



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 19 March 2007

Lundi 19 mars 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Acting Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière par intérim
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Copies of Hansard can be purchased from Publications Ontario: 880 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. e-mail: webpubont@gov.on.ca

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Des exemplaires du Journal sont en vente à Publications Ontario : 880, rue Bay Toronto (Ontario), M7A 1N8 courriel : webpubont@gov.on.ca

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 19 March 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 19 mars 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS
FOR MARKHAM, BURLINGTON,
AND YORK SOUTH–WESTON

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that the Acting Clerk has received from the Chief Election Officer and laid upon the table certificates of the by-elections in the electoral districts of Markham, Burlington and York South–Weston.

The Acting Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): This is a letter addressed to:

“Mrs. Deborah Deller
“Acting Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
“Room 104
“Legislative Building
“Queen’s Park
“Toronto, Ontario
“M7A 1A2
“Dear Mrs. Deller:

“A writ of election dated the tenth day of January, 2007, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Judi McIntyre, returning officer for the electoral district of Markham, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Markham in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Tony C. Wong who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Markham, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Markham on the eighth day of February, 2007, Michael Chan has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 16th day of February, 2007, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“John L. Hollins
“Chief Election Officer
“Toronto, March 8, 2007.”
The second letter is addressed to:
“Mrs. Deborah Deller
“Acting Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
“Room 104
“Legislative Building
“Queen’s Park
“Toronto, Ontario
“M7A 1A2
“Dear Mrs. Deller:

“A writ of election dated the tenth day of January, 2007, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Jean Schemmer, returning officer for the electoral district of Burlington, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Burlington in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Cam Jackson who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Burlington, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Burlington on the eighth day of February, 2007, Joyce Savoline has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election dated the 16th day of February, 2007, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“John L. Hollins
“Chief Election Officer
“Toronto, March 8, 2007.”

The third letter is addressed to:

“Mrs. Deborah Deller
“Acting Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
“Room 104
“Legislative Building
“Queen’s Park
“Toronto, Ontario
“M7A 1A2
“Dear Mrs. Deller:

“A writ of election dated the tenth day of January, 2007, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Kenneth H. Paterson, returning officer for the electoral district of York South–Weston, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of York South–Weston in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Joseph Cordiano who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of York South–Weston, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in York South–Weston on the eighth day of February, 2007, Paul Ferreira has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 16th day of February, 2007, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“John L. Hollins
“Chief Election Officer
“Toronto, March 8, 2007.”

Mr. Chan was escorted into the chamber by Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Bradley.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Michael Chan, member-elect for the electoral district of Markham, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker: Let the honourable member take his seat.

Applause.

Mrs. Savoline was escorted into the chamber by Mr. Tory and Mr. Runciman.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Joyce Savoline, member-elect for the electoral district of Burlington, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take her seat.

The Speaker: Let the honourable member take her seat.

Applause.

1340

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Paul Ferreira, member-elect for the electoral district of York South–Weston, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker: Let the honourable member take his seat.

Applause.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VIC PRIESTLY

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I rise today to pay tribute to a great Ontarian. In his hometown of Aurora, throughout York region and across this province, Vic Priestly is known as a man who has a head for business and a heart for people, his outstanding business success overshadowed only by his generous contributions to his community and to humanitarian causes that will continue to touch lives for generations to come.

Whether a voice of encouragement to a struggling business acquaintance, a guiding hand to a budding entrepreneur, a word of caution to an overly optimistic politician or a helping hand to the vulnerable, Vic Priestly moves in and out of these roles with determination, enthusiasm and grace.

Organizations that benefited from Vic's leadership over the years include the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, the Royal Canadian Legion and the York County Hospital Foundation. His leadership with the Rotary Club of Aurora earned him the prestigious Paul Harris Fellowship Award, and in 1999, Vic was named citizen of the year by the town of Aurora. Today, Community Living Newmarket/Aurora district is honouring Vic

Priestly for his lifetime of excellence in community service.

I invite all members of this Legislature to join with me in endorsing this most appropriate honour on a most deserving citizen of this province.

HATE CRIMES

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I regret to rise once again to address the issue of hate crimes in our communities. While Ontario has made great strides in protecting the equality and human rights of our citizens, occasionally we are confronted with a dark reminder that hatred still remains.

This time, it reared its ugly head in the form of offensive Nazi symbols scrawled on the Chabad Midtown Jewish Community Centre in downtown Toronto. Jewish groups are understandably outraged, as they should be; indeed, all Ontarians are outraged.

Fortunately, a suspect was apprehended at the scene, thanks in part to the vigilance of TTC bus driver Giovanni Hidalgo and the Toronto police.

If there is a bright light that can emerge from such a hateful incident, it is that the good citizens of Ontario who feel a duty to stand up and fight back, did. Ontario is a beacon of multiculturalism. Our diversity and acceptance of difference helps to define our identity. As Premier McGuinty has said, an attack on any one of us is an attack on all of us. As members of this House, we must stand together yet again and send the message that hate, in any form, against any group, against any person in Ontario, will not be tolerated.

TOBACCO GROWERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Tobacco country is in full-blown crisis, and desperate farmers need a total exit plan immediately. We are all well aware of the proposal from the tobacco marketing board and Tobacco Farmers in Crisis. As well, Dalton McGuinty promised to be "an active participant in a federally led process to fund a long-term solution for the tobacco growing region."

These are Ontario farmers. If this farm crisis was in any other province, farmers would be taken under that province's wing, but not as yet in McGuinty's Ontario. A few weeks ago, the finance committee government members voted against a motion to fund the traditional 40% share of a federally led compensation package: another broken promise. Both Ottawa and Queen's Park have said \$1 billion is too rich. However, if this McGuinty government would contribute its traditional 60%-40% share, I'm confident the exit package would be affordable.

There are a few government MPPs who want to do the right thing for tobacco farmers. The rest could learn a lot from these members, because they understand that this crisis goes beyond polling. Thursday's 2007-08 budget has to be more favourable for all farmers than the past

three budgets. McGuinty government policy has put tobacco farmers out of business. Will you not help pay for a dignified exit?

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I rise on behalf of those who are residents of long-term-care facilities not only in the riding of Timmins–James Bay but across this province who have been waiting on this government for over three years to take action towards the promises they made in the last election. The Liberal government in the last election said they were going to fund an additional \$6,000 per resident for each resident in long-term-care facilities. To date, here we are on the eve of an election and yet we are not anywhere near meeting the commitment that the Liberals made in the last election. Then they talked about providing a minimum standard of care of 2.25 hours to every resident in long-term-care facilities across this province. Yet again, we are not anywhere near that.

I've got to say that each and every one of us here in this Legislature has had the chance to go into long-term-care facilities, no matter what side of the political aisle we come from, and we all see the same thing. We see staff working their hearts out, trying to do the best they can with as little money as they've got to provide services to those people in long-term-care facilities. We watch what happens to the residents in regard to the amount of attention they get when they are in need and they are not able to find staff people, not because staff people don't want to respond, but because staff have to respond to many calls and there's not enough money to fund the homes to the degree needed in order to provide the services that are required.

What is really sad is that when you go into the secure units and you look at those residents who are suffering from dementia, you often see situations where there's one staff person to watch the entire wing while other staff people are out basically doing other things within the facility.

This is unacceptable. This government has to act, because if we are not going to take care of seniors, then I've got to say that we're not doing a very good job of what government should be all about.

CIA BOUNCE BASKETBALL

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West–Mississauga): I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a very special achievement by a constituent, Brampton elementary schoolteacher Mr. Michael George. He joined lifelong Brampton residents Tony McIntyre and Derek Boyce, who together formed CIA youth bounce basketball. CIA—which stands for “characteristics inspiring achievement”—bounce basketball is an elite basketball program. It was founded to provide a safe environment for youth to cultivate confidence, discipline and respect

through mentoring, workshops and excursions, as well as through teamwork.

This past month, as many still may recall, Mr. George, who teaches at Cardinal Newman Catholic school, won \$144,000 on a popular game show, and as promised then, he has given half to the organization and the kids who mean so much to him. That's a lot of money.

I cannot fully express my happiness and admiration for these role models and the selfless example they set for our community and our youth, and especially for the residents of Brampton West–Mississauga. For more information on their great work, please visit www.bouncebasketball.com. Mr. George is here in our gallery today, and I would appreciate it if we would welcome him to our Legislature.

1350

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): We have three days until the provincial budget is presented in this place. Based on the previous record of Premier McGuinty, the outlook is grim for Ontario taxpayers. It took from Confederation to 2003 to get Ontario government spending to \$68 billion a year in total. In true Liberal fashion, Dalton McGuinty plans to boost that spending to over \$90 billion in four years. That's a whopping \$22-billion, or 34%, increase in government spending. That is simply breathtaking.

We all remember that this time last year the McGuinty cabinet hastily rushed out some \$3 billion in last-minute March-madness spending that was heavily criticized by the Auditor General for the lack of controls or strings attached. Despite all of that spending, Ontario taxpayers must wonder where all the money has gone and what they've got to show for it. We don't see better education, we certainly don't see improved health care, nor do we see reduced taxes for seniors or working families in the province. Instead, we see the McGuinty Liberals increasing the debt by some \$13 billion and forecasting a \$4-billion increase this year.

Mr. Speaker, you know as well as I that money does not grow on trees. It comes from the pockets of hard-working voters across Ontario who want to see spending with a plan, with controls and with real results for Ontarians. In the immortal words of Roger Daltrey, taxpayers won't be fooled again by Dalton McGuinty.

HUMBER RIVER REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): In my riding of York West, Humber River Regional Hospital this year celebrates its 10th anniversary. For the past 10 years, and previously as York-Finch Hospital, Humber River Regional Hospital has been serving the larger community, reaching out to approximately 800,000 people. In York West, home to a strong multicultural community, Humber River Regional Hospital provides health care information in more than 50 languages.

February 2 of this year marked the occasion of our Minister of Health having announced that Humber River Regional Hospital has been designated as the province's first medical centre of excellence. Humber River Regional Hospital provides care to some 100,000 emergency visits each year and more than 300,000 ambulatory and diagnostic procedures annually. It provides a full range of medical and surgical services and is recognized as the regional centre for dialysis, level 2 women's health, child and adolescent mental health, and in the provision of cancer surgery and chemotherapy.

Humber River Regional Hospital has a very proud past and is looking toward an even more exciting future. Congratulations to the president, Rueben Devlin, his hard-working staff, physicians and volunteers, who total about 4,000 dedicated and committed individuals. Together, their tireless efforts have promoted Humber River Regional Hospital to the cutting edge of acute hospital care in Canada. Humber River Regional Hospital will celebrate not only 10 years but the beginning of a long and continuous level of service to the people of York West.

To Humber River Regional Hospital, happy 10th anniversary.

HOCKEYVILLE

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): The tension ran high in North Bay on Saturday night as the winner of Kraft Hockeyville 2007 was set to be announced during Hockey Night in Canada, with all of Canada finding out which of the five final communities would be voted the champion.

Ron McLean read the results of the vote, starting with Noelville in fifth place, and the final two communities, both from Ontario: Cornwall and North Bay. The tension could not have been higher as Gary Bettman announced that North Bay is Hockeyville.

This is one more example of what we in Nipissing can do when we put our minds to it. This was truly a grass-roots campaign, and a number of people worked tirelessly to make this happen. I want to congratulate Chris Dawson, the chair; Debbie, Heath and Devon Marson; Ryan Drouin; Paul Robillard; Rob Brownlee; Brad Gavan; Joey Rainer; Linda Turcotte; Trina St. Jacques; and Randy Edmonds. They encouraged all of us to vote early and vote often. We proudly wore our hockey jerseys to work on Thursday and encouraged everyone to get out and vote.

Not only does the city win bragging rights as Hockeyville, \$50,000 for arena upgrades, and a pre-season NHL exhibition game between the New York Islanders and the Atlanta Thrashers, but the city will also be featured in a national one-hour CBC Television special to air this fall.

Hockeyville officials noted that "North Bay's commitment to community and hockey underlies everything they do." The officials took notice of local initiatives like Tommy Hedican's Coach for Food program and the hosting of Hurricane Katrina victims at our local pond hockey tournament.

I want to congratulate everyone who was involved in this. It was a great community effort and everyone got out and voted.

I just want to remind everyone in this Legislature that in North Bay we are Hockeyville.

KOOLATRON INC.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): It's a very large pleasure to rise today to highlight the tremendous contribution being made to local infrastructure in my riding by Koolatron Inc.

With the help of a \$2.34-million investment from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, a \$26-million investment will be leveraged.

Koolatron is a fascinating business that is investing in the development of several new products, including a large mobile cooler and a cordless mosquito trap, using energy-efficient thermoelectric power designed by the shuttle program.

This investment will allow for the creation of new jobs and the retention of over 170 high-value jobs for workers in Brant, jobs that the people of Brant can count on into the future.

All of this acts as proof that the McGuinty government's ongoing commitment to local infrastructures, a stable energy supply, as well as research and innovation are key to the economic development of our province.

The investment made in Koolatron represents a win for my riding of Brant, the workers and their families and for the government.

Our government is making strategic investments that are helping manufacturers throughout the province with this specific program.

The summer season is quickly approaching, and if anyone has any plans to travel, I would strongly suggest that they visit www.koolatron.com, where they can read about and purchase several different types of portable travel coolers and warmers that are ideal for travel.

This will unlock investment in our province. We thank the McGuinty government so much for this investment.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Speaker: Ribbons today have been mailed from Epilepsy Ontario—their program that they want to make March their epilepsy awareness month. I seek unanimous consent in this House to wear the ribbons that have been mailed to each one of us. Lavender will now become the colour of epilepsy.

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

VISITORS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): On a point of order, Mr.

Speaker: I would like to recognize Bill Laidlaw. He's the executive director of the MaRS Centre and the Canadian Biotechnology Education Resource Centre. I'd also like to recognize Faridah Saadat. She is the intern working with Bill Laidlaw at the MaRS Centre.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would draw members' attention to the members' west gallery. We have with us Mr. Elie Martel, who represented Sudbury East in the 29th to 33rd Parliaments. Welcome.

In the Speaker's gallery we have David Warner, the member for Scarborough–Ellesmere in the 30th, 31st, 33rd, and 35th Parliaments and the Speaker of the House in the 35th Parliament. Welcome.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I'd like all to join me in recognizing my new seatmate's husband, Ron Savoline, along with their children Robb, Becky, Natasha and Josh, and her cousins Philip and Courtney Patent, who have flown in from Arizona to see today's event.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report on the pre-budget consultations 2007 from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr. Hoy: I thank the committee and all of the staff who worked on this particular report.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system / Projet de loi 155, Loi prévoyant un référendum sur le système électoral de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1400 to 1405.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Barrett, Toby	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Bartolucci, Rick	Hudak, Tim	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldeep	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Brotten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Bryant, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Scott, Laurie
Cansfield, Donna H.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sterling, Norman W.
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Tascona, Joseph N.
Di Cocco, Caroline	O'Toole, John	Tory, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Watson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	Wilkinson, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Patten, Richard	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	Yakabuski, John
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Ferreira, Paul	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter

The Acting Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 78; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on social policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Mr. Parsons from the standing committee on social policy presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 140, An Act respecting long-term care homes / Projet de loi 140, Loi concernant les foyers de soins de longue durée.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1410 to 1415.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Barrett, Toby	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Bartolucci, Rick	Hudak, Tim	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Bryant, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Scott, Laurie
Cansfield, Donna H.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sterling, Norman W.
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Tascona, Joseph N.
Di Cocco, Caroline	O'Toole, John	Tory, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Watson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	Wilkinson, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Patten, Richard	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	Yakabuski, John
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Ferreira, Paul	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter

The Acting Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 78; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 20, 2006, I beg leave to present a report on the driver and vehicle private issuing network from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr. Sterling: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As you know, the public accounts committee reviews the auditor's report and does it section by section on a weekly basis. This report comes from the Auditor General's 2005 annual report.

The driver and vehicle private issuing network provides a great service for the government of Ontario and does it very cost-efficiently.

1420

There have been a number of issues with regard to the compensation for the people who do this work. There have been a number of issues with regard to the oversight of these different offices. I think there was a general feeling of the committee that these issues should be

resolved and resolved now. They have been outstanding for as many as 10 years. Even if some of these issues would be resolved on an interim basis, the committee feels that that should be done.

I move adjournment of this debate.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Mr. Berardinetti from the standing committee on justice policy presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 103, An Act to establish an Independent Police Review Director and create a new public complaints process by amending the Police Services Act / Projet de loi 103, Loi visant à créer le poste de directeur indépendant d'examen de la police et à créer une nouvelle procédure de traitement des plaintes du public en modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

VISITORS

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's my pleasure to introduce the family of the new member from Markham, the Minister of Revenue, Michael Chan. In the northwest corner, we have the family of the member: his wife, his two sons, his mother-in-law, his sister and, of course, the president of the Markham riding. Welcome to this House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the Clerk received the reports on intended appointments dated February 26 and March 1, 2007, of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the reports are deemed to be adopted by the House.

SPECIAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following report was tabled on February 27, 2007: a report from the Ombudsman concerning the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
DAY ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR
LE JOUR MARTIN LUTHER KING

Mr. Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to proclaim Martin Luther King Jr. Day / Projet de loi 181, Loi proclamant le Jour Martin Luther King.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): As the preamble to my private member's bill states, more than 100 countries around the globe honour the person and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in support of the movement inspired by his life and death to promote interracial harmony based on the principles of human rights, equality and freedom.

In the words of Dr. Rosemary Sadlier, the president of the Ontario Black History Society, "Martin Luther King has come to be a symbol of freedom, social justice and equality in the world. And when we recognize him, we also recognize the efforts of countless others who have contributed to our current level of awareness of these important issues."

I would ask members to welcome Dr. Sadlier, who is here to observe the tabling of this legislation in the west members' gallery.

Dr. King himself was inspired by the example of a great abolitionist and member of the British Parliament, William Wilberforce, who spent his political career fighting slavery and who died just one month before the anti-slavery act of 1807 was promulgated by the British Parliament on March 25 of that year. That act did end the transatlantic slave trade but did not end enslavement of Africans.

A contemporary of William Wilberforce who likewise took inspiration from him was Ontario's first Lieutenant Governor, John Graves Simcoe. In 1793, when this very House came into existence at Newark, and at its first sitting, John Simcoe ensured that the first bills on the order of business to be tabled were those that attacked the pernicious institution of slavery in Upper Canada. That was almost 15 years before the British act of 1807.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 SUR LE MOIS
DE L'HISTOIRE DES NOIRS

Mr. Balkissoon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act to name February in each year Black History Month / Projet de loi 182, Loi visant à désigner

le mois de février de chaque année comme Mois de l'histoire des Noirs.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): This bill, entitled An Act to name February in each year Black History Month, is about celebrating the many contributions of African-Canadians, both past and present, every year in the month of February. It signifies this government's commitment to promoting and upholding Ontario's diversity.

Ontario has been enriched through the achievements made by African-Canadians. I am pleased to propose that we formally acknowledge February in each year as Black History Month in Ontario.

MEMBERS FOR LEEDS–GRENVILLE AND DAVENPORT

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: If I may, I would like to draw to the attention of the House that on March 19, 1981, the member for Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Runciman, and the member for Davenport, Mr. Ruprecht, were elected to this House. I think we should extend congratulations to them.

