member from Kenora—Rainy River. Yes, we need to hear about this. He talks about aboriginal consultation. I'm not sure what the title was, but the minister hosted a summit with aboriginal leaders not too long ago to talk about these very issues in a very

early stage of our legislation. So one would say: "When is it enough? When is it not enough?" There are 106 or 107 members in this House. We could always argue about what "enough" and "not enough" are, and whatever. But the fact of the matter is, the bill is being debated and the bill will go to committee, and with lots of input.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further debate?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I am thrilled with the opportunity to speak on this this afternoon. I know that there was a lineup for people who wanted to participate, and I got to the front of the line as quickly as possible. With that, I'll bring this little I know in as long as a period of time as I am able to extend the time.

It is a serious and important topic. I'd say that Bill 179 was introduced here a couple of weeks ago—April 13. In fact, our member in the chair, the member from York—Simcoe, is well versed and thoroughly convinced as an advocate—I think a well-informed advocate—on this topic. I would only say that what I've learned, basically, probably came from things that she has said and from working with my constituents.

**1640**

To wrap a little bit around—that may not come in in the main briefing notes that members use. We are on the record as being supportive, and we are on the record as trying to move this into committee so that we get it right.

There's lots changing, some of which is direct, by this bill. There's a couple of things that have been mentioned that, I think more importantly, put some wrapping around this. The member from Kenora—Rainy River spoke in response to the member from Northumberland—Quinte West about the First Nations issue, which is quite unique and separate—and I think perhaps they'll be speaking after me in a very short time—and which is important.

Those families are different. The whole issue of traditions and culture is very important. Perhaps some years ago we were all wrong and all ignorant in terms of the importance of symmetry in a person's life. I suspect that in some ways it still exists today. We expect that—how would you say?—the normalized cultural zones that people live in and are comfortable with suit their references in life, which I think is important.

Also, when I relate this back to the government's broader policy on the poverty reduction task force, as an example—we know a lot of families that do end up in problems because of the economy. Now, I'm not blaming all the problems in the economy on Premier McGuinty, but part of them I am. When you don't recognize the economic unit of society—the family—and support it in the most obvious ways, whether they're First Nations, new Canadians or whatever their reference point, that is important. We see families under stress today. Some of it is affordability of the essentials. Whether it's food, heat for your home, gas for your car, proper nutrition—these are important things. When we see the family in trouble, we see problems where children need to have care providers.

Even in the last budget—this is the budget I'm referring to, Madam Speaker. It's the 2011 budget presented here in the House. There's a section in here, the child welfare section—I'm referring to page 120: "Across Ontario, child welfare services are currently provided by 53 children's aid societies." I could say that, in a general sense, having worked with the children's aid in my riding of Durham, along with other members—this is non-partisan, and I heard earlier the NDP leading this—they are all in freeze mode, and the more remote ones even more so; resource-poor for the most vulnerable members of our shared society.

The plan here in the budget—the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare. "Ontario is helping more crown wards succeed in school and move on to post-secondary education with support such as education championship teams that offer mentorship, peer support, motivation and guidance. The government continues to explore options for further enhancing its crown wards success strategy to improve educational outcomes and smooth the transition to adulthood."

This all speaks to opportunity, not more red tape. "Opportunity" I believe is the operative word, and it links very nicely with "hope." A child without hope is a child in trouble. This is paramount. As a parent of five children—and now six. I mentioned the last time I was speaking that my youngest son, Andrew, and his wife, Alison, had a little baby girl, Alexandra. It's wonderful. She's doing well. She's three weeks this Friday.

My point in bringing this up is, it takes abilities to raise a child and all that, but it really takes a family, the economic unit and the extended family—the rights of grandparents and access to these things. Somehow, when you get into children's aid, you end up with another kind of institutional model. We've moved out of that, and I think this bill goes some way to addressing some of that; I really do.

It goes on here—there's a bit of a study going on. It says, "The government is acting on the recommendations of the commission to consolidate children's aid societies." There won't be 53 of them. They're going to be bigger and—you thought I was going to say "better," didn't you? No, they're going to be bigger, they're going to be more bureaucratic and less family-focused. Show me the door.

I'm concerned about that provision in the reference we're talking about, this restructuring under the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and provision of care and maintenance, especially for the two groups mentioned. The groups I'm mentioning are the access to crown wards and the 15- to 16-year-olds returned to care.

Again, I am not, in any way, except listening here and thinking about the most vulnerable members of our society—children. I suspect we should be paying close care and attention because the government is planning on collapsing the 53 probably into—I hope they don't collapse into LHINs, these large bureaucratic, unresponsive, unaccountable political appointments that run

the health care system. Ask yourself: Is the health care system any better since they brought in the LHINs?

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** Yes.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I hear members on the government side saying "yes." I see it as another barrier to the autonomy of the local hospital board, in conjunction with the ministry and the community, to say that one size does not fit all. I only bring that up because I know it's a sensitive spot for them. They're probably quite aware of that, if they're listening. I won't mention any more than that because I know that it would upset them.

The numbers don't tell the whole story. I haven't got quite enough time. I may have to ask for more time on this because I'm barely getting to the notes here, which is a problem.

This is from the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Some of them don't want to hear the information, it's apparent to me. I've said that we're supportive of this. I'm just adding value to it at the moment.

The numbers tell the story in this case. The approximate number of children adopted in Ontario families each year through the three provincial adoption services—public, private domestic and intercontinental, or inter-country, really—is 1,600. The approximate number of crown wards in 2007-08 was 9,400; 822 crown wards adopted in 2007-08; one in six Ontario couples struggle with infertility in their lifetime; and 1,500 babies born in Ontario in 2006 through in vitro fertilization.