Applause.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: While I appreciate the applause—and so does Mr. Runciman, I'm sure—I want the honourable members to know that when I was still in public school, I listened to the rousing speeches by the member from St. Catharines, who has been here much longer than I have.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Kormos and Mr. Ferreira exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Kormos assumes ballot item 78 and Mr. Ferreira assumes ballot item 74; Mr. Balkissoon and Mr. Duguid exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Balkissoon assumes ballot item 72 and Mr. Duguid assumes ballot item 73; and that, pursuant to

standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot items 71, 72, 73 and 74.

The Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

1430

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FAMILY SUPPORT SOUTIEN FAMILIAL

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-phone affairs): Today I am proud to tell the House about an important McGuinty government initiative that is helping families and children get the support that they deserve. On February 19, our government launched *goodparentspay.com*, a new website to help track down defaulting support payers who refuse to live up to their family responsibilities.

Nous affichons sur le site *lesbonsparents payent.com*, la photo de mauvais payeurs dont le lieu de résidence est inconnu, ainsi que des renseignements à leur sujet. Le site Web *lesbonsparents payent.com* connaît un succès retentissant. En fonction depuis seulement quatre semaines, plus de 16,8 millions d'accès au site ont été enregistrés.

We have received more than 200 tips from the public about the location of support payers not living up to their family responsibilities. Most important, I am proud to tell this House today that we have already located five defaulting payers. We've added five new profiles to the site so that Ontarians can continue to help us make sure that children get the support they deserve.

Most parents are responsible. These good parents pay their court-ordered child support. But there are some irresponsible parents out there. To them our message is simple: We will find you, and we will make sure your children get the support they deserve.

Le site Web *lesbonsparents payent.com* est la plus récente des mesures prises par le gouvernement McGuinty pour aider les familles et les enfants.

J'aimerais rappeler quelques autres réalisations du Bureau des obligations familiales : Plus de 330 \$ millions ont été recouverts grâce à l'initiative d'information des agences d'évaluation du crédit. Près de 400 000 appels additionnels ont été traités par la nouvelle unité du service à la clientèle du bureau depuis février 2004, ce qui représente une hausse de 35 % du nombre d'appels traités par le bureau. Plus de 238 000 nouveaux numéros d'identification personnels, NIP, ont été délivrés à des clientes et clients pour leur permettre d'accéder, 24 heures sur 24, sept jours sur sept, à des renseignements sur leur cas au moyen d'un système automatisé.

Our government believes that children should not suffer because a parent refuses to live up to her or his financial responsibilities. We will use every tool at our

disposal to find those who don't pay. Thanks to *goodparentspay.com*, parents not living up to their family responsibilities are getting the message and children are getting the support they so rightly deserve.

I want to thank all those who have gone on the site and are helping us to identify and locate these parents.

EDUCATION FUNDING SUBVENTIONS DESTINÉES À L'ÉDUCATION

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

Over the past four years, we've seen our government's commitment and investments in education paying off for our students.

Au cours des quatre dernières années, nous avons constaté que l'engagement de notre gouvernement envers l'éducation et ses investissements dans ce secteur donnent des résultats au profit de nos élèves.

Scores on various provincial tests are up between five and 15 percentage points. Graduation rates have increased 5% over the past two years, and class sizes are smaller, with almost all primary students in classes of 23 or fewer.

And it's not over. Students will benefit from another year of significant education investments through the help of new resources and a funding formula that reflects the changing needs of our students. Education funding will increase by \$781 million, to an unprecedented total of \$18.3 billion in 2007-08. Province-wide funding per pupil will rise by 5.1% to more than \$9,400. That means an additional \$2,000 for each student in Ontario since our government came to office.

This funding supports three new components to the funding formula to help boards meet their operating costs and to boost student achievement.

First, the program enhancement grant will support arts, music, physical education, outdoor education and other activities that provide students with a well-rounded educational experience.

Second, the First Nations, Metis and Inuit education supplement will provide enhanced ongoing supports for aboriginal students.

Third, the supported schools allocation will ensure that schools in small communities with low or declining enrolments stay viable.

Our government's new investment in 2007-08 also includes support for 1,900 new teachers, a 3% salary increase negotiated in the labour framework, increased funding for special education, increased funding to recognize the rising costs of transportation and utilities, and additional support for French-language boards.

We are listening to our education partners. We are listening to ensure that the way we deliver funding responds to the changing needs of students and schools.

Since 2003, our government has made 10 significant changes to the funding formula. We've supported more teachers to create smaller class sizes and more secondary

courses. We've addressed the teacher salary funding gap. We're renewing our schools with a \$4-billion investment to repair and rebuild them, and we're providing school-based funding so that small schools and schools with declining enrolment get the stable funding they need.

We will continue to work with school boards and our other partners in education to ensure our students' best interests are looked after and that parents can feel confident in the publicly funded education system.

Through our investments, commitments and partnerships, we're creating peace and stability and giving our students more opportunities to reach their full potential.

Grâce à nos investissements, à nos engagements et à nos partenariats, nous instaurons de la paix et de la stabilité et nous donnons à nos élèves plus de possibilités de réaliser leur plein potentiel. Merci.

DORIS ANDERSON

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): On March 2, days before International Women's Day, our province lost a champion and a trailblazer of women's rights: Doris Anderson. I'd like to take this opportunity to ask my colleagues to join me in remembering an icon of women's equality.

Grâce à ses efforts, les femmes en Ontario et au Canada ont davantage de choix et d'opportunités. M^{me} Anderson a tracé la voie vers la pleine égalité des sexes pendant plus de 50 ans. Elle estimait que toutes les femmes devraient être libres de faire leurs propres choix et de vivre sans craindre de devenir victimes de violence. Elle a agi pour que ses convictions fassent partie de notre expérience quotidienne.

During her tenure as editor of *Chatelaine* magazine, Ms. Anderson raised women's consciousness about topics that had a direct impact on their lives: topics like the wage gap; inequality of divorce laws; women's health issues.

At a time when there were very few women in politics, Doris Anderson asked what was then considered to be an impertinent question: Why aren't there more women in politics?

1440

Ms. Anderson pushed for a Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

She used her position as chair of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women to lobby for strong wording on women's equality in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Thanks to Ms. Anderson and the support of a generation of Canadian women, we now have wording that enshrines women's equality in the charter.

But she didn't stop there. Ms. Anderson, in the last decade and a half of her life, campaigned vigorously for proportional representation in the electoral system. She believed that it would encourage more women to run and have a better chance at being elected.

Looking back at all of her accomplishments, we owe a lot to Doris Anderson.

Of course, we know there is still more work to do. Our numbers are still too few in politics. Women are still living with the threat of violence in their own homes, and some are not able to access economic opportunities. But our government, along with our community partners, is doing its part to honour this inspirational woman by re-doubling our efforts to address these issues.

Our government is investing more than \$82 million over four years to keep women and children safe through our domestic violence action plan. The plan is working to prevent violence against women through better community supports, a strengthened justice system response, public education strategies, and increased access to French services. And we are creating economic opportunities by funding training programs in the skilled trades and information technology areas.

Our government will also safeguard those rights that women have fought so hard for.

True equality means that women can live free from the fear of violence in their own homes and have economic opportunities. Our government will honour Doris Anderson's memory by doing just that: improving women's lives across this province.

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

FAMILY SUPPORT

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm glad to have this chance to reply to the Minister of Community and Social Services on behalf of our party. I know that the member for York North, who is an outstanding advocate for improving the well-being of Ontario's children and families, would want to be here to respond to this statement, but I understand that she is attending a funeral this afternoon. So, in responding on her behalf, I'm expressing my own personal views.

My wife and I have been blessed with three children, and they are the centre of our lives. As a father, I believe that I have certain moral obligations to my children, one of which is ensuring that all of their essential material needs are met. I believe that every father has this moral obligation. This obligation continues even in the event of a marital split.

In many cases, Ontario court orders are intended to ensure that the costs of raising children are shared by both parents. Unfortunately, as we know, too many children still do without because one parent is unwilling or unable to make their payments to meet their children's needs.

Every member of this House knows that the Family Responsibility Office is a bureaucracy which has huge problems. Rarely a day goes by that my constituency office doesn't receive a complaint about FRO. Whether FRO is poorly administered or is under-resourced or its processes need to be simplified or new leadership needs to be appointed, the government has been remiss in

tackling the fundamental problems at FRO. The Ombudsman has said as much, and I agree.

With over \$1.3 billion in support arrears uncollected, tens of thousands of children go without the basic necessities that most of us take for granted. How do these families pay for healthy food, new shoes, additional school expenses and extras like minor sports and other recreational activities, let alone save up for post-secondary education? Many of them can't.

Will this new website help? I sincerely hope so. However, when we looked at it in my office a few minutes ago, it appeared that there were only 18 so-called deadbeat dads pictured on the website: hardly something worth boasting about in this House.

The minister claims to have located five deadbeat dads, but has the money that they owe yet found its way to their children? Apparently not.

Collecting all of that money for all of those children and families in Ontario will take a lot more than a website. It will take an overhaul, strong leadership, compassion for families and a good business sense.

The McGuinty Liberal government had its chance and wasted the last three and a half years. These children need a change of government.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): The minister's statement today is nothing short of an indictment of the government's mismanagement of public dollars: that after three and a half years and an additional \$3.5 billion, the best this government can do is to take credit for improved test scores on standardized tests that every member of the Liberal caucus voted against.

The reality is that after \$3.5 billion and three and a half years, neither of the Dalton McGuinty cornerstone promises of caps on class sizes and fixing the funding formula has been kept. In fact, where the cap has been implemented, school board administrators and teachers are telling us about the incredible problems they're having in those schools. The fact is that the funding formula has not been fixed, and the commitments that this government made while on the campaign trail to ensure that the foundational funding for education would be dealt with are a miserable failure on the part of this government. Three and a half billion dollars later and we have school boards in deficit, we have classrooms in trouble, and the stakeholders who are the most true supporters of this government are abandoning them, accusing them, and exposing the shell game that they've been playing for the last three and a half years.

DORIS ANDERSON

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to rise and respond on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus in honour of the late Doris Anderson. It is also fitting that we celebrate the life of Doris Anderson in

light of the 30th anniversary of International Women's Day, which was March 8.

As a journalist and an activist for women's rights, Doris Anderson spent much of her life clearing a path for the advancement of women in Canada and in Ontario. We are fortunate to join today in celebrating the life of such a progressive woman in Canada as we welcome my colleague the member from Burlington, Joyce Savoline, as part of the John Tory team. Ms. Savoline's election to this Legislature has allowed us to reach a historically high proportion of women in the Ontario Legislature, at 25%. I am very proud to be a member of a party that, under Premier Bill Davis, appointed the Honourable Margaret Birch as Ontario's first woman cabinet minister in 1972.

To Doris Anderson, equality simply made sense. It was and is a basic question of human rights and fairness. In order to help our goals of equality and inclusion, it is imperative that we recognize the work of pioneers such as Doris Anderson.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): In response to the Minister of Community and Social Services: another day, another government website. What people need in this province is a lot more than that. What the spouses and children need is action, not another website that does virtually nothing. By your own admission, you have found five defaulters. By your own admission, not one of those defaulters has yet paid a single nickel into the system.

What you have announced today is nothing. What we need is streamlined rules where those who want to pay more are allowed to do so without going back to court. What we need is a computer system that actually works. What we need are some workers who are given the muscle and the money and the number of people they need to actually do their job. We need speedy legal action.

You have stated in your statement that children suffer when parents won't pay. Children also suffer when your government won't pay. They also suffer when you claw back their money. You should have a website to report yourselves for what you have done these past three years.

DORIS ANDERSON

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): In the meagre amount of time we've been allotted to honour the iconic symbol of the Canadian women's movement whom we lost March 2, I want to pay tribute to the legacy of Doris Anderson, who championed the rights of women in a trailblazing fashion in this province. Every step Doris took in her life was a break of new ground. She put herself through university in 1945. She began working as a journalist when barriers to women working outside the home were still very much in place. When she moved to *Chatelaine* magazine, Doris rose quickly

through the ranks. As the editor for 20 years, she made Chatelaine the pre-eminent voice for women's issues and shaped generations with the feminist belief that women can do anything, and she encouraged women to do just that.

Doris lived her beliefs. As an activist, a champion, an insightful writer, an author, and a dogged campaigner for raising the status of women, Doris constantly worked for equality and against social injustice. Even as her life was nearing an end at age 85, Doris was lobbying fiercely to stop the Harper Conservatives' raid on status-of-women funding and the closure of local offices.

You might be interested to know that Equal Voice has found a powerful way to honour Doris and her life's work by establishing the Doris Anderson fund, which will be dedicated to getting more women elected to political office. This goal was Doris's driving passion. Equal Voice has planned a memorial tea kickoff fundraising event for Sunday, April 15, and we hope that everyone who is watching today can attend. I can think of no better way to recognize Doris Anderson, a modern pioneer for women's financial, social and political equality, than with a fund that encompasses the principles she lived by and cherished.

Doris Anderson will long be remembered and will be a source of inspiration and strength as we continue to struggle for equal pay; for universal, non-profit child care; for affordable housing; and here, in Ontario, an end to the clawback of the national child benefit.

1450

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Here we have yet another multi-million-dollar announcement on education funding. The problem is that this government is high on announceables and low on payables; this government is all about announceables and not about deliverables. Frankly, New Democrats don't believe that this money will ever be spent. These announcements give the government all the political currency they want, and they feel that once they've gotten the headlines, there is no urgency about actually keeping the promises.

The government announced \$4 billion in school repairs in 2004. To date, less than 10% of that money has actually been spent, but the government continues to take credit for the announced amount. Buildings are still crumbling, students still go to class in portables, parents still have to fundraise for basic school essentials like teachers' office supplies and textbooks with chocolate bars and skip-a-thons. They're raising money unlike ever before. It's \$40 million today and rising under the Liberals.

Children cannot learn English as a second language because there are no teachers to teach them. We cannot improve transportation funding simply by encouraging boards to work together to improve services for students and to reduce costs. Children are still waiting in line for special education support because government has

capped special education spending. Parents have already heard that special ed teachers will be funded; now they will hear it again.

This government treats the announcement of programs and the implementation of programs as the same thing. This money will not deal with the backlog of needs that has built up over the last three years, but the worst part of it is that the money won't flow at all, because we all know that McGuinty money flows like molasses in March.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Could the Premier please tell the House how much taxpayers' money the Dalton McGuinty government has spent to date fighting various lawsuits related to autism?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm sure that the leader of the official opposition would be more interested in learning what we're doing for children who are affected by autism. I'll be pleased to better inform him in that regard.

First of all, we've ended the entirely unfair discrimination that had been put in place by the Conservative government, who were cutting kids off from assistance when they turned the age of six. We have eliminated that unfair age cut-off. We have more than doubled our level of investment in supports for children affected by autism to more than \$115 million this year. We now have more therapists than ever before. We've created a new college program to train therapists; 110 new therapists have been hired, and there are 200 graduating in the next year.

Mr. Tory: The fact is that in this area, as in so many others, the Premier has utterly failed to keep the promises he made so forcefully in 2003. Maybe the Premier will actually answer the question if I put it this way: We've heard estimates of the amount of money that he has spent on lawyers fighting parents of children with autism and lawyers fighting to keep information secret about how public money is being spent on those same lawyers. We've heard estimates on how much he's spending to keep that information secret. We've heard estimates ranging from \$2 million to \$10 million. That's money that is not available to help these families who have these challenges in front of them. Maybe he could help the poor old taxpayers whose money this is by telling them: Is the number closer to \$2 million that you're spending on lawyers to fight these parent with children with autism or is it closer to \$10 million? Then maybe you might explain how your idea of addressing autism to begin with comes from fighting parents in court and fighting MPPs in court who are trying to help them. Maybe you could explain that.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, so that the leader of the official opposition is reminded of this, this is litigation that was started under the Conservative government, just so we're clear about where we're going on this, because he seems to have forgotten that.

Now, what else have we done specifically to assist families into which a child has been born who has been affected by autism? More children than ever before are getting service. In fact, more than 1,100 children are now receiving IBI treatment this year. That's a 105% increase since 2004. We've reduced wait times for assessments; there has been a 68% reduction in the waiting list for assessments since 2004. And there is more early years support than ever before. We're training 1,600 early childhood education and child care workers to work with children who are affected by autism.

Again, I want to remind my honourable friend that it was on his watch, under his government's watch, that they instituted this particular—

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

Mr. Tory: The fact is that the promises the Premier himself made—he could have and should have shut that litigation down a long time ago.

I attended a fundraiser a couple of weeks ago. It was put on by friends of Eugene and Jee Lee and their four-year-old son, Parker. They get from the government about half of what it costs to provide autism therapy for Parker; the fundraiser was to pay the rest. Yet even with the help of the fundraiser that they brought their friends out to on a Saturday night, they have their house up for sale because they have to sell it, and they're thinking of moving to Alberta, where they can get more help.

In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, millions of dollars are spent on lawyers to fight these parents in court, and millions of dollars are now being spent to fight MPPs in court who are just trying to get information and help these families and these kids. It's no wonder Dalton McGuinty's government has increased spending by \$20 billion, with few results. It's this type of thing that the money is going towards.

My question is this: Will the Premier please tell us how many millions of taxpayers' dollars he has spent on these lawyers to fight these families that have children with autism, and when is he going to stop—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I want to again take this opportunity to remind my honourable friend that the court case was started because of their unfair, discriminatory cut-off. That's why that court case was instituted in the first instance. I note as well that my honourable friend is now also saying he's prepared to provide additional support should he earn the privilege of serving in government, but again, that is restricted to children under the age of six. He would continue that discrimination.

Something else that we have done: For the first time ever, we're providing support in our schools. As of September of this year, under a new initiative, we'll be serving 7,000 school-age students in the classroom. To

that end, we are now training 5,000 teaching assistants to work with children over the age of six with autism in the classroom. We've also hired 170 autism consultants—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): The bottom line is, you haven't come close, not even close, to fulfilling your own promises.

A question to the Premier: Last week we had a report in the *Globe and Mail* that the McGuinty Liberals were looking at signing a contract with the Don Mills Surgical Unit for the purposes of performing 1,500 knee replacement operations. This was supported by a quote from Ministry of Health spokesperson A.G. Klei—one of the 77 people, by the way, who work in the communications branch alone of the Ministry of Health, according to the government phone book. The following day, the Minister of Health said that your government would “never support” such a proposal.

My question for the Premier is this: Does he support the Minister of Health's out-of-hand dismissal of this proposal, which would be paid for entirely within the public health care system with OHIP cards and would result in removing 1,500 people from the knee replacement wait-list in the process? Do you support the out-of-hand dismissal of this proposal to get these people off the list and out of pain and suffering?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): First of all, I want to take the opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Health and all those individuals working so hard within our public health care system who have realized so many gains when it comes to getting wait times down in the province of Ontario.

1500

This is yet more evidence that the leader of the official opposition is more than ready to give up on public health care in Ontario when it comes to bringing about more innovation and getting our wait times down. The public health care that he is today implicitly criticizing is a system through which we have already brought wait times down for knee replacements by 30.2%, which means we've brought wait times down by 133 days.

No, we are not prepared to give up on public health care, we're not prepared to give up on the gains we've made within public health care, nor are we prepared to give up on the gains we have yet to make within public health care.