All of us in our constituency offices have dealt with almost all these issues: the adoption process and its accessibility, as well as the desire of young couples to have their own child. Barriers like costs, lack of information, system weakness, location, work constraints and stigma prevent many Ontarians from accessing these services and keep many children waiting to be adopted.

This Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption is to provide advice in how to improve—I believe that is one of the reference points in the legislation we're discussing here. I've made a few notes here so that I don't completely just speak extemporaneously, if that's a proper word.

The content here is—I'm trying to keep it light-hearted. It's sort of like a Liberal speech, really. It's quite enthusiastic about it.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Hang on here for a moment. This one here: "Ontarians cannot afford not to fix the system." This is from the expert panel; we're not going off the cuff here. "It costs at least \$32,000 a year to keep a crown ward in care." Thirty-two thousand dollars? Wow. Maybe a grandmother, if she got the \$32,000 and was appropriately trained health-wise and in her resilience and acceptance, could be accommodated here. Give her part of the \$32,000. Have a loving—I'm telling you, there are some simple answers here that have not been very easily acceptable.



"It costs significantly less to provide support and subsidies to help adoptive families parent children." This is where the grandparent argument comes in.

**1650**

I'm sure parents today, like myself—I just pray to God, and quite seriously mean that, with all five of my children that live in different countries, I might say. One of them is moving to Hong Kong next summer, two are in England and one on the Isle of Man. I hope their families and their marriages last. I pray; that's about all I can do. This is where the issues become quite complicated when you're trying to be caring for your family.

How about new Canadians who experience problems? These things here are what I'm talking about. We don't want those children moved out of that cultural community. I still go back to the First Nations issue of how poorly we've looked after that in the past.

"The stated cost of keeping a child in care does not include the long-term cost to society of a child who grows up without a stable family. Former crown wards are less likely to finish high school, and more likely to rely on social assistance and live in homeless shelters." This is from the expert panel report. It's a serious problem.

"For the sake of the more than 9,000 crown wards in the province—many of whom could be adopted—children in other jurisdictions waiting to be adopted, and the families anxious to adopt, the province must act now. It must create an integrated, responsive adoption system that works for children and families."

I am completely in support of that approach. If that's the intent of the bill, it's no wonder our leader, Tim Hudak, has encouraged us to take a very close look. It just makes very good sense for the children and the families involved—not the money and the LHINs or the other kinds of bureaucracies that are there to sort of protract the experience.

"Ontario cannot afford to not fund assisted reproduction services"—that's in the report as well, but it's not specific in this bill, I will say that. That's been called for and has actually been implemented in other provinces, and it's not going to go away. I have not heard a response to that. It's a complicated issue. In vitro fertilization can be expensive and can be unsuccessful. So a question of fairness and equity arises in all of the discussions that I've read on this particular issue. I do have more information, Madam Speaker. I think I may have gotten it from your office, actually.

Excerpts from *Raising Expectations*, the recommendations of the expert panel:

"Adoption in Ontario now—the basics

"Ontarians who want to build or add to their families through adoption have three options: public, private domestic and inter-country adoption." We've seen this in our riding offices quite frequently. People adopting from other countries is a growing trend because they can't get children right here from Ontario. "All three are regulated by the provincial government and, in all instances, the best interests of the child are deemed paramount."

That can't be ignored. Let's remember, even us here talking about this, have we talked to the children? In fact, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, in his very insightful remarks—he's been here a long time; he's been Attorney General; he's been a few things. He knows that certain groups in certain areas of the province need to have their needs met and considered. The Far North might be different than an urban centre like Toronto, but I think that's important to make sure that the children remain at the very centre and where it's best for them in their life journey.

"Patterns of adoption in Ontario have changed significantly over time and continue to change"—as they should. "Over the past decade, for instance, there has been a decrease in the number of private domestic adoptions and a slight increase in inter-country and public adoptions." Public adoptions would be the ones who use an agency, I gather. "In Ontario, as in many other jurisdictions, there are many fewer newborn babies available for adoption than there were several decades ago, and more families are choosing to adopt from countries like China and, more recently, Ethiopia." Remember, keeping a child first is pretty important.

"Each year for the past five years, approximately 1,600 children were adopted into families in Ontario through one of these three services. The largest number—more than 800 a year—are public adoptions, followed by about 650 inter-country adoptions, and 150 private ... adoptions."

I'm hearing that even there, some of these foreign adoptions cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, with the trips and educational time spent on it. But the time spent with the child remains the central point. One of the questions I have is, how long does it take? I see the minister is here, and she might want to respond. What is the actual length of time in which a child that's been put up for adoption is able to get through the process? There is some red tape in here, and I would say that.

One of them is the second component of the bill. The legislation deals with children aged 16 to 18—I think that they would be a little harder to adopt; I don't know—who want to return to care if they have left for any reason. Currently, any child that enters care before the day they turn 16 is eligible to be in care until their 18th birthday. If a child aged 16 to 18 less a day leaves care they are not able to return, as the age of protection in Ontario is 16. In other words, if they leave before they're 16, they're finished. The legislation will allow any child aged 16 to 18 less a day who has previously been in care, but left for any reason, to return to the care of CAS. If the child voluntarily returns to care, they must sign a voluntary service provision, which allows them access to a range of supports and makes them eligible for the extended maintenance program until the age of 21.

Not to leave any sort of uncertainty, I believe that the children's aids I have worked with in Durham are well-intended boards of volunteers that are acting under the regulations as they exist, so I don't blame them for any—but they have some financial constraints about the

provision of care. That needs to be addressed, and I don't think it is, except that I see in the budget that they're going to amalgamate them all, save some administrative costs and create bigger, more remote bureaucracies, is the way I can see it. But that is, overall, keeping the child first in this whole debate. Remember, it's compulsory debate time that's here. We're making our admissions right up front, that we're in support. We are in support to the extent that we would like to see the bill move to some hearing process to clarify things.