Mr. Tory: What you are prepared to do is give up on exploring any publicly funded alternatives at all that would get people out of pain and suffering and get them the surgery they need. The fact of the matter is that the government's own website, Dalton McGuinty's own website, reports that, province-wide, the wait time for knee replacements is 307 days. That's 125 days—more than four months longer—than the benchmark your government set in December 2005. In Stratford, Ontario,

people are waiting 525 days for a knee replacement. In Ottawa, your hometown, they're waiting 641 days. In Kingston, they're waiting 785 days. Are you satisfied with that set of circumstances?

Why won't you explore a publicly funded alternative that will allow these people to get out of their pain and suffering and get in and get the surgery done, paid for with their OHIP cards within the publicly funded system? It's no statement of lack of confidence in the public health care system at all. It's a statement of confidence in the patients and getting them the surgery they need and restoring confidence in the system.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Once again, the leader of the official opposition is seeking to have it both ways. He tells us, on the one hand, that he's not, in effect, attacking public health care, but he is not prepared to acknowledge that they've made substantial gains when it comes to getting wait times down. On the other hand, he says that the only way for us to make these kinds of gains is to go through the private health care system. Well, we disagree with that.

It's also interesting to hear the member opposite use our benchmarks, which that government refused to put in place in the first instance. He's now consulting our website to gain access to information which that government refused to make available in the first instance. But what is more important, and more galling, is the fact that he refuses to acknowledge that public health care in the province of Ontario is making great strides. We are getting wait times down, and we're doing that by bringing about innovation within the publicly funded, publicly delivered health care system. Why won't he join us to work harder within public health care?

Mr. Tory: What the Premier doesn't understand—and that's why he's spent \$20 billion more of taxpayers' money and has little to show for it—is that it doesn't matter if you set benchmarks and then you don't meet them: 525 days in Stratford for a knee replacement; 641 days in Ottawa for a knee replacement; 785 days in Kingston. You are not meeting these benchmarks; you are way off meeting these benchmarks.

Let's look at a different question, then. If it's not okay under the publicly funded health care system to have knee replacements done by the Don Mills Surgical Unit, why is it okay for the Dalton McGuinty government to do cataract operations and arthroscopic knee surgery, paid for through the public system, at the very same place? Why is that okay and these poor people who are suffering waiting for knee replacements can't have their surgery done? Why is it a big point of principle for the knee replacement people and not for the cataracts and everything else? Explain that.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We're going to continue to make progress, to make inroads and to make huge strides forward on behalf of the people of Ontario by pursuing those avenues where we are guaranteed success. That's what we've done to date and that's what we will continue to do.

I think another question that weighs heavily on the minds of the people of Ontario is: If this gentleman

opposite is truly determined to get wait times down and to bring about substantive, measurable improvement within the public health care system—something that his government before refused to do—how is it going to help Ontarians if the member opposite takes \$2.5 billion of funding out of public health care? How is that going to help the people of Ontario who look to public health care when it comes to relying on the quality of delivery services that they have come to rely on under this government?

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier: Last year, the banks broke all records by posting \$19 billion in profits, and oil companies racked up \$21 billion in profits. But at this time of unprecedented corporate profits and prosperity, several studies tell us that the average family is working longer and harder while seeing fewer of the economic benefits. New Democrats believe that today's working families deserve a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. My question is this: Does the Premier share that view? And if he does, why has the Premier refused to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I want to welcome the NDP to this debate. I want to remind them that our government has raised the minimum wage four times now. We've raised it 17% in our first four years. The leader of the NDP will in fact know that I have stated now—it's a matter of record—that the issue for us is not whether we get to \$10 an hour; it's what's the best way to get there for us to do that. He knows all of that.

What he refuses to acknowledge, however, is that he voted against an additional 15,000 child care spaces for Ontario children, he voted against insulin pumps for children affected by diabetes, he voted against 120,000 grants for university and college students, and he voted against our raises to social assistance and disability support. So on the one hand, he tells us that he's prepared to stand up for vulnerable families, but on the other hand, his record in this Legislature speaks to the contrary.

Mr. Hampton: I think the Premier struggles to avoid answering the question.

We know that people working for minimum wage are living below the poverty line. Your answer just now says that you might consider \$10 an hour sometime in the future. But to live, to have a living wage, these workers need \$10 an hour today, not in 2012, not in 2011. Premier, you're very good at preaching restraint to low-paid workers. Can you tell those low-paid workers why they aren't worth \$10 an hour today when you were so quick to raise your own pay by \$40,000 a year?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I note that in the NDP campaign platform, their commitment was to get to \$8 an hour, and now that we have gotten there, of course, they say that they've been in favour of \$10 an hour all along.

Again, let's describe some of those items that go beyond the minimum wage—which, we admit, is an

important issue, and we'll have much more to say about that shortly. When it comes to children, for example, we have now free vaccines in place, saving a family \$600 per child. We're now offering newborn screening; we've gone from two tests to 29. We were the worst and now we're first in Canada. We have 84,000 more children receiving nutrition support. As I mentioned a few moments ago, we've also doubled funding for autism in the province of Ontario. Yes, we have moved on the minimum wage, we will continue to move on the minimum wage, but we're also doing many things beyond that.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, here is the difference between your position and the New Democrat position: We said \$8 an hour in 2003, not \$8 an hour in 2007. And it should be \$10 an hour now, not \$10 an hour in 2012.

Last week we saw how tough you were prepared to be with corporate executives. Tom Parkinson took advantage of the people of Ontario, and you rewarded him with \$5 million in punishment pay. Thank God he didn't rip off the people of Ontario for any more or you would have given him more punishment pay. Premier, how do you justify your \$5 million in punishment pay for disgraced Tom Parkinson while you say to minimum wage workers that they're not worth \$10 an hour today?

1510

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's important to understand what else we're doing, apart from the upcoming budget, to help the plight of the needy in the province of Ontario. We've increased social assistance and disability support twice now. We've ended the clawback of the national child benefit on a go-forward basis. A single parent with two children on social assistance now receives the equivalent of a 15.7% increase in supports. We've flowed through the entire \$1,200 federal child care credit. We've extended health and dental coverage when leaving assistance for a new job. We've restored the nutritional allowance for pregnant women, and we are allowing those who are working part-time to keep more of their income.

Now my NDP friends opposite are quick to dismiss all of these and say these have no impact whatsoever. We beg to differ. We have moved forward on the minimum wage. We will continue to do that, but we will also continue to move forward in so many other areas as well.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier: The Premier talks about what else his government has done. His government continues to claw back \$250 million a year from the lowest-income children in this province in federal money that goes to those children—another thing you should be, according to yourself, proud of, Premier.

But there's a reason why working families aren't sharing in Ontario's corporate prosperity. Over the last four years, the McGuinty government's energy and economic policies have cost Ontario 140,000 manufacturing

and forest sector jobs. Working families are losing their paycheques, their benefits, their pensions; in some cases, whole communities are suffering.

Premier, you held a special, extended session of the Legislature to increase your own pay by \$40,000 a year, yet you refused to recall the Legislature to deal with this loss of manufacturing jobs. I ask you: What message does that send to hard-working families across Ontario about your government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I think the leader of the NDP will have to find a way to grow comfortable with the fact that he stands in here and asks these kinds of questions and yet he has accepted that pay and he has taken that pay. That's something he'll have to find a way to deal with.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): As they all have.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: As I believe they all have, each and every one of them.

We're pleased to be in a position to work with all Ontario communities. We understand that the economy is being challenged in certain sectors, but overall I think it's important to acknowledge that the economy continues to grow. There are 327,000 net new jobs over the course of the past three years plus. We've put in place a number of support strategies, whether to support the auto sector, the manufacturing sector, the agri-food sector, the forest sector or the TV and film sector, all of which are bearing fruit at this particular time. We will continue to work with all sectors, all Ontario communities, to ensure that they transition themselves to a more competitive, value-added economy.

Mr. Hampton: Actually, I haven't pocketed the pay increase, as you have. I've given it away to community organizations and charities that desperately need the money under the McGuinty government.

Premier, I've met with laid-off Hamilton steelworkers, and I've met—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Government House leader, I won't warn you again. Leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I have met with laid-off steelworkers in Hamilton, laid-off auto workers in Windsor, Hershey workers in Smiths Falls and workers in paper mills across the north. I've met with workers who are struggling because they've lost their jobs, and they all say one thing: They know the McGuinty government is out of touch and the McGuinty government is showing no leadership. These workers all agree that Ontario needs a jobs commissioner to fight to reposition these jobs before they're lost.

Premier, these workers saw you take real action to raise your own pay by \$40,000 a year. When are they going to see real action to deal with the loss of their jobs?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP of course likes to pretend that somehow he is the only conscience in this Legislature and he's the only one who cares for families that are affected by job losses. I can tell you that many of us on this side of the House have also grappled to find ways to better serve communities that are affected by job losses.

I have more recently been involved with the job losses in Smiths Falls; I've been talking with the mayor there. I've been on the phone with the president and CEO of Hershey's. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade has just returned from a trip to the US to see what we might do, working with Hershey's, to restore some strength to that particular plant. Just recently, I've had the opportunity to speak with some of the union members and management for a plant in Sault Ste. Marie. I've also worked with Mike Gravelle to help him in a particular case of a plant that was affected by a fire in Nipigon.

We will continue to work with all our communities and all our workers to do what we can as a government to—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, your government is very good at saying, "We feel your pain." Workers across Ontario hear that from your government all the time. These same workers saw your government take real action to raise your own pay. You extended the session of the Legislature by one week to ram through that legislation. Now these workers are asking when they are going to see real action from your government.

Let me give you one specific example. You mentioned Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay just lost another 500 jobs at the Abitibi mill and the Bowater mill. The issue across the north is this: The north of Ontario produces the lowest-cost electricity in the world through hydro dams, but it's McGuinty government policy that says they have to pay seven cents a kilowatt hour for that lowest-cost electricity in the world. That is killing jobs at paper mill after paper mill. They're asking you, will you take real action, since the power dam is located in some cases 100 yards from the mill—

The Speaker: Order. The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: When you land \$7 billion worth of new investment in the auto sector, the leader of the NDP may dismiss that and say it's not real action, but on this side of the House we have a different perspective. We think it's real action that has created or protected 7,000 new jobs. We've put \$500 million into our advanced manufacturing strategy. So far, we have announced seven projects costing us \$350 million in investments and we've landed 2,700 new or protected jobs. In the agri-food sector, we've put in \$910 million to help farmers and support our ethanol program, which will create thousands and thousands of jobs. In the forestry sector, there's over \$1 billion in our strategy to work through this time of global competition and difficult pricing. In the TV and film sector, we've increased our tax credits and we've invested in training Ontarians to work in the film industry.

The member opposite may dismiss that, but we on this side of the House think that all those things and all those investments constitute real action, producing or protecting real jobs.

SMITHS FALLS ECONOMY

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): My question is to the Premier. As the Premier knows, the people of Smiths Falls were rocked last month by the announcement of Hershey closing their plant sometime in 2008 or 2009. This, together with the accelerated closure of Rideau Regional Centre, will mean that more than 1,500 people will lose their jobs in a community of 9,200. You can imagine the effect on not only those people who have lost their jobs directly, but the many people who have lost their jobs indirectly who supply to these major employers.

I appreciate the work that you have done, Mr. Premier, and that some of your ministers have done on this file. Our leader, John Tory, and I met with the mayor and the Hershey employees and are urging Hershey to stay there in some form into the future. But if this doesn't work, what is your plan for Smiths Falls' future?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

1520

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): I think it's important to note that we have been working with the town of Smiths Falls, in particular the mayor and the leadership in this town, and we have brought the very best from my ministry and colleague ministries, all who have a part to play in the future of this town, and we believe that Smiths Falls does have a bright future. We will make sure that we work with them so that they do have a very bright future. Let me say that first.

Second, let me say also that we are impressed with the leadership of Smiths Falls. They are prepared to reach out and work with us to put together a plan, because if plan B is that that plant will close, we need to go to what is next for Smiths Falls and what part we can play in all of that. That is the conversation that we're engaging in with them. We have the A team, which is working directly with this town, meeting on a regular basis. I want to tell you that we believe that these talks are very fruitful and that we will develop a very good action plan for the future of Smiths Falls.

Mr. Sterling: After the announcement of the accelerated closure of Rideau Regional Centre, the mayor and I and many others tried to work with this government to find some answers to replace those jobs, those over 800 public sector jobs. Little has been forthcoming from the government on that issue.

Later today, I'm going to introduce some petitions in the Legislature to ask you, the government, to delay the closing of Rideau Regional Centre and to give the final

okay to the redevelopment of the Smiths Falls hospital. These people in Smiths Falls need a ray of hope for their future. This community is already suffering from a shortage of doctors, and a new hospital will help them attract not only the physicians but new investment to the community. Premier, will you commit to delaying the closure of Rideau Regional Centre and immediately starting the redevelopment of this hospital, which is ready to go to tender now?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I think it's clear to the people who are in Smiths Falls and whom we've been working with these last many years, ever since the announcement of the final closure of the Rideau Regional Centre: That plan is moving ahead. We do want to work with this community, and we have told this community that. We have developed a very good rapport with the people, who are drawing up their lists of exactly where they want to go. We believe that the people at the table have to be local leadership, and they are there. We're working with them now, going across our ministries, to see how we can be helpful. The Ontario Realty Corp. is working diligently, in terms of releasing the site, to see what can happen on that site in the future. We believe that this community, through the benefit of the rural economic development fund, through my colleague at OMAFRA—they have made monies available over the past couple of years to draw up their plans around tourism and what they can bring to the region. We're working with this community hand in hand.

I spent two hours with the leadership at Hershey in Pennsylvania on Friday. They made it very clear what their future is as a company. We're—

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

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I'm honoured to rise in this House for my maiden question to the Premier. Premier, I've been instructed by the voters of York South–Weston to send you a loud and clear message: The people of York South–Weston do not want your privately run, publicly subsidized Blue 22 air-rail link. Premier, the people of York South–Weston want to know: If you found the time to give yourself a \$40,000 pay raise, when will you find the time to stop the Blue 22 dead in its tracks?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm going to refer the question to the Minister of the Environment, but if I may, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member opposite, to welcome him to this Legislature and to offer him my very best and sincerest wishes as he assumes his new responsibilities on behalf of his constituents.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have a chance to clarify for the new member the process that is before the Ministry of the Environment with respect to the terms of reference. As

I've been saying since I received the terms of reference in January, I share many of the concerns that have been raised by the community, and I very much value the input that they are giving to this very important environmental assessment process.

So let me assure you that I will be making a decision with respect to the terms of reference, and I will be doing so once my concerns have been satisfied. I've asked MOE to work closely and consult with GO Transit and the various proponents to ensure that if a project should go forward and a terms of reference should be crafted, the right decision is made for the community and for the environment.

Mr. Ferreira: This is very typical. The Premier passes the buck, but he takes the big bucks.

Premier, my constituents confirmed how important this issue is to the environment, the safety of their kids and the economic survival of local businesses. Your government acknowledged this in the by-election and clearly echoed my sentiments that the communities along the rail corridor will not benefit from nor do they want the Blue 22 air-rail link.

A month ago I wrote your Minister of Transportation, in my first act after being elected, to urgently address the implications for the community along the line. I have yet to get a response.

Premier, I repeat: Will you listen to the community and stop your plans for the privately run, publicly subsidized Blue 22 train?

Hon. Ms. Broten: Let me assure the member that I have been very actively engaged on this file. I have stood on the platform at the Weston GO train and talked to your community, standing alongside Laura Albanese. I have heard from Ms. Albanese on a number of occasions with respect to this issue. At the platform, I had an opportunity to hear directly and to feel first-hand the concerns that the community had about their safety, about a high-speed train going by. Those reflect many of the concerns that have come forward to the Ministry of the Environment, and all of that is what is taken into account in the context of the creation of the terms of reference of an environmental assessment that will examine all of these issues. It's the proper process to take place. All of those things will come forward, and when terms of reference are made in terms of a decision, the right decision will be made for the environment and for the community. That's my commitment.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a question today for the Minister of Health. It's been well documented that the cuts by the third party to medical school spaces in the early 1990s resulted in a doctor shortage in this province. These initial cuts, coupled with years of inaction on the part of the previous government, have compounded the problem. This lack of health human resources is often cited as one of the barriers to shortening wait times for surgical procedures in Ontario.

This past weekend, you announced a brand new initiative to counter the shortage of anaesthesiologists in Ontario. One of these teams will be established in Oakville at Halton Healthcare Services, in my riding. Minister, will you tell the House how these teams will provide better access to surgical procedures for my constituents and all Ontarians?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As we have sought, through the wait times strategy, to dramatically enhance our surgical capacity, one of the shortcomings that we've run into is the shortage, indeed, of anaesthesiologists. Accordingly, we've been working with health care providers to create anaesthesia care teams made up of anaesthesiologists and two new health care roles: anaesthesia assistants and nurse practitioner-anaesthesia. These two new positions will support the anaesthesiologists. This gives them the capacity, working together as a team, to enhance the number of people they can support, thereby enhancing the surgical capacities.

It's an example of the innovations which are occurring inside the context of our publicly funded health care system. We believe that this is one of the really, really important breakthroughs that enables us to continue to enhance our surgical platform in the province of Ontario, thereby reducing wait times even further for the people of this province.

Mr. Flynn: These teams sound like they're a progressive move towards addressing the wait times issue. But what Ontario citizens and Oakville citizens want to ensure is that safety is also a number one priority. What kind of training will these new health care providers receive, both in Oakville and throughout Ontario, in the hospitals that they serve? And are we the first jurisdiction to actually introduce these roles?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: This is an innovation that has been applied in other parts of the world, indeed, in the United States and in Europe. Our model is a more collaborative model.

From the training standpoint, we engaged the Michener Institute, which is a specialized training institute for people taking up professions in medical sciences. We've provided \$1.35 million to support Ontario's first anaesthesia assistant certificate program. There are recent graduates and others who are currently in training.

1530

We've gone one step further. Because of the necessity of having nurses and medicine working well together to provide these supports, we've engaged the University of Toronto and asked them to bring together their faculties of nursing and medicine to be able to further support the adoption of this collaborative team approach to health care, designed to reduce wait times for Ontarians.

CLASS SIZE

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): To the Premier: Premier, just a few weeks ago your Minister of Education

boasted that your 2003 commitment to cap class sizes would in fact be kept. Today, we have reports from school boards across the province telling us that, given the limitations of school facilities, the short list of staff availability they have, it's just going to be impossible to meet your cap commitment. Will you admit today that your promise for a hard cap was wrong in the first place and, second, that it is an absolute failure?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): What has happened in the province of Ontario since we started investing in primary class size reduction is that we've got 65% of classes in this province in the primary grades at 20 students or fewer. We've got over 90% of classes at 23 students or fewer. What's happening is that primary class sizes have substantially been reduced from the time that the previous government was in office. What some boards have said to us—and I want to acknowledge my PA Liz Sandals, who has been talking to boards through this budget process, through this GSN process—was, “Do you know what? We're not going to quite get there. We're not going to be able to build as much as you have given us money to build. So we need a little bit of flexibility.” And what we said is that we're on target. If there are some boards that need a bit of flexibility, we'll work with them to give them some extra time.

Mr. Klees: So, Premier, your Minister of Education has in fact admitted that your cap promise has been a failure: 65% is far short of the commitment that you made.