This legislation is quite similar to the Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Bill 210), which was passed in 2006 by this government. That change was also to terminate access orders upon the placement of a child with a family, and allow for openness orders if it is in the best interests of the child. However, it appears that in five years since, nothing has happened. One would ask why. The number of crown wards in care remains the same today as it did in 2006. Why is this the case, and how will this bill fix that?

The Expert Panel on Fertility and Adoption tabled their report in June 2009, asking for adoption reforms such as these. This was a panel and report commissioned by the McGuinty Liberals, and the timing of this legislation is questionable.

There's only a little while left here in the Legislature. We're heading towards an election. Let's get this done. Let's think of the care of the children. That's what this is about.

Currently, some CASs provide subsidies (at the discretion of the individual CASs)—and this is important, and I do support this—to families who adopt crown wards. While the minister said she would like there to be [a] consistent adoption subsidy, there is no mention of it in the legislation, and she has said she will be seeking the advice of experts. One more reason to have the hearings.

If there are subsidies available, and there are some reports here on subsidies, especially grandparents being adoptive, I think this could do—remember, I told you that it's \$32,000 in care a year per child, and so—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you. Comments and questions? The member for Welland.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Thank you kindly, Speaker. I'll be speaking to this bill in around 10 minutes' time, I suspect.

It's important that this bill get into committee. Here we are, and the member has just noted that we're rising here on June 2, or earlier if the House prorogues, and anything can happen at this point in a provincial election year. My concern is that the bill will not be completed.

The government can say, "That's fine; we'll time-allocate it," for instance. The government could do that and give it, oh, half a day of public hearings. I put to you that the most important contribution to this bill's progress will be the public process, the public hearings: participation by experts, professionals, participation by parents, by adoptive parents, by potentially adoptive parents, by foster parents, by any other number of people who are working out there in the community with kids.

**1700**

As New Democrats, we have no intention of belabouring this bill, and I'm surprised that it hasn't been the subject matter of some discussion by House leaders about wrapping up second reading and getting this into committee. Michael Prue, our member for Beaches—East York—by the way, that riding elected a New Democrat last night, defeated a Liberal incumbent. But our critic and our leader, Andrea Horwath, specifically asked Michael to deal with this bill and its progress through the House and especially at committee. He's eager to get on with committee work, but if this government thinks that one half-day or one or two days is going to be adequate to address the issues that are here and that prevail, it's sadly mistaken and it will do a disservice.

We're prepared to get this thing moving along. Why isn't the government?

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further comments and questions?

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** I'm very pleased to be able to speak in support of this bill and respond to the comments by the member from Durham.

I just wanted to note that he made some comments about the amalgamation of some of the family and children's services, children's aid boards, whatever they happen to be called in your community. I guess I understand why he's very negative about amalgamations and assumes they're forced. I certainly know, having been on a school board when the Conservative government was in place, that the boards were subject to shotgun marriages and were not necessarily happy about the idea of amalgamation.

But what I would like to share with the member is that in this specific instance under our government, where children's aid boards are amalgamating, it's because the children's aid boards are doing so voluntarily. Neighbouring boards have sat down and had a discussion and said, "We're spending a lot on administration. We're spending a lot on duplicating our services. We could actually serve the children much more effectively, much more efficiently, if we voluntarily decided that we will amalgamate."

I just wanted to assure the member from Durham that any of these children's aid amalgamations are totally voluntary and done because it will improve service for children.

With respect to the bill itself, just to say what the bill will do, it will enable a lot of children who are prevented from being adoptable currently because of access orders—it will recognize that those children should be able to be adopted, and under this new legislation, access orders will not—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you. Further comments and questions?

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** It's always a pleasure to hear from my colleague the member from Durham, because he has an insightful thing or two to say—or three or four—about almost everything that goes through this Legislature, and he's never an unwilling participant in debate.

In this particular case, I want to refer to comments that he made generally to the bill in terms of what happens to children's aid societies in light of the enactment of the bill.

There are 1,500 potential adoptive families in Ontario right now, and they're waiting, I dare say impatiently, for a home study to be completed so they can become adoptive parents. The sooner, the better, I would say on behalf of all of them. The ministry has to deal with wait-lists for a home study before the adoption process can move forward, and that places additional burdens on the children's aid societies themselves. As we know, Speaker, they've had trouble balancing their budgets with the mandated services that they have to provide.

In the last couple of years very particularly, I can speak very personally for children's aid in York region. If we go back even as recently as not this year but last year, we had these people on our doorsteps—my colleagues the member from Newmarket—Aurora and the member for York—Simcoe—looking for assistance in making this government come across with just the same, forget about an increase, and we were successful in making enough noise to have that happen. So to see their burdens relieved, that's fine, but there are more burdens that have to be addressed. Some children's aid societies have stopped or have not created a wait-list for home studies, and families are forced, then, to rely on private providers, because so few adoptions are going through the CASs. We can hope that this bill will address some of that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further comments and questions?

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I listened to my Conservative colleague's speech, and I do want to give him credit. He is somebody who's reasonably well informed on these issues, and he alluded to something which I think needs to be looked at very carefully in committee. The fact of the matter is, most of the children's aid societies in this province are grossly underfunded. Many of them run out of money in December of their fiscal year and then have to try to figure out ways to tide things over in January and February and until the end of March. So they don't have the resources to do the work that needs to be done.