Now, for those where in fact the caps have gone in place, you are wrecking havoc with the education system. Let me read to you from a 15-year teacher. She says that absolute capping is creating damaging structural problems in our education system—split classes. Teachers, principals, administrators around this province are telling you that your hard cap policy is a failure. You're creating problems within the system. Will you admit it and will you return to a policy of flexibility so that communities can properly plan within their school system? Will you do that?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I just want to quote from one of the member opposite's constituents. Jennifer Branch, who teaches a primary class at Moraine Hills Public School in Richmond Hill, says, “Having a smaller number, it just allows you the time to sit and really focus with them and give them as much attention and time as they need.” The people in this province who know that primary class size reduction works are the kids in those classrooms. They are the people who benefit from the class size reduction. If the member opposite took the time to go into an elementary school and talk to some primary teachers, he would know that primary class size reduction is working. We are on target.

Some boards have said to us, “We need a bit of flexibility,” because there is so much money in the

system to build capital they don't have time to spend it. They need some extra time. We're willing to give them that flexibility, because that's a reasonable response to a request from the sector. That is not something the member opposite understands, but it is something that we—

Mr. Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like a late show. The minister didn't understand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I would remind members that the standing orders are quite clear about how you apply to have a late show, and it doesn't involve a statement during question period.

New question.

NANTICOKE GENERATING STATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My question is for the Premier. Last week PollutionWatch confirmed again that Nanticoke is the number one greenhouse gas polluter in Ontario. Two weeks ago, the federal government pledged over \$500 million from its ecoTrust fund to Ontario to fight climate change. You were at the press conference; so was I. You're taking the money—that's a good thing—but you're still planning to keep Nanticoke running. Will you designate that ecoTrust fund to demand response, energy efficiency and cogeneration so that we can shut down Nanticoke as soon as possible?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I'm proud that this government has a policy to close coal plants, and I'm proud that, unlike the member opposite's party—the member opposite's leader goes to northern Ontario and says, "Keep the coal plants open." When he comes to southern Ontario, he says, "Close the coal plants."

We have reduced emissions from coal plants by 32% in the first two and a half years. We have closed a coal plant; we have laid out a plan to get the rest. We're going to continue down that path, and we will close the coal plants. We just wish your leader and your party would be consistent throughout the province in their views on closing coal. Don't go up north and say, "Keep them open," and come down south and say, "Close them."

This government is going to close the coal plants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure a cleaner, greener environmental footprint in the energy sector.

Mr. Tabuns: As good at giving direct answers as shutting down coal plants, I have to say.

Anyway, as the minister well knows, reducing demand is the quickest way to shut down coal. He also knows that any credible plan to combat global warming, to combat climate change, has to have shutting down the Nanticoke plant as its highest priority. You know that this number one polluter has to be closed. You promised in 2003 that it would be closed in 2007. It's 2007; you broke that promise. Will you invest this money to cut demand in

Ontario so that Nanticoke can be shut down, or is it going to run indefinitely while you continue to say that someday you're going to shut it down?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Between 2003 and 2006, a 32% reduction in emissions from coal plants, including CO₂: 29% on CO₂, 44% on SO₂ and 46% on NO_x. What I would like the member to do is ask his leader why he said in Atikokan that the Atikokan coal plant doesn't create an air pollution problem and doesn't create a global warming problem. Yes, it does; sorry.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I know what he's trying to do; he's trying to have it both ways. He's trying to say up north that you can keep coal plants firing and down south that you can close them.

We believe firmly and unequivocally—and many other governments are joining us now—that coal must be closed. It must be closed in a timely, responsible fashion ensuring electricity reliability. Tell your leader to get with it, to quit saying one thing up north and another thing down—

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

1540

AGRICULTURAL LABOUR POLICY

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, this year Canadian Agricultural Safety Week is being observed from March 14 to 20. This is a week where farmers are reminded that occupational health and safety is everyone's responsibility.

According to the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, 115 people are killed and another 1,500 are seriously injured by farm-related incidents each year. We know that our government is committed to safe farms. Our government put in place a regulation making the Occupational Health and Safety Act apply to farm operations, which came into effect in June 2006. As a result, paid farm workers, both domestic and foreign, now have the same basic health and safety rights as other Ontario workers employed in provincially regulated workplaces. Minister, can you update the House and my constituents on the impact of this important change both for the farm workers and for the overall farm community?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for his question. I want to thank the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Farm Safety Association for spreading this important message, because it is important.

You need to recognize that the health and safety of all workers is of utmost importance to this ministry, and farmers are no exception. I'm proud that we were able to move forward. Two previous governments did not move forward. They left an exemption in place for agriculture in the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We didn't

believe that was right. We worked very closely with the Labour Issues Coordinating Committee. We worked closely between the Minister of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and those farmers on the ground to make sure that those protections of the Occupational Health and Safety Act applied to farm workers in this province.

We also recognized as we went forward that we had to have properly trained inspectors who understood the specific challenges within agriculture. That's why we have 14 dedicated inspectors who have received specific training. We've also moved forward with community information sessions. We're there to protect Ontario farmers.

Mr. Hoy: That's very positive.

Farmers grow our food and they contribute to our economic success. Our government recognizes the important role of agriculture and how it plays in our economy. No one in this House underestimates the importance of agriculture's farm sector. We could not survive without it. I can tell you from experience that farmers work long hours, sometimes in difficult and hazardous conditions. So I'm pleased to hear that the farm community have accepted the responsibilities under the act and are actively working to make their operations safe. Minister, can you please tell us what your inspectors found when they visited farm operations and what changes might be planned for the future?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I thank the member again for the question. This is Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, and they have a great theme: "Protect your moving parts!" We think that is extremely important. We've taken a very proactive approach to this. We've conducted over 50 investigations. But tragically, two of those investigations involved farm fatalities. We investigated 29 critical or serious injuries. Yes, we recognize that farming can be a dangerous occupation. That's why we moved forward. No other government moved forward better protecting our farmers. We felt that that was extremely important.

As well, we've moved forward with orders. We've issued over 100 orders that have been written. I'm pleased to say that each one of those 100 orders that has been written has been voluntarily complied with, because our farm employees recognize that it's incumbent on them to be serious about workplace health and safety.

Again, we're going to continue to work closely with the Farm Safety Association, because outreach is extremely important. We need to make sure that we educate our farmers and our farm employers. We're going to see that that happens. We are getting results. We are better protected—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Minister, I know you have family in Oshawa and I realize that you know Oshawa is doing fairly well, but doing well in Oshawa is very

dependent on all its supportive infrastructure. I must say that our community was shocked and outraged at several aspects of you and your ministry. To our knowledge, for the first time in the province of Ontario you and your ministry have specifically stated which programs our local health care provider, Lakeridge Health, is to cut. Normally, you just say there is a reduction and then the health care provider decides where the cuts are going to be. But you have directed them. That amount is \$8 million.

Minister, these cuts are affecting vulnerable patients in areas such as children's mental health services, addiction services and crisis intervention services. Local individuals are getting involved, such that tomorrow night Paul Taylor is holding a town hall meeting to address these very issues. Minister, why have you and your ministry directed Lakeridge Health to cut \$8 million from specific programs, such as \$1.6 million at Pinewood treatment centre?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): If the honourable member's community expressed outrage at the fact that they just got a \$7-million budget increase, then imagine how outraged they must have been when his party, when he was a member here, cut Lakeridge's budget in-year by \$6.4 million and when they closed the Whitby hospital. That must have been cause for a lot of outrage. How does the community feel in a circumstance where your leader proposes a further \$2.5-billion cut to health care? The budget at Lakeridge Health this year is \$35.9 million greater than when we came to office as a government.

There are community-based mental health services being provided by the budget of Lakeridge Health. We have obligated the community hospital and the local health integration network to move forward in a fashion that sees those community-based services delivered in the community with no disruption to the individuals in the community. I will be pleased to work with the member more closely on this if that is what is required to address the misinformation.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Minister, you're quite aware that you are at the head of the pack here cutting \$8 million from Lakeridge Health in the riding of Durham, Oshawa and Whitby-Ajax. There is a community meeting tomorrow night. It is important that you understand that this is a community with multi-site hospitals serving urban and rural settings, as well as a rapid-growth area as defined by the recent report from Stats Canada. But quite frankly, at a real level, Minister, these are vulnerable people, whether young or old. These are mental health services. They are being victimized under your watch. You can talk about the past. Under your charge, we've seen health tax increases and less access to services.

Minister, what are you going to do to protect not just the Bowmanville site and the Port Perry site but the

Whitby site as well as the Oshawa site? We need a commitment from you to address the shortfall of \$8 million that affects services to children and vulnerable people. What are you going to do to help the people at Lakeridge?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member in his question said, “You can talk about the past,” and so, in part, I will. For 12 years in this province, community-based mental health services did not see one penny of increase. For every year that that party brought in a budget in the province of Ontario, community-based mental health services were left on their own. They closed the Whitby site of their hospital and they reduced in real terms the funding for Lakeridge Health by \$6.4 million.

In contrast, we’ve increased the budget at Lakeridge Health. This year it is \$35.9 million more than when our government came to office. There is a regional cancer centre under construction. I give the honourable member this very clear assurance with respect to community-based mental health services that are currently being provided by the hospital: We will work with the LHIN and the hospital to ensure that these services are continued with no disruption whatsoever to patients.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Premier. Last summer, charges in the Gilbank double homicide case were dropped amidst allegations of leaks one week before preliminary hearings were scheduled to begin. The Hamilton police chief has said that an OPP investigation into the botched case clears his department of any responsibility for leaks whatsoever. Your Attorney General has tried to sweep this case under the rug. Will you lift the cloud of suspicion around this trial and make the OPP report public?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I think it first has to be said that obviously the death of Lynn and Fred Gilbank was a terrible and a brutal tragedy that affected your community. I’ve met with family members, met with their children. Obviously, we want to do everything we can to support those family members during this particularly difficult time.

The member mentioned an allegation of a leak. I just want to make it very clear that there was certainly no leak from the Ministry of the Attorney General. The Deputy Attorney General has confirmed this; the chief prosecutor has confirmed this. We had a discussion with your chief of police, who indicated very directly that he had absolutely no evidence or information about a leak from the Ministry of the Attorney General.

The matter is subject to an ongoing investigation. As such, I certainly don’t want to say anything, and I know the member won’t want to say anything, to interfere with that investigation, but I’m happy to address any other questions she has in her supplementary.

Ms. Horwath: The problem is that nobody has explained to the citizens of Hamilton why the case was dropped and whether in fact leaks from the provincial government contributed; that’s part of the problem. The government has a record, unfortunately, of hiding inconvenient truths. Last week, the Attorney General was willing to take the honourable member for Nickel Belt to court to prevent her from learning the truth about autism-related cases.

When are you actually going to deal with the culture of secrecy that your government and your Attorney General have in fact made worse and finally create a culture of openness in government that you so long ago promised?

1550

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Again, the matter is subject to an ongoing investigation, and I know that the member would not want to do anything, either in this House or outside of this House, that in any way would derail or interfere with that investigation. Certainly I don’t want to either.

It is in the hands of the police right now. The police are doing their work. Chief Mullan has indicated that the investigation continues. Obviously, if there’s a role to play for the Ministry of the Attorney General to provide them with support, we will do that. In the meantime I personally, and officials in our ministry, have met with the family members and have endeavoured to do our best to explain in a fashion that at the same time does not compromise the ongoing investigation, and we will continue to do that as the investigation is ongoing.

ACCESSIBILITÉ POUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): Ma question s’adresse à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires. En décembre dernier, l’Assemblée générale de l’ONU a adopté la première convention conçue spécialement pour protéger les droits des personnes handicapées. La convention a pour objet de promouvoir, protéger et assurer la pleine et égale jouissance des droits de plus de 600 millions de personnes qui présentent des incapacités physiques, mentales, intellectuelles ou sensorielles durables. Quoique l’ONU demande aux pays de signer la convention et d’adopter des lois protégeant ces gens, quelle est la position de notre province face à cette convention de l’ONU?

L’hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je voudrais remercier le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell pour sa question. Cette convention de l’ONU sur les droits humains est la première du 21^e siècle, et j’espère qu’elle démarquera une amélioration considérable du traitement des personnes handicapées.

Ainsi, je suis heureuse de vous dire que l’Ontario appuie sans équivoque la signature par le Canada de la

Convention internationale sur les droits des personnes handicapées. En fait, le gouvernement McGuinty a adopté plusieurs politiques ayant le but de rendre l'Ontario totalement accessible aux personnes handicapées d'ici 2025. Nous souhaitons réaliser l'accessibilité pour les Ontariens et Ontariennes ayant un handicap en ce qui concerne les biens, les services, les installations, le logement, l'emploi, les bâtiments, les constructions et les locaux d'ici le 1^{er} janvier 2005, en concevant, mettant en œuvre et appliquant des normes d'accessibilité.

M. Lalonde: Je sais que je ne suis pas le seul dans cette Chambre à me réjouir par rapport à votre appui quant à la signature de la Convention internationale sur les droits des personnes handicapées pour le Canada. L'Ontario est le chef de file dans ce domaine grâce à la Loi de 2005 sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario, qui a pour but, comme vous l'avez souligné, de rendre l'Ontario totalement accessible aux personnes handicapées d'ici 2025. Cependant, pourquoi faut-il jusqu'à 2025 pour mettre en œuvre la Loi de 2005 sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario?

L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: La date de 2025 est l'aboutissement et non le point de départ. Les personnes ayant un handicap doivent pouvoir se déplacer d'un endroit à l'autre, magasiner, aller à l'école, rendre visite à leur médecin ou trouver un emploi sans faire face à des obstacles que les personnes qui n'ont aucun handicap n'ont pas à surmonter. En dépit de nos souhaits les plus chers, une telle tâche ne peut être accomplie du jour au lendemain.

D'ailleurs, d'autres pays sont parvenus à la même conclusion. À titre d'exemple, l'Australie s'est fixé des étapes de cinq ans, échelonnées sur 30 ans, pour éliminer les obstacles à l'accessibilité dans le domaine des transports. Les États-Unis, quant à eux, ont établi dans le domaine des transports des objectifs qui s'échelonnent sur une période allant jusqu'à 30 ans.

En collaborant tous—personnes, collectivités, secteurs public et privé—nous serons en mesure d'éliminer et de prévenir dès maintenant les obstacles à l'accessibilité. Nous obtiendrons de véritables résultats en plusieurs étapes, avec des jalons au moins tous les cinq ans.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As you know, standing order 97(d) requires the ministry to respond to written questions within 24 sitting days of their having been placed on the order paper. I want to draw your attention to question 235, standing in my name: The response was due November 13, 2006, and has not been received. And question 309, standing in the name of the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock: A response was due on December 6, 2006, and has not been received. I further draw your attention to questions 242 through 247, standing in the name of the member for Oak Ridges: Responses were due by November 2, 2006.

Interim answers have been received, but we've not seen the full responses. The minister indicated on the responses that "we are currently preparing a response to your question which will be available shortly." That was almost five months ago, and I submit that "shortly" has long passed. I ask you, Speaker, to direct the government to respond to these questions today and release information that rightfully belongs in the public domain.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): This, of course, is a point of order, and I would remind the ministries affected—the Ministry of the Attorney General in response to Mr. Runciman's question and the Ministry of the Environment in response to Ms. Scott's—that their answers are overdue and that they need to deal with that immediately.

PETITIONS

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the lung association's women and COPD national report 2006 reveals that more than 425,000 Canadian women have been diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease ... and more than 4,300 will die of the disease this year; and

"Whereas the women and COPD national report indicates that since 2000, female mortality due to COPD has risen at double the rate of breast cancer;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support a call to action for early diagnosis and optimized management of COPD to reduce illness and suffering;

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the Ontario Lung Association's COPD advisory panel report to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on the prevention and management of COPD in Ontario; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorse a comprehensive strategy to address COPD in this province."

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I have a petition here. I was going to read it with Rosario Marchese's glasses, but I figure I'd better take my good friend Mr. Yakabuski's. They're much more becoming of my physique. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs to its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

“Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

“Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

“Whereas on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member’s motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

“Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provision in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario of Ontario to: increase long-term-care operating funds by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds.”

I affix my name to that petition on behalf of the residents of Extencicare.

1600

PEACE OFFICERS’ MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for an Ontario Peace Officers’ Memorial Day and a memorial monument on Queen’s Park (Bill 131):

“Whereas Ontario peace officers have performed significant and heroic duties to protect the public for over 130 years; and

“Whereas Ontario peace officers have been murdered, killed, or died in the line of duty; and

“Whereas federal peace officers have also been murdered, killed, or died in the line of duty in Ontario; and

“Whereas Bill 131”—written by MPP Dave Levac—“would establish a Peace Officers’ Memorial Day and a permanent Ontario peace officers’ monument on Queen’s Park; and

“Whereas Ontario peace officers are recognized nationally, along with police, at the police and peace officers’ memorial on Parliament Hill in Ottawa; and

“Whereas eight (8) other provinces have police and peace officers’ memorials;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 131 which would create a Peace Officers’ Memorial Day in Ontario and a peace officers’ memorial monument on Queen’s Park where fallen officers’ families, other peace officers and the

public can remember peace officers who have given their lives in the performance of their duties in Ontario.”

I sign my petition and hand it to Alyssa, our page.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being 4 o’clock, I am required by standing order 30(b) to now call orders of the day, but before I do, I beg to inform the House that on December 21, 2006, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 173, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, the MPPs Pension Act, 1996 and the Executive Council Act / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’Assemblée législative, la Loi de 1996 sur le régime de retraite des députés et la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif.

Bill Pr29, An Act respecting Sheena’s Place.

Bill Pr30, An Act respecting Red Leaves Resort Association.

Bill Pr31, An Act respecting the Perimeter Institute.

Bill Pr32, An Act respecting The Centre for International Governance Innovation.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L’INTERVENANT PROVINCIAL EN FAVEUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES

Mrs. Chambers moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth / Projet de loi 165, Loi visant à créer la charge d’intervenant provincial en faveur des enfants et des jeunes et à y pourvoir.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Chambers has moved second reading of Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. Minister.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): Last November, our government took a very significant step forward to provide better protection for Ontario’s most vulnerable children and youth. We did this because we are determined to ensure that these children and youth will always have the ability to be heard by government and by the people of this province.

Today our government is pleased to be moving forward on the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, which would, if passed, make the province's child and youth advocate an independent officer of the Legislature. This legislation, if passed, will better protect the interests of children and youth by ensuring that no government, current or future, would be able to suppress the voice of the advocate.

The child advocate provides a voice to be heard that might otherwise be ignored. This government believes that when it comes to giving vulnerable children a voice, there can be no room for interference, political or otherwise. Ontario's children deserve no less.

We promised to bring forward a law that would have an independent child and youth advocate report to the Legislative Assembly. We said the appointment would take place through an all-party legislative committee, and we said we would make the advocate as independent as the Auditor General and the Ombudsman. If passed, this legislation would meet that commitment.

The child advocate represents a range of children and youth who are seeking or receiving services. Those services could be in the youth justice system, in the children's mental health or complex/special-needs systems, in the child protection and well-being system, or in provincial and demonstration schools for the deaf and blind. The advocate's office also reviews cases that involve complaints about the treatment or care of a child or youth in a program funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

Each year, the advocate's office receives more than 3,000 calls. The majority of calls have been about standards of practice in residential care, violence between peers, children living at home with special needs and aboriginal child protection. The advocate speaks for children and youth who are unable to bring complaints forward on their own behalf. We believe that government has a responsibility to listen to everyone it serves, and we believe that includes children and youth. This legislation, if passed, would ensure that children and youth would be heard not only by this government but also by future governments.

In the east gallery today, I'm very pleased to have with us Ontario's first child advocate, Les Horne, and Matthew Geigen-Miller, who represents Defence for Children. I'm also very pleased to have Cathy Vine and Carlyn Zwarenstein on behalf of Voices for Children. And I'm happy to have Ashraf Shah, who is executive assistant to the child advocate.

As always, it gives me very great pleasure to take this opportunity to once again recognize Judy Finlay. For more than 15 years Judy Finlay has served with the utmost compassion and integrity as Ontario's chief advocate for children and youth. I have had the very real privilege of working closely with Ms. Finlay as Minister of Children and Youth Services. She has helped me to acquire a more profound and a more personalized understanding of the substantial challenges that some of Ontario's children and youth face in their day-to-day

lives. Many of us in this Legislature could not even begin to imagine the challenges that some of these kids face through no fault of their own. My actions, as well as policies and directives created by my ministry, have been guided in large part by what we have learned from reviews conducted by Ms. Finlay's office.

I would like to take a moment to read a quote from Ms. Finlay about the significance of making the advocate independent. She has said, "Independence offers the child advocate unfettered access to Ontario's most vulnerable children and a greater ability to amplify the voice of children about their affairs, concerns and wishes." In Ms. Finlay's words, "An independent child advocate has been a long time in coming to Ontario, and I applaud the government for creating this essential safeguard for the protection and well-being of our children."

We anticipate that the independent child advocate would issue annual reports and special reports as necessary, championing the systemic and perhaps individual concerns of children and youth who might otherwise not be heard. As you may recall, in 2004 as a result of concerns raised during the previous government's time in office, our government asked an independent third party to review the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy. This review addressed a number of important questions, such as: What model of governance would be particularly suitable to enhance the independence of the child advocate's office? What would be the appropriate legislative mandate for the office? What types of performance indicators would best apply to the child advocate? What resources would be needed to implement a new model?

The review surveyed literature and research reports on child advocacy and analyzed legislation and programs in other Canadian jurisdictions.

1610

The research consultants also consulted with many individuals and representatives of organizations, including the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy, people who have dealt with the office in a variety of professional capacities, and, even more importantly, some of the children and youth who have received services from the provincial child advocate.

The interviews and research revealed significant concerns about the perceived lack of independence of the child advocate's office and the effect that had on the credibility and effectiveness of the office's work.

The third party review recommended increasing the independence of the child advocate so that advocacy for the province's most vulnerable children and youth would be more effective. These children, including those in the care of children's aid societies and children with developmental disabilities or other special needs who are living at home and are seeking or receiving approved services, need effective advocacy to protect their rights, promote their interests, improve the quality of services that they receive, and help to prevent abuse while in provincial care. They need that voice, they deserve to have that voice, and we must provide the assurance that they will be heard. That's why we are here today moving

forward on our commitment to Ontario's children and youth.

The review also said that effective child advocacy can often help to improve communication and understanding between children and families who receive services and the agencies that serve them.

Some of the principal recommendations of the review were:

- to make the child advocate an officer of the Legislature to enhance the advocate's independence;

- to ensure that the mandate of the independent advocate largely corresponds to what the office currently does; that is, be an advocate for children whose voice is potentially diminished because they are in the care of the province;

- to provide a range of advocacy services for children and have the responsibility for responding to complaints from children, parents and others about services provided to children receiving care, as well as children with developmental and other special needs who live at home;

- to make recommendations and engage in informal dispute resolution and advocacy for children and, in limited circumstances, conduct reviews of services, participate in coroners' inquests, and provide policy advice to the Legislature.

However, the third party review also recommended that the child and youth advocate should not engage in formal advocacy in courts or before tribunals or carry investigative or adjudicative functions. It recommended that those roles should be left to other agencies and bodies, although the child and youth advocate may have an important part to play in terms of liaison and, on occasion, may contribute to certain reviews.

The review confirmed the wisdom of our government's commitment to the independence of the advocate. I would like to say that actually setting up a new officer of the Legislature is a very complex process that requires consultation. Staff from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services undertook extensive consultations with central agencies: the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Children's Lawyer, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and the current child advocate.

The policy work included work on issues such as the mandate of the proposed independent advocate; the powers and limitations of the office; privacy and access to information; and financial and human resource implications.

Consultations were conducted with the current child advocate of the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy about the operating practices of the office.

The Office of the Children's Lawyer in Ontario was also consulted to ensure that it would continue to work with a new, independent advocate in a complementary manner to assist vulnerable children and youth.

An independent child advocate's office would have to manage its own website, so consultations were also held to assess the new office's information technology requirements.

All of the consultations informed our policy development and helped produce a strong and viable new approach to child and youth advocacy in Ontario.

We took the necessary pains to put a solid policy framework in place, and this will ultimately benefit the vulnerable children and youth who would receive the support of an independent child advocate. Our government has worked hard to ensure that this legislation would serve Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth well.

There are members of this Legislature of all political persuasions who, at one point or another, have expressed support for our government's commitment to establishing an independent child advocate. So I am looking forward to all-party support of this legislation.

If the legislation that is receiving second reading today is passed, Ontario will have an independent watchdog looking out for the province's most vulnerable children and youth. By making the advocate truly independent, we will be giving children and youth the strong voice they deserve.

Thirty years ago, Ontario was a world leader in establishing child advocacy services for children in the care of the state. Since then, similar services have been established in many countries and in most Canadian provinces.

It is now time for Ontario to establish a child advocate as an independent officer of this Legislature. Establishing an independent advocate will serve not only to further protect the rights of our most precious resource but will also reinforce their right to be heard. The most vulnerable of our children and youth have not always enjoyed that right. If the proposed legislation is passed, children and youth will have a completely independent officer of the Legislature to speak on their behalf. Our government is committed to ensuring that they will be heard. This is an exceptional opportunity for this Legislature to demonstrate its support for Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth.

Our government has also been strengthening supports and services for these young people through other complementary initiatives. For example, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, proclaimed last November, is now in effect. Reforms under this act will improve the province's child and youth well-being and protection system and further protect our vulnerable young people.

Our government has come a long way. When we took office, we inherited a lot of lost ground which we have been working hard to recover. I realize we still have a long way to go. The establishment of an independent provincial advocate for children and youth will be a giant step forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Just a few comments on the minister's address: She's claiming to be a very strong advocate for children and youth. I appreciate that and I'm glad to hear that, but her record would belie that statement, because recently, in

my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the Phoenix Centre—and the minister knows well about the communications we've had on this issue—which provides mental health services for children and youth in Renfrew county, made an urgent appeal to the minister back in September for special funding to deal with a huge increase in the caseloads of their workers dealing with mental health issues regarding primarily families of military personnel as a result of the Afghan deployment. The minister turned them down. A second appeal was made, and the minister actually came to me in the House here and said, "Do you know what? We're doing something to help the Phoenix Centre." That turned out to be nothing. Recently, we had a press conference to bring this issue to the attention of the media and the public, and lo and behold, the Ombudsman himself, Mr. Marin, has determined that this requires an investigation. Interestingly, we're talking about a child advocate here, yet, for the minister's own actions on this issue, the Phoenix Centre and children's mental health services in Renfrew county, the Ombudsman himself believes that it requires his action on this issue to try to get to the bottom of this and do what is right. So what's happening here is that the minister is actually victimizing children in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for political gain—victimizing children for political gain. I think that that is reprehensible and that if the minister wants to advocate on behalf of children, she could start with the mental health of children in Renfrew county and base Petawawa.

1620

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to have a few opportunities to speak to this bill probably today and tomorrow. I'm glad to finally see it here in the Legislature for us to deal with, because it certainly has been a long time coming. In the spirit of actual questions and comments, I have a few questions that I hope the minister will consider and perhaps respond to in her opportunity for responses.

The first question is about whether or not she really thinks that this bill meets all the measures that can be met in terms of an independent child advocate for the province of Ontario. I say that not rhetorically; I say that because we know the process of bills. We're in second reading now and we're going to go to committee, hopefully. At that point in time, in committee, I'm sure there will be an opportunity to hear from people about what possible improvements could be made. So I would hope that in the spirit of creating—and the minister said it herself, and I agree with her 100%, the fact that this is a rare thing to happen. The creation of a new position, a new independent officer of the Legislature, is something that doesn't happen every day around here. Therefore it's extremely important to get it right and to make sure that the legislation actually is going to do all of the things that it needs to do and that it should do and that we would want it to do in order to provide a voice for children in our province. So that's the particular question that I have.

I have some recommendations, I would say, about some of the things that are in the bill and some of the

things that are not in the bill. I look forward to spending some time on that. So what I really look to the minister for is a commitment, an assurance that there will be real dialogue, that that dialogue will be productive dialogue at the committee stage and that the opportunity at committee will be for us to hear from people, certainly not to delay, because this bill has been a long time coming, but certainly to hear from people, to make this legislation the best it can be. That's what I intend to be working on myself.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): First, before I start, I want to congratulate the minister for bringing such an important issue to the House, a provincial advocate for children and youth. I think it's an important issue we should have dealt with a long time ago, but I'm happy and honoured to be part of a government that cares about children.

During our mandate, we listened to many people who came to our committees and spoke about how we can protect the children in the province of Ontario. A few minutes ago, we heard great accusations from the opposition of the government, the minister and many different agencies and groups, but that's why it is important for all of us to bring this bill forward, and hopefully this bill will get support from the three parties, because it will stop the accusations. It will put everything in place. It will protect children and youth because, as you know, so many of our youth and children live in agencies and group homes and many different places. They have no family to advocate on their behalf. They have no one, and they're also subject to abuse. That's why I think it's important for all of us, voted in by the people of Ontario, to protect all of us, especially the vulnerable people among us.

I want to congratulate the minister for bringing forward such an important issue, and hopefully the three parties will get together and make it a strong bill to appoint an advocate, independent from all the political parties. It's great to be an advocate on behalf of the children, because children are our responsibility, and it's our job to protect them and to make sure everyone lives in respect and dignity, because we need them in the future.

I think it's a great bill. Hopefully, all of us will support it and make sure it will touch all the elements and have a great impact on future generations.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I am very pleased to be able to stand today and make a few comments on Bill 165. It is nice to see this legislation back in the House. Hopefully, we can make proper amendments, have good consultations and good committee hearings and get a bill that means a lot to today's children.

I'm really looking forward to the comments we'll be hearing in a few moments from our critic Lisa MacLeod, who is the youngest member of this House. She has a beautiful little girl, Victoria, whom I see the odd time upstairs on the third floor. I can tell you, I can't think of a

better person as a critic than a young mother who actually brings her child to the provincial Legislature.

Our party is very proud of the fact that we had the first child advocate under the premiership of the Honourable William Davis. I just wanted to say that, when you're talking about children and youth, it's sad that we need someone to speak on their behalf. There's nothing more precious in the world than the children.

I just want to say something about my family. I have an eight-year-old granddaughter. Her name is Rachel. She means the world to me. She has sort of been part of my MPP political life since I got here. But I was so proud of her the other day when she went to the hairdresser and had her long, dark brown hair cut off and she donated it to the Canadian Cancer Society. She was so proud because she got this small certificate to say that she had done something for some other person who was faced with cancer. I just wanted to put that on the record. Her name is Rachel Rynard. I'm sure that someday you will see Rachel Rynard right here in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister, you have two minutes to respond.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'd like to start my response, if I may, by recognizing the member from Simcoe North and congratulating him for obviously being a very positive influence on his granddaughter. I think that's wonderful and I agree that she should feel very proud of herself and you should feel very proud of her. I would like to give you and your family some recognition for instilling that kind of spirit in her.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke unfortunately was kind of misguided in his comments. I'll forgive him for that, but he needs to understand that one of the reasons we have this commitment is because his government muzzled the advocate when the advocate had very, very serious issues to bring forward in the past. We want to make sure that no government ever has that opportunity again, whether ours or any other government in the future.

The member from Hamilton East, I can assure you that we want to make sure we get this right. This will go to committee, and I will look forward to any enhancements you and others can make to this bill. And yes, we do want it to be the best that it can be so it can serve the children of this province well, because they deserve no less.

To my colleague the member from London–Fanshawe, thank you for your support. I know how you feel as well about Ontario's most vulnerable children, as do all of my colleagues on this side of the House. We are looking forward to all-party support of this legislation and, yes, we will work together in the interests of children in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): It's a pleasure to be back here today with all of you. Today is a very important day in the Legislature. It's the first time in Ontario's history that the Legislature has 25% women sitting in these seats, and that's because of my friend

Joyce Savoline from Burlington. I want to congratulate her. It's a tremendous feat; it's very historic.

I also want to congratulate two other colleagues, from York South–Weston and from Markham. I think it's tremendous that they were able to participate in the democratic process, and I think all three political parties are richer for it. Joyce, I'm so pleased that you're here with us today.

1630

I'd also like to acknowledge some people in the gallery whom the third party critic is talking to right now. They are Les Horne, our first child advocate, appointed by Premier Davis; Matthew Geigen-Miller, who I think is probably one of the foremost experts in the country on the independence of a child advocate; Judy Finlay, who is our current chief Ontario child advocate; and Cathy Vine and her colleagues from Voices for Children. They should all be congratulated for their work on behalf of children in this province. Certainly throughout the period of my research their names popped up everywhere. They have tremendous insight, and we're very proud to have you here, so thank you very much.

As I mentioned in first reading, my party, the Progressive Conservative Party, is proud to have been the first to introduce the child advocate in Ontario, who was Les Horne, under the premiership of Bill Davis in 1984. Premier Davis established IMPAC in 1977, which is the interministerial provincial advisory committee, by which we are now able to have ministries work across boundaries to provide a forum for agencies and families to enable better access for children. In 1978, Mr. Davis established Canada's first provincial advocacy office, the Office of Child and Family Services Advocacy, which was later entrenched in legislation when Mr. Davis's government introduced the Child and Family Services Act.

This great man, Premier Davis, was far ahead of his time. After all, it was only 1993 when the United Nations adopted the Paris Principles, calling on governments worldwide to establish government bodies for the protection of children and youth. Premier Davis was the first in this province to envision a government body which would bring together expertise in the areas of child welfare, children's mental health, developmental disability, youth justice, education, health, family treatment and children's rights in order to best serve Ontario's children. Because of Bill Davis's vision and leadership, Ontario's child advocate became a model for governments across this country, and our chief advocates, Les Horne and Judy Finlay, have set the standard worldwide for effective advocacy on behalf of children everywhere. For that, I truly want to thank them.

The McGuinty Liberals, on the other hand, have delayed and dithered on matters relating to children and youth, and I want to touch on this before I get into my direct concerns with this bill. In fact, of the 231 promises that were made to Ontarians during the last election—the “Say anything and get elected” election—the McGuinty Liberals made about 30 promises related to children and

youth. More than half have been broken and others have only been partially implemented. The Minister of Children and Youth Services talks a good game, but of course she would want to after a dismal record in the three and a half years since the McGuinty Liberals took office. They talk about their commitment to children and youth, yet the kids of military men and women serving in Afghanistan are suffering as resource centres on military bases across Ontario, like the Phoenix Centre in Petawawa, are underfunded and basically ignored by the minister, even during a time of elevated crisis on the bases on which they serve. The McGuinty Liberals will talk about their commitment to children and youth in Ontario, yet they have not moved forward on increasing resources to children's mental health in this province. The Minister of Children and Youth Services has a framework on her desk submitted by Children's Mental Health Ontario, but what has she done with the framework? Nothing. There has been no implementation plan, no implementation timeline and no desire on her part—or, worse, no clout around the cabinet table for children and youth matters—in order to move this important issue forward.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services and the McGuinty Liberal government muse about how much better off children are in Ontario today because they are in power. But, sadly, parents of autistic kids will tell you otherwise. After breaking an election promise to autistic children immediately after being elected in 2003—which is entirely heartless, in and of itself—the McGuinty Liberal government had the audacity to continue court action against their parents. Adding insult to a series of injuries, these same McGuinty Liberals then added another commitment to these already disillusioned parents by introducing ABA in the classroom within the next six months, a commitment which we all know will be very difficult for them to keep, just to put that mildly. The Liberals have also broken their promises to autistic kids with inexcusably long wait lists. Think about it this way: These families have had to endure exhausting legal action, repeated broken promises, counterproductive politicking, and three and a half years later they are still waiting for this government to be honest and straight-forward with them.

The parents of autistic kids have ample reason to be skeptical. As one parent told me last week, this new McGuinty government commitment on ABA is wide enough, with a hole in it, that you could drive an entire Mack truck through it, which I think is pitiful and shameful. And then, as if this turmoil isn't enough, the McGuinty Liberal government has put families living with autism through even more turmoil by turning around and slapping the autism community's biggest advocate, our honourable colleague from Nickel Belt, Shelley Martel, with legal action. The McGuinty Liberals just don't get it. That is not how you advocate on behalf of Ontario's children.

My colleagues, since I've arrived back here at the Legislature, have also brought up issues in their own

communities. For example, in Kawartha Lakes there are zero Best Start spaces. It's the only place in all of Ontario without a space. I know that my colleague Laurie Scott has been working very hard to try to get those Best Start spaces in Lindsay. My other colleagues Christine Elliott, Jerry Ouellette and John O'Toole have spoken in this Legislature about the \$3 million that is needed to continue mental health services at Lakeridge Health Corp., yet those continue to be cut.

The Liberals have had ample opportunity to govern by example in advocating for our province's most vulnerable children. In my opinion, they've squandered this opportunity. The Liberals' dithering, delaying and deception on the children and youth file is unacceptable. The McGuinty Liberals made a promise in 2003 to appoint an independent child advocate. They said at the time that a future Liberal government would pass legislation creating an independent office of the child advocate. This office would report to the Legislature rather than the government. The legislation would require the appointment of the child advocate through an all-party committee of the Legislature. This appointment would be for a fixed term. The legislation would also require the child advocate's budget to be set by the Board of Internal Economy.

Yet instead of acting on their promise, after they were elected, they dithered, they delayed and they deceived. After the election, the McGuinty Liberals stalled by commissioning private consultants to undertake a review. Almost two years—

The Deputy Speaker: Would the member take her seat. I do think the word "deceived" is one that she might consider withdrawing.

Ms. MacLeod: I withdraw that, Speaker.

Almost two years after the initial promise, the Liberals stated that legislation was "imminent." From there, it took another 20 months, more than three years after the initial promise, for the McGuinty Liberals to follow through. I need to put this in perspective. The second promise is as old as my two-year-old daughter, Victoria, who was a newborn at the time of the first promise. She is now walking, talking, toilet training and doing all the other wonderful things a toddler does when she's entering the terrible twos. But two years is a long time to sit and pontificate on a promise to children: vulnerable children, children at risk, children who need the government to speak for them because they cannot speak for themselves. Mr. Speaker, these kids do not have two years to wait for an inactive government.

Ironically, this legislation, as you'll recall, was miraculously introduced the same day we learned of a leaked Auditor General's report which detailed millions of misspent tax dollars intended for children at risk in our province. On the same day the Minister of Children and Youth Services introduced legislation for an independent children's advocate for vulnerable kids, we learned that, under the leadership of the McGuinty Liberals, they had abandoned financial reviews on children's aid societies. We learned that, under her leadership, the McGuinty

Liberals had cancelled risk assessments for vulnerable kids. We learned that, under her leadership, the McGuinty Liberals ignored quarterly reports in the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. And sadly, on the same day this bill was introduced to create an independent child advocate, we learned, in the leaked Auditor General's report, that this McGuinty Liberal government lowered accountability standards when it came to helping children at risk in this province. That is the abysmal commitment to children and youth by the McGuinty Liberals and this minister.