As my other colleague from the Conservative Party pointed out, the money goes to the mandated services, and services involving support for adopted children or support for the adoption process get pushed off. So one of the things that has to be addressed is this: What will the resourcing be of children's aid societies? It's one thing—and we've seen this on several occasions from this government—to pass a law, but if you do not provide the resources to implement the changes in the law, if you do not provide the funding to see it through, then it's all just superficial paper, and you really haven't done much to make the situation better.

Simply passing this legislation without addressing the issue of the underfunding of children's aid societies across Ontario would simply not do the job. That's one of

the issues that we think needs to be addressed before committee: What will the resourcing be in order to make this happen?

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I want to thank the member from Welland, who referred to the importance of hearings—otherwise, we'll be time-allocated—and the member from Thornhill, a good friend and an informed commentator, both on radio and in here.

The member from Kenora—Rainy River, I expect, will be speaking next, and he talked to something that I said: the lack of resources for this very important determinant.

The member from Guelph mentioned something that sort of struck a nerve with me, because I knew her when she was a trustee and I was a trustee once upon a time. She talked about the amalgamation of school boards. That should be understood—I want to clarify the record. They often say things without adequate information. It was called the Sweeney commission, and it was done under the NDP, under David Cooke, and their intent was to amalgamate boards for efficiencies. There was a consultation on that, and the province of Ontario—Premier Harris was the one who looked at the Royal Commission on Learning and the suitability of boards and jurisdictions and coterminous issues. So if you have something bad to say about that—mostly they make these things into negatives. We carried out, in complete fulfillment, equal funding for education for all children in Ontario. That's what actually happened between the royal commission and the Sweeney commission. So I thank you for commenting on and praising Premier Harris's work.

Also, I think it's important in the context of this to look at whether these amalgamations make sense, or the de-amalgamations for perhaps First Nation groups to look after their own issues with custody and support. It is an important opportunity here to recognize those, I'd say, sensitive needs. I don't want to use the words "cultural needs," but I think it's important to those persons.

I looked at the forecast; other speakers may want to look at this. Adoption subsidies aren't used enough, and the minister—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you. Further debate?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** In fact—and I note that this is disappointing the member from Durham—I'm going to be speaking to this matter next, although I'm eager to hear what my colleague the member from Kenora—Rainy River has to say, in addition to the numerous comments and numerous contributions he's made to this debate up until this moment.

**1710**

I want to make it clear that on second reading the New Democrats are supporting this bill. I want to make it clear, as I did in that brief commentary a few minutes ago, that New Democrats are eager to see this bill go to committee for thorough consideration in the committee. But we have a time constraint. The legislative calendar

requires this House to rise on June 2. Having said that, I'm sure that New Democrats would be pleased to negotiate with the government an extension of the sitting days of the House. It's something that I'd be eager to do. Or the government can prioritize its various bills that remain on the order paper, and surely this bill is one that should be prioritized.

I am skeptical about some of the claims made by the government with respect to the impact that this bill will have, and one of the sources of that skepticism was referred to by the member for Durham and my friend the member for Kenora–Rainy River when they talked about the whole issue of funding children's aid, family and children's services. Many years ago, when I was a college student, I worked for Niagara region family and children's services in their receiving and assessment centre. I was one of the night staff—a far different type of family and children's services than exists now, because that was some 40 years ago. And over the course of working as a criminal lawyer and handling a good chunk of young offender defences, I became familiar with family and children's services again, because a whole lot of these kids either were in group homes or were foster kids or had other interaction with family and children's services, even to the point of, let's say, therapy or interventions in violent families or unstable families or unhealthy families. I certainly don't want to suggest by any stretch of the imagination that all kids who are in the custody or care of family and children's services end up in young offender court. You don't have to imagine very much to understand that by the time a kid's been bounced around, in and out of a parental home, a parental home that usually has some serious problems with booze or drugs or violence, or abuse of a child—still rampant—that child's going to be pretty damaged and is going to act out in some pretty severe ways.

Regrettably, the criminal justice system, even the young offender system, really hasn't been developed in a way that's very satisfying to either the community or the young people whose lives intersect with it—not very effective at all.

Annually, we have people rising in the chamber on behalf of their family and children's services, their children's aid society, asking the minister about that family and children's services unit being on the verge of literally shutting down, staff on the cusp of being laid off. The member for Kenora–Rainy River talked about the mandated services, basically the core services. These agencies are having a hard enough time performing those core services, those mandated services, never mind ones that legislatively they can, if they're compelled to, avoid.

There's a very interesting bill that's coming before this House on Thursday of this week during private members' public business. It's Bill 183, and it's being put forward by a New Democrat from Trinity–Spadina, which also elected a federal New Democrat last night, Olivia Chow, who pundits—who are these pundits?—said was in trouble. Give me a break. She cleaned up. She had a plurality that would choke a horse. Olivia

Chow has championed her constituents and has been an incredibly effective member of Parliament.

Now, I should mention, just as an aside, that Malcolm Allen down in Welland—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Order. I'd ask the Minister of Economic Development to come to order.

Member for Welland, continue.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** I've asked you to come to order.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I mentioned that in Welland we re-elected another New Democrat who was supposed to have been in trouble, Conservatives nipping at his heels, Malcolm Allen. Malcolm Allen had a bigger plurality yesterday than he did two and a half, two and three-quarter years ago, in what was a pretty tough campaign and a pretty dirty, little nasty campaign, too, but that's all done and over with.

**Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I ask the relevancy of the comments to the adoption bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** I'll ask the member to continue his remarks consistent with the bill being discussed.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Speaker, I thank you very much for the intervention, and I appreciate your guidance, because what we're talking about is the financing of children's aid societies, the financing of family and children's services. You can't do that without talking about the political responsibility—the legislative and the parliamentary responsibility—to do precisely that. If we're going to talk about the legislative and parliamentary responsibility to fund children's aid societies, we've got to talk about the people who are elected to those Legislatures and to those Parliaments.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** The member for Kenora–Rainy River says one the of questions to put to the committee, to put to the government, to put to the minister—who I'm sure is extremely proud of this bill—is, what commitment is the government making in terms of long-term, stable funding? Not those one-shot deals.

Heck, we met with the Ontario Provincial Police Association today; I'm sure you did as well. One of the concerns they had was the need for a minimum of 600 more OPP officers. They also made it clear that these—I was at one just the other day in the government caucus room. The government was announcing a special allocation of police officers to some serious issues—guns and gangs and so on. It looked like General Pinochet and his cabinet because there you've got the Premier with all these military-type, gold-braided, with the caps and all the—what do they call it? Egg salad? Scrambled eggs on the cap?

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** I'm going to remind the member from Welland to maintain his remarks relevant to the bill.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I digress. I would ask the Speaker to please consider this: I live down in Welland. There's two ways to get there. I could take the QEW—it's usually faster; it's a direct route—or I can take Highway 8 and Highway 20. That takes a little longer, but I'm still going to Welland, and it's a lot more colourful and interesting. So if you don't mind, I'll take Highway 8 and Highway 20 to get to where I'm going on this bill.

The bill that's coming forward on Thursday—and let's see how members respond to this proposition by Mr. Marchese, the member for Trinity–Spadina, the riding that elected a New Democrat last night to the federal Parliament—is an amendment to the Ombudsman Act. Bear with me. It's a very important bill because the amendment to the Ombudsman Act is to the following effect: The Ombudsman may investigate designated public bodies in respect of, amongst other things, “a society within the meaning of the Child and Family Services Act.” This is something that this government that has dug its heels in about. This government that talks about transparency and openness and frankness—horse feathers, bull spit, far from it.

This government talks about openness and transparency, yet it has dug its heels in when it comes to extending to the Ombudsman the authority to exercise his jurisdiction when it comes to, amongst other things, a society within the meaning of the Child and Family Services Act.

**1720**

That proposal by Mr. Marchese, the member for Trinity–Spadina, on Thursday during private members' public business is probably critical to the success of any proposal being made by the government in the course of its proposal contained in Bill 179. Think about it: The Ombudsman could actually investigate the level of funding and its inadequacy or adequacy for the responsibilities that children's aid societies are being called upon to do in this effort, supposedly, to increase the adoption of kids currently not being adopted.

One of the interesting things that the expert panel spoke about was the fixation on infants, that by and large most people want an infant, not a toddler, not a teenager, not a kid with special needs. The expert panel was very clear in advising that if children's aid societies had the capacity to speak with potential adoptive parents and explain to them that it isn't just an infant that can be adopted—you can adopt a toddler, you can adopt an older kid, you can adopt a teenager, you can adopt a kid with special needs—and more than just talking to the potential adoptive parents about that proposition, talking to them about the kind of supports that they will be eligible to receive, including financial support.

The member for Durham made mention of grandparents raising grandkids. You know that Paul Miller, our member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, has been on that file since his election here four years ago. We have had grandmothers come here pleading, pleading with this government, asking for some modest financial support as they're rearing their grandchildren.

We also witnessed the disgrace, the shameful disgrace of the Liberal McGuinty government when it effectively told parents to surrender their kid with special needs up to the custody of children's aid societies because that's the only way that that kid could get the treatment or therapy that kid needed—and parents were doing it. Parents were surrendering up their children out of love for their children and after having been told by the government itself that that's the only way that kid is going to get medical treatment, therapy, rehab, any number of things; that's the only way that kid is going to have some special needs addressed. And this government pretends to have any interest in families at all? This government uses this bill to attempt to deliver the message that it cares about unadopted kids? This government is pretty transparent when it's demonstrating its failure to address the needs of children.

Shall we venture into the whole arena of kids with autism and how those kids are abandoned by the Dalton McGuinty Liberals and how their families are forced into bankruptcy because this government arbitrarily terminates IBI treatment for those kids? Please. It's offensive.

And it's not what people expect of governments. I know there are people who that say we should have less government, but there is also a whole lot of people out there who say that we need government to help people who need help. We need government to protect vulnerable people. We need government to care for kids whose families aren't capable of rearing them. We need government to do more than simply create the legislative framework to facilitate the adoption of kids who are subject to access orders. We need a government that's willing to go that extra step and make sure that family and children's services, children's aid societies, have the resources to do the job that they're going to have to do if this is going to work.

I should mention that I have no doubt that there will be some concern raised about, effectively, the negative optioning, the Rogers Cable-style of eliminating the access order. I understand what this bill does—and if I'm wrong, feel free to correct me; I know you would, but you won't because I'm not—that a society can, in effect, by preparing an adoption plan, nullify the access order. What it does is notify the party—presumably the natural parent but not always—that can avail itself of the access order that they have a right to apply to have an openness order.

Why this negative optioning? Why aren't the courts being encouraged to take a more active role in supervising the welfare of kids and, for that matter, the relationship between kids and their natural parents when those kids are being adopted by somebody other than a natural parent? Many times it could be a relative, but many times not.

Why isn't this government doing more to encourage, facilitate and assist grandparents raising their grandkids? Why don't they have some priority in the pecking order? We've heard and read and talked about in this legislation some horror stories of foster parents who have cared for a

kid since that kid was just a tyke until that kid's four, five or six years old and then having that kid taken out of their home in an adoption with people who are strangers to that baby when the foster parents want to be adoptive parents. You know that's the case because you talked about it right here.