Life goes on, and because of this, children at risk in Ontario have suffered under the McGuinty Liberals' ineffective and unfocused government. Again, you need look no further than last December. Children in Ontario deserve better.

During first reading, I made a commitment in this Legislature. I assured Ontarians that the Ontario PC Party would take this legislation very seriously. We would study it, we would consult on it, and we would make sure that this government gets it right. Today, I assure you that we will be active participants in this legislation and that we have studied this bill. We have consulted on it. Since last December, I have discussed children's issues with children's organizations throughout this province. I am here to make sure the McGuinty Liberal government gets it right, because, as we have seen in other legislation that has come before us, they simply put forward a bill without understanding the complexities of the issues they are dealing with, and the actual legislation sometimes misses the mark.

1640

As an active participant in this debate on the independent child advocate, I have some concerns. Primarily, it seems that the longer the crowd opposite waits to draft and introduce legislation, the more hastily drafted and less consultative the bill before us appears.

I know I've touched on the timeline earlier, but I want to delve a little bit more deeply into the timeline on this particular legislation.

In July 2003, the McGuinty Liberals issued a press release promising that a future Liberal government would pass legislation creating an independent office of the child advocate that would report to the Legislature rather than the government. By fall of 2003, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services commissioned researchers to study the Child and Family Services Act and develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a new office of the child and youth advocate. The contract for this review was granted to a consortium of four researchers organized by Whitehead Research Consultants Ltd., a London, Ontario-based consulting firm. Then, in 2004, nine months after the initial promise, the third party review began.

In August 2004, when the final report of the third party review was submitted to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, one would have thought that the McGuinty Liberal government would have been prepared to include the critics from both the official opposition and

the third party, particularly since the McGuinty Liberals have been advocating that this position would be an independent officer of this Legislature, and that with this new role there would be no room for political interference or partisanship. Rather, they continued to stonewall.

Sadly, the March to June 2005 spring sitting came and went. The government did not introduce a bill that spring, as they had promised. So too went the fall sitting of 2005 and the spring sitting of 2006. By then, we had learned what the word "imminent" means to the serial promise-breakers across the way. According to most dictionaries, "imminent" means forthcoming, pending, about to happen, looming, coming up or just around the corner. To those who say anything to get elected without contemplating the implications of their broken promises or the cavalier choice of their wording, "imminent" actually takes on the meaning of its antonym: distant. One can only conclude that the words "this spring" and "imminent" are used as recklessly by the McGuinty Liberals as "I will not raise your taxes." Obviously, when this government says one thing, it clearly means another.

So off in the distance, on November 30, 2006, the Minister of Children and Youth Services finally introduced Bill 165, legislation the Liberals had promised was imminent a full 20 months earlier. Again, it seems the longer the crowd waits to draft and introduce legislation, the more hastily drafted and less consultative the bill before us appears.

Therefore, because this bill was hastily drafted, perhaps because of the damning Auditor General's report, there should be no surprise that there are serious concerns with this bill on this side of the House. We will be asking the critical questions: Because of the timeline, are we any closer to getting an independent child advocate, or will this legislation die on the order paper when the legislative session is scheduled to end in less than three months? I note that there are still 125 bills left on the order paper. Is the model before us the right model? If not, how can we improve this legislation? And are we going to do everything we can to do what's best for the kids?

While this bill does address some key issues lacking in the current system and does answer some of the key questions, there are still several areas where there is need for improvement. My concerns are:

(1) A lack of consultation with stakeholders and with parliamentary colleagues.

(2) I don't believe this bill has real teeth: no investigative powers, no ability to summons witnesses, no ability to summons evidence, and no ability to review child deaths.

(3) Children's access to the advocate is not guaranteed, and entrance to facilities by the advocate is restricted.

(4) Although the scope and mandate of this office is broad, the bill still manages to leave out two groups that are presently protected by the current office of the chief children's advocate.

These are four concerns about this piece of legislation. The fact that these concerns have not been addressed indicates exactly the point I alluded to earlier, which is that the longer they wait to introduce legislation, the more hastily drafted their bills are.

Let's look more closely into my concerns. First, lack of consultation: It should not be out of the realm of possibility to any concerned Ontarian that with the delay of introducing legislation, the Minister of Children and Youth Services would have had plenty of time to consult stakeholders across the children and youth spectrum. Unfortunately, we learned from groups across the children and youth spectrum that they were not part of the consultative process in drafting this bill. In fact, we learned there was very little input from the very communities the bill is intended to help. Just like Bill 107, the human rights act, and Bill 43, the Clean Water Act, we are again in a position during legislative debate in this chamber that leaves us speaking to a bill that has not been properly consulted among key stakeholders in the sector.

As an example, my colleague the member for York North, Julia Munro, asked the Minister of Children and Youth Services back in October 2006 why, after years of being lead advocates for an independent child advocate and publishing a comprehensive report on issues entitled *Child Advocacy Renewal in Ontario: Progress Report and Agenda for Action*, Defence for Children International was unable to secure a meeting with the Minister of Children and Youth Services on this legislation, despite the assertion made by the Minister of Children and Youth Services that she was conducting extensive consultations. In fact, the minister's response to Ms. Munro was, "You cannot start to imagine how many requests for meetings we receive."

Mr. Speaker, I think you would agree that if the leading experts in the field of child advocacy were still trying to seek a meeting with the Minister of Children and Youth Services three weeks before she introduced the bill, then their input was clearly not considered in the meaningful way one might expect. Rather, considering the Minister of Children and Youth Services addressed Ms. Munro's question so cavalierly, one can conclude that she was unprepared to meet with key stakeholders in the sector until after her department had prepared a bill the McGuinty Liberal government could live with rather than a bill that considered what is best for Ontario's children.

In fact, let me read an excerpt from the *Child Advocacy Renewal* report written by Defence for Children International on the McGuinty Liberal government's consultations.

"The Ontario government does not appear to have conducted any other major consultation on research projects regarding its commitment to strengthen child advocacy," referring to the McGuinty Liberal government's third party review.

In addition, the report points out this major concern: "There are a number of concerns about weaknesses in the

process of the third party review. Generally, these weaknesses relate to three findings regarding the methods and the process of the review. Namely that the review was completely controlled by officials at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the review was rushed and the review did not include adequate consultation with affected young people."

To expound on these three points: Officials of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services determined the scope and parameters of the review. Therefore, the consultation findings could be considered as having been influenced by the minister's department. In addition, for a piece of legislation which has been promised for three years, the review was only afforded about eight weeks to conduct research and report findings, which was an insufficient amount of time to undertake a thorough policy and research initiative. Finally, with close to 25,000 children in this province relying on the current child advocate, the review, at best, interviewed six children—six children out of 25,000.

In addition, if the Minister of Children and Youth Services was truly serious about making an effort to ensure that this is a truly non-partisan issue, she would have made one of the most grand gestures of this sitting of the Legislature: She could have invited myself and my colleague from the third party to share our visions on the best way to protect children in Ontario. She could have worked with us to achieve the best for children in Ontario.

But to the contrary, in keeping with the tradition of saying anything and doing anything, the McGuinty Liberal government hastily drafted a bill without consultation, what appears to be a stop-gap, instant piece of legislation in front of this chamber that would help them sleep at night after we learned of the atrocities of the children's aid society leak in the Auditor General's report.

Of particular concern, whenever our party through myself, the member from North York or the critic from the third party asked the tough questions regarding the consultation needed for the bill or the expected timeline for the introduction of this bill, the Minister of Children and Youth Services responded with severe partisanship. While Defence for Children International has implored politicians to work together on this legislation and put children's needs above partisanship, there has been no effort on the part of the minister to do just that.

Nevertheless, we have this legislation before us and, without consultation, we are left with several other concerns. If the Minister of Children and Youth Services and her government wanted to give this office the teeth it needs and allow it to be a truly effective office, she might have included investigative powers as one of the authorities attributed to this office, yet this is not the case. As we found out from the McGuinty Liberal reaction to the recent revelations of the misappropriations of funds at the children's aid societies, simply giving someone a title or giving them the right to investigate is not enough. If this office has no investigative authority,

one has to ask whether the McGuinty Liberal government is truly serious about an independent office for child advocacy or just the appearance of one.

Throughout Canada, advocacy offices exist with varying degrees of powers and authorities. Unfortunately, as revealed by Matthew Geigen-Miller's Defence for Children International report *It's Time to Break the Silence*—and to care—Ontario lags far behind other provinces when it comes to the right to enter residential facilities, the right to access and examine records regarding applicable services to children and youth, and the ability to summon witnesses and examine them under oath for the purposes of investigation.

1650

Even with this new independence, Ontario will not be as progressive as provinces like Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. In fact, last May the British Columbia government unveiled their plan to give their children's advocacy office the power to review and investigate deaths and injuries of children in foster care.

The McGuinty Liberal bill does not include in the mandate of the office a role in child death reviews, yet experts suggest this is necessary. Take, for example, the Chan Durrant report in Alberta, published in 2005. It maintains, "Actual and perceived independence in death reviews is essential. Current processes, including special case reviews with the Ministry of Children's Services, do not appear objective because the decision to review, and most participants to the review, are internal to the system."

The report goes on to add, "[A]n external, objective child death review process is the only way to secure public and professional confidence in a system designed to learn from these tragic situations and prevent similar occurrences."

Cathy Vine, who's with us today, is the executive director of Voice for Children. Three weeks prior to the introduction of this bill, she wrote, "The children's advocate needs the independence, authority and resources to consult directly with children and youth, respond to their requests to investigate abuses or problems in the system, inform them of their rights, demand progress reports from the government, review deaths of children in care and seek standing at inquests."

Another concern surrounds the fact that this new legislation has no provision to guarantee that children have access to the advocate and indeed no provision to guarantee that the advocate has access to facilities under his or her mandate. Children, under the mandate of the advocate, do not have the right to have a private conversation with the advocate's office. They do not even have a right to know about the existence of the advocate. Common sense dictates that if a young person in our province has a problem and feels the need to speak to his or her advocate, that same young person should be able to speak to that advocate in private. Would you expect a young person who's troubled to be open and honest with the advocate if the person they were having issues with

was standing over their shoulder, listening to their conversation?

It might seem like common sense to my colleagues here, but this is exactly the sort of thing that we need to look at to ensure this bill is what is best for the children. This is what's missing from the bill. In this day and age, we need to make sure the legislation we pass is clear so there are no loopholes.

In addition to the shortcomings regarding children's access to the advocate, the legislation also restricts access by the advocate to facilities under his or her mandate. The specific section in the act restricting the advocate's access fails to clarify whatsoever the rights of the advocate to enter a premises and, rather, confuses the advocate's access to facilities by restricting access.

We all know the current child advocate takes over 3,000 calls each year from troubled youth, children at risk and others who are in need of advocacy. The majority of these calls are about standards of practice for children living in residential care, peer-on-peer violence, children living at home with special needs, and aboriginal child welfare. These are Ontario's most vulnerable children. Yet this legislation, while it appears to propose a new-found independence and separation from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, in practical terms does not indicate in explicit, direct and clear language that the advocate should have the right to enter the premises where the children under the office's mandate are receiving services, nor does the legislation clearly state the right of entry by the advocate. It would appear that the McGuinty Liberal government has engaged in a game of smoke and mirrors with this legislation. Without the right of entry, one has to question if this legislation will achieve the goals its makers would lead us to believe will occur.

Another concern that follows this point is that while the scope and mandate of this office is broad, it leaves out two groups who are presently protected by the current office of the chief children's advocate. Currently, the advocate's mandate covers the following client groups:

- children and youth seeking or receiving approved services under the CFSA;
- young people in custody and detention under the CFSA and Ministry of Correctional Services Act;
- young people held in police or court holding cells; and young people transported to or from police or court holding cells while in custody; and
- students in schools for the deaf and schools for the blind and demonstration schools. Yet for some reason, two of these groups are left out of Bill 165. Students in schools for the deaf, schools for the blind and demonstration schools are left out. This group was added to the mandate of the advocate in 1992 following the Report of the Review of Student Care at the Provincial Schools for the Deaf and Blind and Demonstration Schools. The report raised concerns about the lack of residential care standards for the operation of residential schools, ineffective child abuse reporting procedures, harsh and degrading treatment of students, use of corporal punishment and

an absence of case advocacy for students. If you ask me, that sounds like something the advocate would be especially suited for.

The next group that is excluded is young people held in police or court holding cells and young people transported to or from police or court holding cells. This group was added to the mandate of the advocate in 1998 following the report of *Voices from Within: Youth Speak Out*. This report noted young people's concerns, particularly a lack of privacy, poor conditions, a lack of appropriate supervision and being placed near adult offenders. Again, to me this sounds like something that should be covered under Bill 165, yet for some reason this group has been left out.

Rather than include these two important groups, the legislation prefers to deal in generalities. Particularly, Bill 165 establishes the position of Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. The appointed advocate is an officer of the Legislative Assembly, and the functions of the advocate are to:

“(a) provide advocacy to children and youth who are seeking or receiving approved services under the Child and Family Services Act;

“(b) provide advocacy to young persons who are being dealt with under the Ministry of Correctional Services Act;

“(c) promote the rights under part V of the Child and Family Services Act of children in care and the rights under Part V of the Ministry of Correctional Services Act of young persons in custody; and

“(d) provide any other advocacy that is permitted under the regulations or any other act.”

Today, the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy is a safeguard for young people in Ontario. It is mandated to coordinate and administer a system of advocacy, except for advocacy before a court, on behalf of children and families who receive or seek certain services provided by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and to advise the minister on matters and issues concerning the interests of those children and families. In practical terms, this means the advocate provides assistance to young people who are in the care of the government, their families, and also to family members of young people with special needs. This legislation needs to be improved to include these two vulnerable groups.

While these issues are of utmost concern to me—and I am sure we will hear some of the same criticisms of the bill from the third party—I am reminded of an article celebrating National Child Day which was published on November 20 last year. Again, it was written by Cathy Vine. She pondered that Canada's young people “are perhaps the last major group systematically excluded from decision-making.” She continues, “This leaves them completely dependent on the goodwill of adults for their health, safety, and capacity to develop and thrive.” How right she is. Yet this legislation leaves out two very vulnerable groups who are most dependent on the goodwill of adults for their health, their safety and their capacity to develop and thrive. Deaf students, blind

students and troubled youth should not lose those advocacy services. They should not be excluded from this legislation.

As Cathy also points out, “Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth—approximately 25,000 in government care through children's aid societies, in mental health systems, in residential schools for the hearing or visually impaired, in detention, or police custody or other settings—depend on a system that too often fails them utterly.”

Cathy, I'm just looking at you in awe for being able to pen those words, because I know they came from your heart.

To bring my remarks full circle about what is best for the kids and the rights of these kids to be heard, I'd like to take a quote from a report published by Defence for Children International in June 2006. In the conclusion of their report titled *Child Advocacy in Ontario*, they point out that, “The Ontario government owes young people a unique duty of consultation in the project to establish a new office of the child and youth advocate.

1700

“First, section 107 of the Child and Family Services Act guarantees young people living in residential care the right to be heard and for their views to be considered, when the government or service providers make decisions that will affect them.

“This right applies to children living in foster homes, young offender detention and custody facilities, and other residential facilities licensed under the act, such as group homes and children's mental health centres.

“Second, article 12.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have a right to be heard, and for their views to be considered, when a government makes decisions that will affect them.

“The young people who are entitled to be consulted under these provisions include children and youth who fall under the mandate of OCFSA, and/or the anticipated mandate of the proposed office of the child and youth advocate. The meagre consultation attempted under the third party review is clearly inadequate.

“Further, MCYS has not attempted or proposed any further consultation with young people following the third party review. In March 2005, DCI-Canada submitted a proposal to MCYS to conduct a consultation with affected young people regarding child advocacy renewal in Ontario, but this proposal was rejected.

“The Ontario government has not approached a reasonable standard of consultation with young people regarding the project to establish a new office of the child and youth advocate.”

The report goes on to say, “The government has not indicated the reason for the delay, nor has it announced a new timeline for the introduction of a bill. It is clear that a bill cannot be introduced earlier than the fall 2006 sitting of the Legislature, leaving only one year in the present term of government to pass the necessary legislation. Unless child advocacy renewal becomes a priority for this government in the very near future, it is

unlikely the Ontario Liberal Party's promise to establish a new office of the child and youth advocate will be delivered in the present term of government."

It seems I'm not the only one skeptical of the McGuinty Liberal government's promises, not by a long shot.

In Cathy Vine's article, she quotes Stephanie Ma, author of *Just Listen to Me*. Ms. Vine attributes the following to Ms. Ma: "What good have our voices done?" At the time, Ms. Vine was referring to the fact that the McGuinty Liberal government had only a year left in its mandate. Today there is even less time left. She says what we all know: Children don't have time to wait.

The biggest issue before us is to ensure that the right bill gets passed in this House. What is particularly discouraging about the task ahead is the fact that the bill was introduced so late in the McGuinty Liberal government's mandate. Defence for Children International and I share a similar concern. Their 2006 report had an eerie warning: "If the introduction of the bill occurs too late in the period only two outcomes will be possible: the bill will die on the order paper ... or, the bill will pass but will have to be rushed through the Legislature, preventing thorough consultation with stakeholders and debate by members. Either of these possibilities would undermine the public's confidence that the government is acting diligently, appropriately, and in the public interest." That statement was prophetic in that we are now, because of the government's delay in the introduction of this legislation and the lack of consultation by the minister, sadly strapped with one of the two possible outcomes above, a bill which may never see royal assent, or, equally as troublesome, a bill that is so rushed that they simply won't get it right.

Again, I'll not kid you. The fact that the McGuinty Liberal government waited so long to introduce this legislation I believe is indicative of their lack of commitment on the independence of this office. Matthew Geigen-Miller, in the report entitled *It's Time to Break the Silence*, outlined 25 recommendations that Defence for Children International would like to see enacted. Though some of these have found their way into the current legislation before us, others are noticeably absent. In the interest of providing input into this debate on behalf of some of the stakeholders who would like to have their voices heard, not the least of whom are children and youth who were left out of the consultations, I am going to read into the record these 25 recommendations on behalf of them.

"(1) Appointment: The advocate should be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council upon the resolution of the Legislative Assembly, or upon the recommendation of a committee of the Legislative Assembly. The advocate should be an independent officer accountable to the Legislative Assembly.

"(2) Term: The advocate should be appointed for a term of five years, with the possibility of reappointment for one additional term....

"(3) Budget: The advocate's budget should be determined through a process similar to that used for the Auditor General. The advocate should present a budget annually to the Board of Internal Economy. Money required to fulfill the advocate's mandate should be appropriated by the Legislative Assembly....

"(4) Annual report: The advocate should be required to submit an annual report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

"(5) Special reports: The advocate should be empowered to publish and release to the public any other reports regarding children and youth in Ontario that it deems to be in the public interest....

"(6) Included services: The advocate should be mandated to provide advocacy services for young people and families seeking or receiving, or subject to the following government services

"—All services provided to young people under the Child and Family Services Act;

"—Arrest, detention and custody under the Youth Criminal Justice Act;

"—Mental health services for persons under the age of 18 provided under the Mental Health Act;

"—Schools for the deaf and blind and demonstration schools;

"—Residential and community services for children with developmental and other special needs, and their families....

"(7) Individual and group advocacy: The advocate should establish a continuum of advocacy services for young people and families seeking or receiving services, including

"—Provide information, advice and support regarding services; rights; and complaint, review or appeal processes;

"—Receive and review complaints regarding services and alleged abuses of rights;

"—At the request of a young person or family, make non-adversarial advocacy interventions such as negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution;

"—At the request of a young person or family, convene a case conference with service providers, affected persons, and other appropriate participants;

"—In response to a complaint or on its own motion, conduct a review of the conditions and practices within a facility, and of the perspectives of young people who live in the facility;

"—Conduct investigations into services for young people and families;

"—On behalf of a young person who is receiving services, perform any of the above functions in response to complaints and matters that address any service within the jurisdiction of the province of Ontario, including public education and health care....

"(8) Systemic advocacy: The advocate should establish a range of systemic advocacy services, including

"—Conduct or commission research regarding services for young people and families, and/or the rights,

interests and perspectives of young people who receive services;

“—Review and comment on legislation, policies or practices regarding services for young people and families;

“—Provide advice to ministers and committees of the Legislature regarding services for young people and families....

“(9) Public education, capacity building and youth participation: The advocate should establish a range of public education, capacity building and youth participation activities which may include the following:

“—Conduct public education regarding the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and youth;

“—Promote the rights of children and youth, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

“—Establish programs or projects that build capacity for advocacy, education or child and youth participation within facilities, agencies, communities and ministries of the government;

“—Establish programs or projects for the participation of young people who receive services in decisions that affect them....

“(10) Death reviews: The advocate should be required to review the circumstances of every death of a young person who was receiving services or received services within six months at the time of his or her death. The purpose of a death review is

“—To assess the impact of government services in the young person’s life; and,

“—To identify what role, if any, government services played in the young person’s death....

“(11) Election, mode of review: Upon the report of a child death by the coroner and the provision of a coroner’s report, the advocate should make an election to conduct a death review

“—Informally through a review of records and voluntary disclosures of persons interested in the review; or,

“—Formally by conducting an investigation....

“(12) Right to refuse or cease to act: The advocate should be empowered to refuse or cease to act in response to any complaint made by a young person or family if, in the opinion of the advocate, the complaint is frivolous or made in bad faith....

“(13) Right of entry: The advocate should be empowered to enter any premises or facility in which young people are placed for care....

“(14) Conduct investigation: The advocate should be empowered to conduct an investigation

“—In respect of a complaint or group of complaints when less intrusive measures have been attempted and have failed to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the advocate; or,

“—To identify, arrest and prevent conditions or practices that, in the opinion of the advocate, threaten the life, security or dignity of young people; or,

“—For the purpose of a death review.

1710

“(15) Notice required: Before initiating an investigation the advocate should provide written notice to the responsible minister(s) and to the administrative head of the ministry, agency or service provider subject to investigation. The notice should indicate the reason for the investigation.

“(16) Investigative powers: For the purpose of an investigation, the advocate should be empowered to

“—Enter any premises in which services are provided, including a facility or office, and examine or copy any record;

“—Summon witnesses and examine them under oath;

“—Require a witness to produce records or other things for examination;

“—Make recommendations to any department, agency or service provider that is within the jurisdiction of the province of Ontario....

“(17) Require reports: When an investigation has occurred, the advocate should be empowered to require any department, agency or service provider to whom a recommendation was addressed to provide reports on the progress of the implementation of that recommendation according to deadlines established by the advocate....

“(18) Protection from proceedings: No proceeding should lie against the advocate or persons acting under its delegation for actions taken in the course of their duties that were performed in good faith....

“(19) Duty of caregiver: Caregivers in facilities or placements for young people should be required to

“—Inform all young people in the placement or facility of the existence of the advocate; and,

“—Forward a communication from a young person to the advocate without delay. In the case of a letter, it should be forwarded unopened....

“(20) Offences: It should be a punishable offence for any person to

“—Obstruct the advocate from performing its duties;

“—Fail to appear when summoned for the purpose of an investigation;

“—Fail to comply with a requirement of the advocate;

“—Make false statements to the advocate;

“—By threats, intimidation or other means, discourage or prevent a young person from communicating with the advocate....

“(21) Duty of coroner: A coroner should be required to notify the advocate of a death of a young person who was receiving services, or who received services within the previous six months, at the time of his or her death. The coroner should also be required to furnish the advocate with copies of its records and reports regarding the death....

“(22) Rights information materials: The government must take immediate action to ensure that rights information materials are produced and distributed to all facilities, foster homes and other placements. These materials should [be] age-appropriate in language and presentation. Rights and advocacy information should also be available on the Internet. Every young person in

care should be aware of his or her rights, and of the existence of the advocacy office.

“(23) Additional staff: The Minister of Community, Family and Children’s Services should consult with the advocacy office to determine what additional staff are required to meet demands for service in the short term. Additional staff should be provided as needed.”

I just want to make a point here. I want to step outside of the 25 recommendations at this particular moment because in my research I have learned from DCI and from Voices for Children that we are understaffed in this province compared to every other province in Canada. We are the largest province, we probably have more children in care here than anywhere else, and we are understaffed tremendously. I want to say, “Thank you,” right now to Judy, who I know takes over 3,000 calls a year. The work your office does is amazing.

I’ll go back.

“(24) Task force: The government should establish a child advocacy renewal task force as a mechanism for the input of stakeholders in the development and implementation of a new child and youth advocate. This task force should include representation from a range of groups that will be affected by the advocate’s services, and experts on child advocacy and child rights. This includes young people with experience in child protection, youth justice and mental health care, and provincial schools; families of children with special needs; experts from non-government organizations; labour representatives; representatives from other advocacy agencies such as the Ombudsman and the children’s lawyer; and representatives of associations such as OACAS, OARTY, CMHO, and Community Living Ontario.

“The mandate of the task force should be to advise the government and Legislature during the drafting, legislation, and pre-implementation phases of child advocacy renewal.” I’m sorry that this has not occurred. “Also, the task force should assist in the implementation of the new child and youth advocate by advising the advocate during the first year of operation.”

Unfortunately, number 24 is no longer valid. I think that we really missed an opportunity in the Legislature.

“(25) Continuity: During the transition to the new child and youth advocate, the current advocacy office’s leadership and staff should be mandated to remain in place and continue the functions of the existing office. The child advocacy renewal task force, as part of its mandate, should specifically consider recommendations to incorporate the expertise and knowledge of the current advocacy office into the renewed office.”

These are 25 recommendations that I believe were drafted, researched and reviewed by some of the most effective advocates and researchers and experts in the field. They’ve done a tremendous job. Having reviewed the bill, I’m not sure that the minister or the minister’s office reviewed any of that research. I’ve printed off all kinds of copies in my office and I’d be happy to provide her and her staff with this information, because it seems to have been missing from the draft of the bill.

In any event, I know I have a few minutes left, but in the interest of debate I’m going to just wrap it up very quickly by first saying that the official opposition is here. We’re waiting to be engaged in this process. We’re waiting to be listened to and we’re willing to sit down with the minister and her staff in a meaningful dialogue if they are ever so interested. I know that my colleague in the third party would be interested in that dialogue and that level of consultation as well.

These recommendations and this entire debate truly put Les Horne’s words in perspective when he writes, “The case for listening to children is more than proved.” He continues with a quote made famous by children attending the United Nations Special Session on Children in 2002: “We are children whose voices are not being heard: It is time we were taken into account. We want a world fit for children, because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone.” This is particularly touching to me, as a mother who is really missing her little two-year-old daughter right now, who’s back in Ottawa with her dad and not at the Legislature today with me, where she normally is.

In closing, I impart to my colleagues the words of Frederick Douglass, the American abolitionist, author, statesman and reformer, who once said, “It’s easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.” Let us all ponder that thought as we prepare for the next stages of this legislation so that we in this chamber are doing what is best for the children and we are getting this bill right.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I look forward to your questions and comments.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: It’s my pleasure to make a few remarks on the comments of my colleague the Conservative critic for children and youth services. I have to say that I respect the comments she has made. She spent much of her time relying on the work of some extremely dedicated people in this province who we are quite lucky to have, who are very engaged in this debate and in this initiative and effort to try to finally come to a place where we have an independent child advocate in the province of Ontario. So I am looking forward to my full remarks, which are going to begin this afternoon and probably end tomorrow night, but I was going to say it’s going to be awfully repetitive, quite possibly, because a number of the issues that my colleague has raised are ones I wanted to put on the record as well. I will figure that out myself over the next little while so as not to bore everyone in this chamber to tears.

But I do respect the work that she’s done on this bill so far in terms of her analysis and I really do have to echo her particular call to the minister. It’s what I raised, in fact, in my first opportunity to give questions and comments on the minister’s opening remarks on the bill, and that is the need for us to make sure that this is not done in a haphazard or half-measure way, but that we put the time and effort into a proper child advocate office and that we make sure it does all of the things we want it to do, not for us, not for those who sit around this chamber,

but for the children of Ontario whose voice it is that needs to be amplified in the office of the child advocate. That's the whole point of having an independent child advocate: to amplify the voices of children and the needs that they have in terms of their government.

1720

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I have to say I am absolutely delighted to be able to speak, even if for only a couple of minutes, on this very important legislation. I think that our responsibility, as legislators, to kids in care is something we have to focus on a lot more than we have in the past.

I want to take a moment to thank Judy Finlay and everyone at the office of the child advocate for the outstanding work you do. I had a private member's bill that dealt with kids in care. It deals with their ability to carry on at school when they come into care and if they have to move as a result of that. Through my homework on that, I got to know some people at the office of the child advocate, and I am enormously impressed with the work they do.

These kids we are talking about have a lot to say, and they have a very important message, if only we would listen to them. They know what they need. They know what government should be doing and isn't. I think the more we can strengthen that voice, the better we all will be.

I happen to live across the street from a group home with teenaged girls living in it. Any chance I do get to sit on my front porch, I see the girls across the way. To be honest, my heart breaks for them, because I know they have had tremendous challenges. They are in that home because of reasons beyond their control, and they are doing their very best to get their lives back in order. We must listen to them, we must act on their suggestions, and having an independent child advocate will allow us to do that better.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I am pleased to comment on the outstanding job that our critic for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services has done in her role on committee and in listening and being a critic. She is standing up for children. She has first-hand experience. She has listened to what the people have said about Bill 165, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act. The minister should take up the offer by my colleague to sit down and to work together to get the best solution that we can, the best advocacy that we can for the children.

The minister is quite familiar with the situation I have in my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock in the Best Start cases. Some 15,000 Best Start spaces were created in Ontario; Kawartha–Victoria was the only municipality that got zero.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: And you know why.

Ms. Scott: I'm glad the minister has spoken up, because we've asked the Auditor General to look into the situation, and I asked the minister in a letter in January—because this has gone on for several months; we've tried to work together—to please tell the service area what is wrong.

Interjection.

Ms. Scott: The service managers in the municipality of Kawartha Lakes–Victoria are working very hard with the ministry to say to them what is wrong. But the children are the people who are suffering here. The minister is responsible for providing the children in my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock with the best services available. When they're the only municipality to get zero—

Interjection.

Ms. Scott: We asked you to look at that, to say you are the minister and the children need the services, and it's disappointing that the minister hasn't acted more strongly on that. I ask her again today. I've asked the Auditor General too. The children are what's important here. That is the bill we're debating. I need her to be an advocate for the children of this riding, because this legislation is not through yet and it's three years late.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to congratulate the member for making a number of interesting comments in regard to the legislation.

I want to also say, because I represent, as does everybody here, a distinct part of the province of Ontario, that in my case there are a lot of aboriginal families. The minister will well know, because we've dealt with a number of issues together in regard to the plight of aboriginal children when it comes to their contact with the children's aid system and the difficulty that many families have in working within that system, and one of the things that I'm looking for in this legislation is to make sure that we take into account the specific, special challenges that aboriginal children and their families are having to face, basically coming to terms with dealing with the children's aid system. We know that many of these families have had to deal with the effects of residential school. We know they're impoverished communities by and large. There are many, many challenges in aboriginal communities that we don't see in mainstream Ontario.

I would ask the minister—and I have not had a chance to read the legislation in detail. This is just but the first day, and I want you to rest assured that I'll be looking at it in detail, but we need to really do something in regard to giving some ability to this new office in some way, shape or form to basically have a section that deals specifically with aboriginal children. I believe it should be aboriginally staffed because the person who has walked a mile in somebody's shoes normally understands that issue far more than others. Not that we're not well meaning; sometimes, culturally and from a language perspective we just don't get it. I think one of the things we need to look at in creating this particular position is a way to make sure that children who are in need of an advocate, somebody to look out for their best interests—that it's basically in tune with what children are having to go through in our aboriginal communities across Ontario.

So I look forward to the debate. I look forward to reading this in more detail, and I certainly look forward to the comments from the member, Andrea Horwath,

who's next to speak, because I'm sure she's going to have volumes to say on that particular issue as well.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean–Carleton, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. MacLeod: I want to say thank you very much to all of my colleagues who contributed to the debate.

To my colleague from Hamilton East: I know she really cares, as do all members in this Legislature, when it comes to children.

To the member from Timmins–James Bay: I appreciate your comments as well.

To the member from London North Centre: I know she's been a child advocate in her own right, and I certainly appreciate that.

And to my colleague in the Progressive Conservative Party from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock: I appreciate your comments and your frustration with trying to get the Best Start program in your riding. It's just not right that that's not happening.

Minister, I'm here in good faith, offering to work with you on this piece of legislation, but I get discouraged when my honourable colleague from Victoria–Haliburton–Brock stands up and makes a presentation and the entire time you're chastising her.

I think that in the spirit of co-operation on a bill that you're professing to be this important and one that myself and my colleague from the New Democrats are proposing to work together with you on, you have to meet us halfway. We can work on this together, and I'm proposing to do just that. We've done the research.

I see now that the Minister of Energy is just shaking his head. If that's not what—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. MacLeod: Anyway, with the short period of time I've got left, the Progressive Conservative Party is here to listen, study, consult and participate. We have shown that today in our discussions.

I appreciate the opportunity to debate this piece of legislation. I'll listen with great interest as we proceed, and I do hope to see a lot of consultation on this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: About half of my leadoff speech is going to be done today and probably the other half tomorrow. I'm going to focus today more on how we got here, why we think that it's important that we finally have a bill in front of us. I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the situations or the reality facing the children of this province, some of which can be addressed through this new independent office of the child advocate, some of which may not be and is really only something that the government can commit to addressing, and then see how far I can get in some of the actual nitty-gritty recommendations that I want to bring to the table.

I want to start, first of all, by saying that it is absolutely the case that this bill is long, long overdue. In fact, members of this Legislature will know that even

before the McGuinty government took office here in the Legislature, Dalton McGuinty was talking about the need for an independent office of the child advocate; I'm talking back in the early months of 2003. We know that shortly after the Liberals took office, the then Minister of Children and Youth Services, Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, who in fact is from my community and represents the riding of Hamilton Mountain, was very quick to cobble together, under the pressure of a scrum, I believe, a plan, or an announcement at least, to make the office of the child advocate independent. I can't even remember what the exact date of that was. That was March 8, 2005.

1730

There have been many false starts since that time. All the while, myself and others have been urging the minister through question periods—the two different ministers, of course; the minister whom we have now as well as the previous minister—to get on with that activity, to get on with getting before this Legislature a bill that we could start looking at, start analyzing, start working with to try to make the independent office a reality here in Ontario. It is a really sad reflection of the lack of, I guess, prioritization of this issue that we are now at the eleventh hour of this government and we finally have a bill in front of us. I'm glad that it's finally here. I think everyone is. But I think it does reflect the lack of priority that this government gives to children and children's issues overall, to realize or acknowledge the fact that it is in the dying days of this government that we finally see this bill being tabled in the Legislature. I am going to go through some details—some more examples, I guess it is better to say—of this government's track record on children's issues. Nonetheless, we do have a bill in front of us.

It is unfortunately a bill that, notwithstanding the length of time we've had to wait for it, has not succeeded during that interim period, so really from July of 2003 through to March 2005, when the minister at the time first announced that it was imminent. I don't know how many times I asked the minister in this question period. It actually makes me laugh, because she's just so calm. Every time I asked her the question, "When is that bill coming?" she would say, "The member from Hamilton East, I assure you that this bill is imminent." Well, finally we are here, making history in the province of Ontario, which again is a good thing. But the imminence unfortunately was a long time in coming. I don't think "imminent" was the right word.

Interjection.

Ms. Horwath: Imminent? I think it might be, but you never know. It's coming; it's imminent. Okay.

Nonetheless, the reality is that the bill, notwithstanding how long it took—and again, there is some speculation that this is not the first iteration of this bill. In fact, as a result of some of the—

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: Consultation.

Ms. Horwath: No, I wouldn't call it consultation. Some of the feedback that the minister has received over

the last little while has led to a couple of iterations of this bill.

I guess the problem—and the member for Nepean–Carleton mentioned that in her remarks as well—the thing that continues to be problematic, at least in the process, is the lack of fulsome consultation even to this very day. I am not going to repeat the specifics around what has and hasn't been done or the critical pieces of lack of consultation that the member for Nepean–Carleton raised, because there is just no point. But suffice it to say that, notwithstanding the fact that this has been a priority of the McGuinty Liberals for four full years—mind you, only three and a half while they were in government—it has had woefully inadequate input particularly from young people and from other sectors of our community.

I know that my colleague Gilles Bisson raised the issue of First Nations communities, and I'm going to be talking about that as well. Unfortunately there is a bit of a problem, I think, in terms of the government's or the ministry's or somebody's ability to, willingness to, desire to, commitment to at the very least consult with First Nations communities, when we know for sure that aboriginal children are far, far overrepresented in situations where they are in care, when they have been removed from their families, when we know that statistically is the case in Ontario. It is absolutely unacceptable that we do not have full consultation with them, and in fact full reference in regard to their needs in the legislation, in the bill, an outline specifically set out quite clearly, a commitment to dealing with those families and those children. To do anything less is to simply ignore the sad reality of the experience of our children who are from First Nations communities. It's totally inappropriate that their voices have not in any way been reflected in the bill at all.

Speaking of voices, I was busily looking through the binder of bills that's underneath all of our chairs here, which is looking a little thin these days. You might not be able to see it from the camera, but in fact it's almost empty. Why is that? That's of course because we are getting near the end of this government's mandate. There isn't a lot more that's going to be accomplished or achieved in terms of legislation because the timetable simply won't allow it; time is running out.

It's interesting because one of the things that I noticed is that in some of the bills that are in that binder, in some of the pieces of legislation that I've seen come forward, there is time spent at the beginning of the bill, usually after the explanatory note, where there is a preamble, where there's a vision statement that talks about what it is that this piece of legislation is attempting to accomplish in the province of Ontario. It seems to me that an initiative as rare as the implementation of a new, independent officer of the Legislature, particularly the office of the child advocate, is so important that it warrants a bit of preamble, a bit of a historic outlook or reminder of why it is that we need to have an independent officer put forward, why we need to have a child advocate in the

province of Ontario. You would think there would be an opportunity to talk about why it is that we have a commitment, why it is that there is a desire for the voices of children to be heard and the need to have someone who is on the side of children in this province when it comes to the dealings they have with government organizations and agencies that purport to be meeting their needs but in fact, as we've seen so many times, tragically are not and are causing some significant problems and life difficulties for very, very vulnerable kids.