Committee is where the bill belongs. Michael Prue, the member from Beaches–East York, is eager to see it there. He's eager to work with people making submissions to that committee.

Rosario Marchese's bill on Thursday is really of paramount importance. It's crucial. The Ombudsman has been crying out, calling out for the authority to expand his jurisdiction to conduct his investigations into, amongst other things, family and children's services for years now. As a matter of fact, there are some who speculate that the Ombudsman, a truly honourable man, was being blocked for his reappointment because he was so enthusiastic and downright aggressive about seeking legislative authority to have the Ombudsman office investigate societies within the meaning of the Child and Family Services Act, or, for that matter, as Marchese's bill goes on, a board within the meaning of the Education Act, or, for that matter, a university, a college of applied arts and technology or other post-secondary institution or, for that matter, a home for special care within the meaning of the Homes for Special Care Act, or a long-term-care home within the meaning of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, or the Office of the Independent Police Review Director within the meaning of the Police Services Act, or a private hospital within the meaning of the Private Hospitals Act. Would this ever reveal the source of a crisis down in Niagara where this government has been shutting down emergency rooms and hospital beds, helter-skelter?

Giving the Ombudsman the authority to inquire into the conduct of a hospital within the meaning of the Public Hospitals Act, like the Niagara Health System and that crummy, unelected, unaccountable, anonymous LHIN that's nothing more than a firewall for Mr. McGuinty and his Liberals and that is shutting down emergency rooms and now shutting down long-term beds—as many as 120 of them in the Welland County General Hospital.

As I say, New Democrats will support this bill to send it to second reading. But we insist that there's a whole lot of work to be done, and if the government's really serious about getting that work done, it will sit down and negotiate a finalization of second reading and begin the committee process as promptly as possible; that is to say, immediately.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Comments and questions?

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten:** I'm very pleased to have a chance to speak today and comment on second reading. I will start by saying that I, too, am anxious to see this bill move on to committee because it is so important. It's so important that we move this piece of legislation forward because this piece of legislation will open a door of

opportunity for 75% of the 9,000 crown wards in Ontario. It is so critical that we continue to build upon the success that we have had and the progress that we have made since we've started to facilitate and move forward with respect to adoption and permanency planning for Ontario's crown wards. In fact, as a result of steps taken in 2006 and 2007, last year alone we increased the number of adoptions by 21%. Those steps are important. This piece of legislation fully removes a barrier that has been in place for a long time and that will prevent the planning of a permanency strategy, an adoption strategy, for so many kids in Ontario. For me, that is what it's all about.

**1730**

If you have an opportunity to ever walk around or learn about the Adoption Resource Exchange, which is one of the initiatives—that we will double the number of them that take place across the province; we'll make sure that they take place more than simply in the city of Toronto—they are opportunities for the matching of willing families with kids who need those families, and they are amazingly emotional opportunities. They hit you in your heart. They make you think about, as the member opposite talked about, the opportunities that might exist for an older child to be adopted. If I can leave this House with one message, as I have been trying to leave for many Ontarians, think about it. Think about it in your heart and in your family, and determine whether you have a place for one of the older children in Ontario who might be looking for that forever family.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I enjoy the presentations from the member from Welland. We share a riding boundary east of Dunnville, west of Wainfleet. I do enjoy his presentations and his style of presentation.

A question has been raised this afternoon. The legislation is fine. We see a lot of good in this legislation. The question: Where are the resources, in particular for certain children's aid societies, smaller children's aid societies?

We know this law will allow a child aged 16 to 18 less a day who had previously been in care to return back to the care of a children's aid society. They can access a fulsome range of supports and they are eligible for what's called the extended maintenance program up to age 21.

But again, the question: additional responsibilities, additional work for children's aid societies; is there budgeting available for this? Many children's aid societies have gotten in trouble, even to the point of filing what's called a section 14 review of their funding model, asking the ministry to come in, show them where they can continue their mandate, show them where the funding is available, how this can possibly be done.

The case has been made to me that the model is unsustainable. This has been going on for the last couple of years, to my knowledge, and I see little action on the part of this government. We know that some children's aid societies have been encouraged to join another

organization or to merge with another children's aid society. Some of them have gotten to the point where they've been laying off staff.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further comments and questions?

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I listened to my colleague from Welland. He makes the point that, again, one of the reasons this legislation needs to go before committee is because there are some unanswered questions with respect to the financial support that children receive while they are wards of the crown but do not receive as soon as they are adopted. This needs to be addressed.

The expert panel on adoption heard from parents and foster parents who came forward, foster parents who would like to adopt a child who is in their home, but the child has special needs and they know that, under the current rules, if they adopt the child, the special-needs allowance is removed.

The expert panel put it this way:

"We heard from some very dedicated foster parents who said they would like to adopt children currently living in their homes, but primarily due to the significant needs of the children, simply could not afford to do so. Others worried that adoption was not in the best interests of a child if it resulted in a loss of critical services and supports." This panel then observes, "Perversely, as the system is currently structured, a child with special needs has a better chance of having those needs met by remaining in care" of the children's aid society, "a 'solution' that overlooks their basic human need for permanency and emotional attachment, and the province's own need for fiscal responsibility. Simply put, it costs more to keep children with special needs in care than it does to provide adoption subsidies for these children."

We need to hear more—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you. The member for Etobicoke Centre.

**Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield:** I think my colleague across the way from Welland took Highway 8 and Highway 20. I think he also took Route 66. I think I'll take the more direct route.

This is about children, and this is about children who are in care who need to find a family. It's about removing the barriers so those children can find a family as soon as possible. I don't think there's anyone here who doesn't know that, after second reading, it will go to committee, it will go for discussion, it will go out to consultation, and those questions, suggestions and considerations will all come forward to that committee as they deliberate this bill—and then it comes back to this House for additional discussion. While people may wax eloquently about, "It needs to go to committee," in fact, it will go to committee. That is the process that we follow here.

I think the important part that we need to remember is that there is a significant number of children who currently have a barrier to adoption. We need to find a way and we need to find a way quickly so that those children can have a family just like other children, so they can have the same opportunities. We know that when

children have a family and the security of a home, the opportunity for them to go to school increases, and the opportunity for them to graduate from secondary school and go on to post-secondary school also increases. Those children do need to have the same opportunity.

I do agree that we need to address those issues around special needs to ensure that all children are treated in an equitable and fair fashion. That is part of the responsibility of a government and of a civil society: to help others who are less fortunate than themselves. But I think the important part here is that we recognize that this is really all about the children and how we can move forward in a positive way to make a real difference in their lives.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** The member for Welland has two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** This isn't about the children; this is about this government's last-ditch effort to identify itself with an issue that is troubling Ontarians and has troubled Ontarians for number of years and to pay lip service to a solution, but not providing the resources so that the solution can be effected.

Look, I give the minister credit for being here today: Many ministers don't follow their bills through the Legislature. But I, for the life of me, don't understand why this minister or her colleague would attempt to say that the funding is going to be there when the funding hasn't been there for IBI treatment for kids with autism, has it, Speaker; when the funding clearly isn't there for hospitals like the hospitals in the Niagara Health System to maintain emergency rooms and long-term beds, is it, Speaker?

The member is quite right: This is the role of government—it's the role of good government. The problem is that we haven't had good government in this province for a good chunk of time. We have government that wants to fiddle around with these sorts of things, that wants to spin and try to put a veneer on a pretty corrupt core.

I question the minister: Why does the Ministry of Children and Youth Services 2010-11 briefing book say that the number of adoptions completed by children's aid societies in Ontario have flatlined since 2003 and then try to give us the impression that, somehow, there's this revolution, there's this explosion of adoptions taking place, when her own documents say that those adoptions have flatlined since 2003? There's something askew here. There's something that's not right, and people want to know the answers. We're only going to get that in committee, and that's why the opposition is going to force this bill into committee.

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**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Further debate?

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** It's a pleasure of mine to stand in this House today and support Bill 179, which amends the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and the provision of care and maintenance of young children and youth.

This legislation is the next step in our government's commitment to improve Ontario's adoption system. If

this bill should pass, it will help people build their families and help the children in the province's care find loving, permanent homes, where they can find a loving family that will provide them with all the supports they need. There is nothing more critical, nothing more fundamental to a child's well-being than knowing he or she will always have a place to call home and have a family that will support them as they face the daily challenges of their lives.

In 2006, our government introduced changes to increase the number of children growing up with families in permanent homes, including through adoption. Let me say to you that these changes made a positive difference in the adoption process, but we believe there is more to be done, and that's what Bill 179 does. I've heard from everyone who has spoken so far that it looks as though this bill has the general support of all parties within the Legislature.

Since then, fewer kids are coming into children's aid societies' care and more kids are getting the chance to succeed in a permanent home. We continue to work with adoption organizations and our community partners to strengthen Ontario's child protection system and help all Ontario children reach their full potential. It's a win-win situation for the adoptive parent, who waits to open their heart and home to a welcoming child, and for the child who needs a loving, stable, permanent home as they face the challenges of their daily life.

There are currently about 9,000 crown wards in the care of children's aid societies. These children and youth have moved from place to place and from school to school and from family to family over the years. It's not a very positive thing for a young person growing up. Over 80% of them have special needs of one kind or another. I believe this bill will help to solve that situation in some small way. These needs can vary from a learning or developmental disability to complex physical, behavioural or emotional disabilities, and in many cases they have not received the appropriate supports and care to deal with their conditions. And whether they live in a foster home or in a group home, they all have one thing in common: Their best chance of success is with a safe, stable and permanent family.

Research indicates that kids who are adopted or provided with the permanency of a long-term home have significantly better outcomes compared to those who remain in care. Adopted children are almost 25% more likely to complete high school and 50% more likely to continue school at the post-secondary level. Unfortunately, three out of every four kids in care have access orders that legally prevent them from being placed for adoption. An access order is a legal order that prescribes how much and what type of contact the child has with significant people in their lives, including their birth family and, as some have mentioned, their grandparents.

Access orders have prevented young people from being adopted in Ontario for more than 30 years. This bill significantly changes that and will certainly make a difference for some of these young people. This legis-

lation will hopefully help some of these young children find a home, have a better chance, have more opportunities in life, and I think the bill brings hope.

Our government must make it easier to bring these children and the waiting parents together. These young people deserve a place to call home. They deserve to be cared for and loved by parents who want to open their homes and hearts to these young people. They deserve the best opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential in life and be contributing members of our society.

The new legislation, if passed, will mean an access order will terminate automatically when a child is placed for adoption. In cases where it would be in a child's best interest to maintain some contact with their birth family or another person after adoption, and the child consents—if he or she consents to the order—the court would make that openness order available. Proposed legislation will also reinforce the children's aid society's plan for the adoption of a crown ward even when an access order is in effect.

These changes will make a difference for many kids who want "forever families," who want to come home to a hug from their parents, and they will make a difference to those people who want nothing more than to open up their homes and their hearts to these young people, to read a book to a child or tuck them in late at night with a hug and a kiss.

And the changes do not stop there. We've heard from adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents on what they need to make it easier to adopt a child in Ontario. As a result, we're doubling the number of adoption resource exchange conferences held annually across the province from two to four. These conferences help match prospective adoptive families with children waiting to be adopted.