So I was a little bit disappointed—I guess that's the right word—to not see not only some kind of acknowledgment of the work that's been done so far, but some kind of framing of the expectations of what we want to get from this independent child advocate, what our expectations are and how it is that we're going to approach this particular kind of job or initiative, because you know what? Without these subtleties, without this descriptor attached to the bill, you can very easily look to the letter of the law and not be able to contextualize what the purpose is in the first place. Without that context, I think that you really not only don't do justice to the importance of this legislation and this office, but also you don't make that commitment in terms of your approach. I've heard quite clearly myself, personally as well as through the work that has been done by our current advocate, that that's an extremely important perspective to be reflected in the legislation—that that sets the tone, if you will, for what the business of the child advocate should be all about in the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, it's not in there.

It's not a difficult thing to do—in fact it's quite a simple thing to do—but I think it has a great deal of meaning, particularly if you take the perspective that this legislation is not for us but for them. It's not for the people here; it's for the children of Ontario. If you acknowledge that, then perhaps the thing you need to do is explain to them, or explain for them, with them or have their voice in that very preamble, because from my perspective at least, that's what will set a tone for the future of the office: having a preamble that is actually more reflective of the voice of children. It's unfortunate that it's not there, but I don't think it's too late. I really don't think it's too late to put together some kind of a preamble that focuses on the orientation of this legislation and this effort to be one reflecting the voice of children and their needs.

1740

To do so in plain language, language that's understandable by young people, is another thing that I would suggest. Again, we are at second reading of this bill. We do have to go to committee. There is an opportunity to do that. I think if we're going to do that, which I would recommend, then we should really make the effort to do that in language that's understandable and usable and that actually reflects the young people of the province of Ontario, because I think this is their legislation more than anybody else's.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about a little bit in the first part of my remarks was, the minister in her remarks—and I'm going to pick up on that, because I think it was an important reflection or indicator of the way that this ministry and this minister, unfortunately, seem to tackle the issues of First Nations communities. The minister talked about her proud record of implementing, for example, Bill 210 and how she thought that she had done such a very great job with that piece of legislation. In fact, interestingly, you might recall that one of the amendments that I brought to Bill 210—in the discussion, anyway, at committee—was the independence of the child advocate. Now, having said that, I realize that a small amendment to Bill 210 certainly wasn't enough in terms of creating an office of the child advocate. But when I was speaking earlier about the various points in time over the last four years where we've raised this issue, that was another opportunity during the discussion of Bill 210 to raise the issue of a lack of an independent child advocate in the province.

Having said that, people who participated in that process might recall—and even people who didn't—but I speak particularly to First Nations communities who participated or were trying to participate and in fact forced the minister to get their voice on the table. They were given some pretty clear promises by the minister. They were quite unhappy with the lack of consultation with First Nations communities. They were stunned that they could be so overlooked in terms of the consultation process. Having spoken to the minister, her claim was that she had done all kinds of consultations; she had met this person, this person and that person. But again, I guess it's a matter of your perspective. If your perspective is, "I'm going through the motions. I'm having meetings so that I can say I did," then the meetings happened. But if you're the leaders of various First Nations communities and you're the ones wanting to have a voice and have an important thing to say about, for example, customary care, then their experience wasn't that they had a voice.

So again, that consultation did not occur in any appropriate way. When we got to the clause-by-clause discussions, or even before that, when we got to the hearings, it started to come out on the table. So the bill is drafted, we're in the hearings and all of the sudden First Nations communities are saying, "Well, hold on. We didn't even get consulted about this legislation, at least not in the way that we consider consultation to have occurred." So as a result, I believe the minister took an opportunity and directed the staff to spend some time and try to figure out how to let this go forward, how to prevent the whole thing from getting mired down in a problem around whether or not there had been consultation. So some promises were made, particularly about regulations around customary care. Those promises were made to First Nations communities that in fact their issues would be dealt with. "Just trust us." Just trust the government that they were not going to do anything untoward and that they wouldn't do anything like implement any regulations or any framework around what

customary care was going to look like and how that was going to be realized in the province of Ontario. "Trust us; it's not going to be a problem. Just let this go through. You have our word that it's going to go forward. And then, once it goes forward, once the bill is done, we're going to spend some time on making sure that all of your issues are addressed and you have a model that you can support."

As it turns out, here we are, quite some time since the bill came into force—and not so long ago I spent some time with some leaders in the First Nations communities who told me that in fact a bit of renegeing went on, that nobody bothered to take the time to put that framework together, that nobody bothered to re-consult or to reconsider or to even pick up the phone and say, "Okay, it's time for us to start hammering out these details." No. To this very day, those communities, those peoples, are feeling pretty betrayed by their experience in terms of the commitments that the minister made to them and didn't follow through on. I'm telling you, I'm really concerned. I'm concerned because I truly believe that the same minister, the same ministry and the same staff are about to create the same mistake, and I don't think that's acceptable.

What's that saying? "Fool me once: Shame on me. Fool me twice: Shame on you," or however that goes. "Fool me once: Shame on you. Fool me twice: Shame on me." Well, shame on you. Shame on you that this extremely important piece of legislation does not include any reference, any regard, any comments, any acknowledgement of the fact that the greatest number of children in care, proportionately, in the province of Ontario are children from First Nations communities, and yet not a word, not a commitment, not a side glance, not an acknowledgement—nothing. I think that's something that is sorely lacking in this bill.

I'm extremely hopeful that when it comes time to put some amendments on the table or to go through a hearings process that might get some of those voices on the table, we can perhaps visit the north and talk to some of those communities whose children are, unfortunately, the ones who often are being removed from their families and having the intervention of the state, if you want to call it that. That's a big problem. It's a big issue. I only hope that we can get at it one way or another. If we can't get at it through the hearings process, then some kind of commitment to make that happen I think is absolutely in order. So I await the minister's response to that request or that initiative to see what we can do in that regard.

That's one of the issues that reflect the process or the procedural problems or the lack of consultation—just this whole sense that they still haven't figured out how to make that happen in a way that actually makes people feel heard and feel valued in terms of the input process. Interestingly enough, how are we going to assure children that they are being heard, that they are being believed and that they are being valued if we can't even do it in the consultation process of putting the legislation

together? It's a little bit of a warning bell that goes off in my mind, and it's concerning.

So we ask, why is it that children in this province need to have an independent child advocate? I've just explained the one reason straight out, the whole lack of attention that this minister had in terms of the drafting of legislation for Bill 210, but there are many, many other pieces that make it not surprising that this bill has come at the 11th hour.

I want to spend a very few minutes—I'm probably not going to talk about any of this stuff the next time I have a chance to talk about the bill, because I'm going to be a little more specific—to take a look at the government's record on children's issues. I have to say that it's been disappointing. I think "disappointing" is a mild word, but it is absolutely a disappointment at every turn: a disappointment that this bill took so long to get here, a disappointment in the lack of consultation around this bill, a disappointment that it wasn't a higher priority at the cabinet table. That's all true.

But when you look at just what has happened recently in terms of even last week, when one of the strongest advocates in this province—not to step on the toes of Ms. Finlay, because of course she is a wonderful advocate and her staff do a great job and she does a great job, but I'm speaking particularly about one of my colleagues here in the Legislature, and that's Shelley Martel, the member for Nickel Belt, and the advocacy work she has done on the autism file.

1750

Just last week, instead of putting effort and attention and dollars and investment into, for example, treatment for kids, the government decided to pretty much name Ms. Martel in a muzzle suit so that she can't get the information she would like to get in terms of what the government is spending in its ongoing court cases against the families of children who were cut off from IBI therapy. You begin to wonder where the priority of this government is. It's certainly not with children; it seems to be with preventing information from coming forward; it seems to be with making sure that you have to go through a number of hoops and climb a number of mountains before you can get some of the most basic information on the table about where the government is spending its money. That's only the most recent kind of reflection or the most recent incident that occurred.

But people will be very aware—and I don't think this is going to change when the budget comes in a couple of days. Do you know what? It will be a wonderful surprise if it does change. But when you look at the promises this government made to children, particularly to families with children more broadly, you will see that it has been backtrack after failure after backtrack after failure.

The thing that's most disturbing to me is that the Campaign 2000 people were here in the Legislature not too long ago and indicated quite clearly in the most recent analysis they've done that the children of this province are in fact worse off than they were four years

ago when this government came into power. What that tells me in kind of an aggregate way is that this government has really done very little to effect positive change, particularly for low-income children in this province, and that's just unacceptable. A child who lives for four more years in poverty has lost four more years of possible opportunity, has lost four more years of opportunity to excel in school and to be socially included in their community and to be healthy physically. All of these things are simply not going to happen if the children in this province continue to live in poverty.

Just the devastation that families living in desperate poverty experience day to day is something that I would hope every member of this Legislature would at least have an opportunity to see or a commitment to finding out what that looks like, because I can tell you that the part of the province that I represent is one of the lowest-income ridings in the entire province. It's not a pleasant thing; it's not a happy thing. In fact, it's a disgusting thing to see the kinds of conditions that these families have to live in. It is absolutely horrifying and inappropriate and it's just wrong that this government has, in four years, not had any effect whatsoever and that in fact the lot of children in the lowest-income brackets in this province continue to lose ground.

Maybe that's not something specifically a child advocate is going to be looking at, although I have to say that there are many pieces to that poverty puzzle that continue to be ignored by the McGuinty Liberals, and it's just not acceptable. Every year that we ignore this problem is another year of children we're going to lose because they're just not ever going to be able to overcome those years of lack of opportunity, ill health and inability to learn and participate and create social relationships with each other or others of their peers because of the poverty they live in. It's absolutely unacceptable.

The other big, big failure of this government—and it's a failure for children more from the perspective of what we could be doing in terms of early learning in this province, and we're not doing it. I know the government makes announcements here and there, they're doing this, they're doing that, but the bottom line is, we simply do not have the kind of child care system in the province of Ontario that we should have, that we could have, that we need to have.

This government was very interested in all of that not too long ago, until the Conservative government of the day decided they were going to pull back on their commitment, and that gave this government a real good curtain to hide behind. They could hide behind the curtain, they could blame it all on Harper and nobody here would have to say, "We've abandoned our principles," or, "We've abandoned our commitments to the child care system in the province of Ontario." I have to tell you, if Quebec can do it, darn it, Ontario can do it too. I guess it is because, once again, children's issues just keep falling off the cabinet table. I have to congratulate the minister to finally get this legislation

here, at the eleventh hour. Gee, it must be really tough when her colleagues sit around the cabinet table and nobody gives a darn that the kids in this province are getting poorer by the year and nobody gives a darn about what that's going to do to future generations of communities. I guess it's a big victory that this long-awaited legislation is finally on the table.

I know that my colleague from Nepean–Carleton spoke about the issue of children's mental health. Again, here's another one. I know the minister says, "We've invested \$10 million in children's treatment centres." The part that she doesn't say is that when you talk to those people, they're going to tell you that in fact it has not taken 100% of the waiting list down; in fact, it has taken most but not all of the waiting list down, and then unfortunately what has continued to happen in that sector is, over time, because they have been so starved for investment—and I would agree with anybody who criticizes former governments for not having kept up with investment in those sectors. But people from that sector will tell you that because of the lack of funding, because they've been withering on the vine for so long, the way that many of these organizations have made ends meet is by diluting their services, stretching the dollars. Lots of those organizations are run by independent boards of directors who sit and make policy and make decisions about how the service gets provided. In many

cases, rather than saying no to kids, these organizations say, "What we're going to do is stretch those dollars. We're going to reduce the funding for Jane so that Jenny can get a little bit of funding. So Jane can't have the 10 hours a week that she's supposed to have, because we can't afford to do that and not help Jenny, so now we're only going to give Jane five hours and we're going to give Jenny five hours, even though Jenny needed 15 and Jane was already getting 10." Do you see what's happening there? That whole sector is in an absolute mess. Notwithstanding that there was some base funding applied to that sector, it still has significant challenges.

The other big one is children's mental health. I've heard horror stories about children who are facing absolute crisis and cannot get the services. I know I'm out of time, Mr. Speaker. I look toward to speaking about this again. I have two minutes? I will be speaking about this again tomorrow night, but I think the focus on children's issues needs to come back to the top of the agenda. It's unfortunate that this government has squandered so much of its mandate and not fulfilled a lot of the promises they had made around children in this province. It is simply unacceptable.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Tuesday, March 20.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman

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

Acting Clerk / Greffière par intérim: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

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

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

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

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

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

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Kim Craiton, Bob Delaney,
Garfield Dunlop, Andrea Horwath,
Tim Hudak, Linda Jeffrey, Phil McNeely,
Jim Wilson, David Zimmer
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Phil McNeely
Ted Arnott, Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett,
Pat Hoy, Judy Marsales,
Deborah Matthews, Phil McNeely,
Carol Mitchell, Michael Prue
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jim Brownell
Jim Brownell, Vic Dhillon, Brad Duguid,
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Jerry J. Ouellette,
Tim Peterson, Lou Rinaldi,
Peter Tabuns, John Yakabuski
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Cheri DiNovo, Brad Duguid,
Michael Gravelle, John Milloy, Carol Mitchell,
Julia Munro, Laurie Scott,
Monique M. Smith, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Justice Policy / Justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Maria Van Bommel
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti,
Christine Elliott, Frank Klees, Peter Kormos,
David Oraziotti, Shafiq Qaadri,
Maria Van Bommel, David Zimmer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mario G. Racco
Ernie Hardeman, Linda Jeffrey, Rosario Marchese,
Ted McMeekin, Norm Miller, Jennifer F. Mossop,
Tim Peterson, Shafiq Qaadri, Mario G. Racco
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Ernie Hardeman
Wayne Arthurs, Ernie Hardeman, Lisa MacLeod,
Shelley Martel, John Milloy,
Richard Patten, Liz Sandals,
Monique M. Smith, Norman W. Sterling
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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

Chair / Présidente: Andrea Horwath
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jeff Leal
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney,
Andrea Horwath, Jeff Leal, Dave Levac,
Gerry Martiniuk, Bill Murdoch,
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Social Policy / Politique sociale

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

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

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

OTHER BUSINESS

Introduction of members for Markham, Burlington, and York South–Weston

The Speaker.....	7151
Mr. McGuinty	7152
Mr. Tory	7152
Mr. Hampton.....	7152

Wearing of ribbons

Mr. Levac	7154
-----------------	------

Visitors

Mr. Takhar	7154
The Speaker.....	7155
Mr. Ouellette	7155
Mr. Racco.....	7156

Special report, Ombudsman

The Speaker.....	7156
------------------	------

Members for Leeds–Grenville and Davenport

Mr. Bradley	7157
Mr. Ruprecht	7157

Answers to written questions

Mr. Runciman	7171
--------------------	------

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Lundi 19 mars 2007

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2007 sur le Jour Martin

Luther King, projet de loi 181,

M. Klees

Adoptée.....7157

Loi de 2007 sur le Mois de l'histoire

des Noirs, projet de loi 182,

M. Balkissoon

Adoptée.....7157

DÉCLARATION

MINISTÉRIELLE ET RÉPONSE

Solution familial

M^{me} Meilleur.....7158

M. Arnott.....7159

M. Prue.....7160

Subventions destinées à l'éducation

M^{me} Wynne.....7158

M. Klees.....7160

M. Marchese.....7161

Doris Anderson

M^{me} Pupatello..... 7159

M^{me} Scott..... 7160

M^{me} Horwath..... 7160

QUESTIONS ORALES

Accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées

M. Lalonde..... 7170

M^{me} Meilleur..... 7170

SANCTION ROYALE

Le lieutenant-gouverneur..... 7172

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2007 sur l'intervenant provincial en faveur

des enfants et des jeunes,

projet de loi 165, *M^{me} Chambers*

Débat présumé ajourné..... 7190

CONTENTS

Monday 19 March 2007

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Vic Priestly	
Mr. Klees	7152
Hate crimes	
Mr. Zimmer	7152
Tobacco growers	
Mr. Barrett	7152
Long-term care	
Mr. Bisson	7153
CIA Bounce Basketball	
Mr. Dhillon	7153
Ontario budget	
Mr. Hudak	7153
Humber River Regional Hospital	
Mr. Sergio	7153
Hockeyville	
Ms. Smith	7154
Koolatron Inc.	
Mr. Levac	7154

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on finance and economic affairs	
Mr. Hoy	7155
Debate adjourned	7155
Standing committee on the Legislative Assembly	
Mr. McMeekin	
Report adopted	7155
Standing committee on social policy	
Mr. Parsons	
Report adopted	7155
Standing committee on public accounts	
Mr. Sterling	7156
Debate adjourned	7156
Standing committee on justice policy	
Mr. Berardinetti	
Report adopted	7156
Standing committee on government agencies	
The Speaker	7156
Reports deemed adopted	7156

FIRST READINGS

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Act, 2007, Bill 181, Mr. Klees	
Agreed to	7157
Mr. Klees	7157

Black History Month Act, 2007,

Bill 182, Mr. Balkissoon	
Agreed to	7157
Mr. Balkissoon	7157

MOTIONS

Private members' public business

Mr. Bradley	7157
Agreed to	7158

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Family support

Mrs. Meilleur	7158
Mr. Arnott	7159
Mr. Prue	7160

Education funding

Ms. Wynne	7158
Mr. Klees	7160
Mr. Marchese	7161

Doris Anderson

Ms. Pupatello	7159
Ms. Scott	7160
Ms. Horwath	7160

ORAL QUESTIONS

Autism treatment

Mr. Tory	7161
Mr. McGuinty	7161

Access to health care

Mr. Tory	7162
Mr. McGuinty	7162
Mr. Flynn	7166
Mr. Smitherman	7167

Minimum wage

Mr. Hampton	7163
Mr. McGuinty	7163

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Hampton	7164
Mr. McGuinty	7164

Smiths Falls economy

Mr. Sterling	7165
Ms. Pupatello	7165

Air-rail link

Mr. Ferreira	7166
Mr. McGuinty	7166
Ms. Broten	7166

Class size

Mr. Klees	7167
Ms. Wynne	7167

Nanticoke generating station

Mr. Tabuns	7168
Mr. Duncan	7168

Agricultural labour policy

Mr. Hoy	7168
Mr. Peters	7168

Hospital funding

Mr. Ouellette	7169
Mr. Smitherman	7169
Mr. O'Toole	7169

Justice system

Ms. Horwath	7170
Mr. Bryant	7170

Accessibility pour les personas handicapés

Mr. Lalonde	7170
Mrs. Meilleur	7170

PETITIONS

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Mrs. Savoline	7171
---------------------	------

Long-term care

Mr. Bisson	7171
------------------	------

Peace Officers' Memorial Day

Mr. Levac	7172
-----------------	------

ROYAL ASSENT

The Lieutenant Governor	7172
-------------------------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007, Bill 165,

<i>Mrs. Chambers</i>	
Mrs. Chambers	7172, 7176
Mr. Yakabuski	7174
Ms. Horwath	7175, 7184, 7186
Mr. Ramal	7175
Mr. Dunlop	7175
Ms. MacLeod	7176, 7185
Ms. Matthews	7185
Ms. Scott	7185
Mr. Bisson	7185
Debate deemed adjourned	7190

Continued overleaf