Adoptive and prospective adoptive parents also told us that finding reliable information, no matter what adoption stream they're interested in—public, private or international—is a challenge to them currently. With that in mind, we will be providing easy-to-navigate, online information so prospective adoptive parents can determine which adoption option is right for them.

Our government has heard from children's aid societies that about 1,500 families are waiting for a home study to be completed. A home study is an assessment process between the prospective adoptive parents and a qualified adoption practitioner, usually a social worker. It determines whether parents are prepared and suitable to adopt.

A backlog of 1,500 families is unacceptable to our government. We will work with the children's aid societies to help this number come down and ensure that home studies are done without delay. We are committed to tackling that backlog and establishing standard timelines for home studies in the public system.

For aboriginal children, the Child and Family Services Act recognizes customary care as a way for children to find permanent homes. Customary care is the care and



supervision of an aboriginal child by a person who is not the child's parent, according to the customs of the child's band or native community. Each community defines its own traditions. We will work with the children's aid societies and First Nations to increase the use of these arrangements so that more aboriginal children and youth are able to stay connected to their communities, their cultures and their traditions.

We are also planning to build on the innovative steps being taken by CASs that are providing subsidies to make it possible for some families to adopt. To do this, we will seek their advice and that of other experts and consider how we can best build on their experiences across the province.

Our government began strengthening adoption in 2006. We are proud of the progress we have made to this date. We've heard from partners that the progress we're making is good and it's relevant. Partners, such as the Adoption Council of Ontario, are encouraged by these changes.

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Last week, Minister Broten introduced the legislation. The executive director of the Adoption Council of Ontario had this to say: "The leadership, reform and supports proposed will greatly assist the adoption community—professionals and adoptive families—in finding permanent homes for more children. We have a lot of work to do, and today we are affirmed that the government is part of the team—we will accomplish so much more when we work together."

Indeed, through working together, government, community partners and families can improve the lives of these children and groups across our province and find permanent homes for kids in care.

We've heard from young people who were once crown wards and have now been adopted. They have spoken to us from the heart. They have thanked us for these initiatives. They have told us that every kid in Ontario deserves a family, especially those kids who have been through what they've been through in their past life. They've told us that nothing compares to the love and support that a permanent family can provide and that loving family that they can come home to on a daily basis.

We are grateful for the hard work of children's aid societies to make successful adoptions like these possible. Last year alone, we increased adoptions in the public system by 21% over the year before, and we are working to increase that number through this legislation. We all feel confident that this legislation will bring about that increase that we expect.

The act, if passed, is another step in the right direction. It is what the public wants us to do. It is what the children want us to do. It is what our children's aid services are asking us to do.

We've taken important steps for children in care, but we've also taken important steps for all Ontario children. Through the Ontario child benefit, we're providing financial support for low-income families to provide for

their children. Through our full-day kindergarten program, we're offering a solid foundation for future learning. Through Healthy Smiles Ontario, we're helping kids get regular dental checkups. Through the funding of more children's vaccines and the testing of infants for more diseases, we are now a leader in Canada and the world for children's health. Through important investments in special education and children's mental health, we're giving our kids the extra support they need to be successful. We are giving them that opportunity that they've been dependent upon us to do and provide to them.

Helping children, youth and families get what they need to succeed is a priority for our government. Our government will continue to work diligently with our partners in the adoption community.

We thank the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption for providing important advice about improving adoption services, and we thank all the community partners and organizations who shared their experiences and advice to help make our adoption system better. Together, we can help young people in the care of children's aid societies and prospective adoptive parents build the lives they always dreamed of.

I want to take this opportunity to encourage all families and individuals in Ontario to think about the special children across our province waiting to be adopted and to ask themselves if they have a place in their hearts and in their lives to give a child a forever family.

While we want to find a forever family for every child in care, unfortunately, the reality is that this is not always possible. There are some kids for whom adoption is not in their future. They will grow up in the care of the province, living in foster homes or residential homes. Many leave care after they turn 16, not realizing how difficult it will be to manage on their own. These kids are our collective responsibility. They need our help to fulfill their potential. We need them to perform at their best.

These changes will allow youth to get the supports they need to fulfill their potential and move into adulthood and be contributing members of our province and our society. We know from Statistics Canada that almost half of Canadians in their twenties live at home and enjoy all the supports of a loving family. But right now, there is a youth who leaves the care of the CAS at age 16 or 17 and is not allowed to come back for the support he or she needs and wants.

When youths leave the care of children's aid societies before age 18, they cannot continue receiving the supports they had in care, including financial support, the support of a dedicated social worker and the social and emotional support of a foster or group home. In fact, youth formerly in the care of CASs are up to three times more likely to be unemployed or drop out of school. This makes them at risk of falling through the cracks. That is not how parents should care for their children, and that is not how crown wards should be cared for, either.

If this bill passes, these changes will allow youth whose care arrangements ended at age 16 or 17 to return

to their CAS to receive both financial and non-financial supports until they turn 21. By extending this support, we expect these young people to stay in school longer and become successful adults. We're also making it easier for a youth receiving financial support from a CAS to go to college or university.

Together, we can help young people in the care of children's aid societies and prospective adoptive parents build the lives they always dreamed of.

I want to take this opportunity to encourage all members of this Legislature to give their full support to this particular piece of legislation.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1757.*

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Maria Van Bommel  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman  
Wayne Arthurs, Aileen Carroll  
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette  
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals  
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling  
David Zimmer  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité  
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller  
David Caplan, Kim Craitor  
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk  
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch  
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi  
Tony Ruprecht  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de  
la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon  
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo  
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones  
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin  
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal  
Elizabeth Witmer  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day









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