

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NIAGARA WEEK

Mr. Tim Hudak: I am pleased to rise in the House to call the members' attention to the fact that this week is the fourth annual Niagara Week at Queen's Park.

I want to recognize the hard work of Niagara regional chair Peter Partington and the many mayors, councillors and Niagara business and academic leaders who are joining us here today.

They're meeting with MPPs of all parties as well as various ministers to draw attention to some very important priorities they have identified in the Niagara region, including the expansion of GO Transit service to Niagara, the completion of the Highway 406 extension to East Main Street in Welland, and the needed acceleration of the mid-peninsula corridor project. Speaking on behalf of west Niagara, investment is much needed for tender fruit farmers and greenbelt communities, where more than 3,700 acres have been affected by recent plant closures, like CanGro and Cadbury Schweppes.

Furthermore, the mayors and councillors will press for investments to improve ambulance response times, which, because of off-loading delays, unfortunately have increased in Niagara by 40%-and the impact of newly designated, provincially significant wetlands on investment and growth, particularly the Niagara Falls to Fort Erie corridor. Obviously, tourism is always important and there is great opportunity presented by the War of 1812 bicentennial.

I invite members to make sure they stop by the Niagara reception in rooms 228 to 230 between 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. this evening.

MARY ELLEN PAULI

Mr. David Oraziatti: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to honour an outstanding act of courage and citizenship by a brave Ontario woman. Mary Ellen Pauli, a helicopter pilot with the Ministry of Natural Resources, received the Governor General of Canada's certificate of commendation at a ceremony in Timmins earlier this week. The certificate of commendation honours Canadians who have made a significant contribution to our country by providing assistance to another person in a selfless manner.

On August 19, 2004, Ms. Pauli took an emergency call from the Ontario Provincial Police. A father, grandfather and three children were stranded on an island at the mouth of the Sutton River in Hudson Bay. The family had sent out a distress call before losing their satellite telephone connection, knowing that the rising tide would eventually cover the low-lying island in more than a metre of water. The five stranded were in great peril.

Ms. Pauli was flying a survey crew in the Moosonee area when she heard the emergency call, and she immediately volunteered to attempt a rescue. Flying into heavy winds, rain and sleet, she arrived at the island and was able to safely evacuate the family. As a result, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources' aviation and forest fire management branch nominated Ms. Pauli for this well-deserved

commendation.

Mary Ellen Pauli's selfless act of bravery in helping a family in need, despite the significant risks she faced, is admirable and an inspiration to all Canadians. I am proud to honour her in the House today.

BEEF PRODUCERS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: A typical beef product exchanges about 30 hands and travels hundreds, if not thousands, of kilometres from the time it's weaned until the time it ends up on our plate. All County Feed and Grain is changing that trend in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound by introducing a new marketing tool for beef products. Much like the 100-mile diet concept, this Markdale feed company's values are based on supporting local food production.

All County Feed and Grain is helping local farmers increase their profits by eliminating the middleman and buying and selling only locally grown beef to local customers. They buy the animals locally, they feed the animals locally, they truck them to a local slaughterhouse, and they store them locally before selling the final product through local butcher shops, retailers, restaurants and institutions.

I support this integrated process because I believe it's a more sensible way than that of the big conglomerates. At a time when beef producers are losing between \$200 and \$400 per animal, the more people we can get behind our local farmers the better. Let's face it: If we were to lose these cow-calf operations in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, we would be in trouble.

This local beef is raised without hormones and antibiotics. It's also fresher, and that means tastier and more nutritious.

All County Feed and Grain owners Darryl Williams and Mark Kuglin started their business only two years ago, first selling feed for horses from a mill between Markdale and Meaford, and eventually expanding into buying and selling beef products. Last week, they processed about 100 animals. Again, at a time when farmers are struggling financially in the face of crippling cattle markets, this is a good-news story that offers all of us a new glimmer of hope.

CITIZENS FOR A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Michael Prue: On Earth Day, it seems appropriate that I stand in this place to talk about a local group, Citizens for a Safe Environment. It was founded 25 years ago this month, and 25 years ago, when it was founded, one of the founding members was our own Marilyn Churley, who has gone on to great and wonderful things. That group has targeted polluters in Toronto's east end. It has been instrumental in stopping garbage incineration as far back as 1989. It stopped the sewage sludge being burnt in the Portlands area and did the first Toronto recycling feasibility study in 1988. Later on, of course, they were instrumental in our communities' actions around the Portlands Energy Centre, unfortunately not with the same success.

Tonight marks their 25th anniversary. They are having their 25th annual general meeting. It is being held at the Ralph Thornton Centre at 765 Queen Street East.

I rise to give kudos to all of the people over those 25 years, the people who have fought for a safe environment, who have got the lead out of the soil, who have stopped the incineration. My kudos to the president, Karen Buck, and to her band of environmental warriors who continue the fight that was begun all that time ago and who continue to do really great things for our city and for our world.

1340

FISH FRIDAY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Last Friday, I had the pleasure of attending an event that is becoming a tradition in the riding of York South-Weston. It is known as Fish Friday and is a great example of what can be achieved when communities work together towards mutual understanding and co-operation.

The event is organized by the Grenadian-Canadian community through the Spice Isle Association. As you may know, Grenada is also known as the Isle of Spice. There are more spices on this Caribbean island per square mile than anywhere else in the world. In Grenada, Fish Friday is a cultural event that happens every week. Here in Canada, for practical reasons, it's held once a month and is well attended by residents of all ages. It really captures the essence of the island's culinary traditions and fosters an ambiance of goodwill.

This local tradition is the result of hard work. The Spice Isle Association's main goal is to bridge the gap between the Toronto police force and youth within the Caribbean community by fostering positive relations between them. Maria Meyers, the organizer of the event, works with the community police liaison committee of 12 Division in the riding of York South-Weston to encourage positive participation from local police officers, who during these evenings enjoy Grenadian music and food with the community in a relaxed setting.

I commend the people involved. I must say that this serves as a great example of how we can promote dialogue and learn about each other through informal cultural gatherings. In our multicultural society, we would go a long way by following this laudable initiative.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: I first rise to extend and express my support for Earth Day.

However, Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform the House of teacher layoffs in my riding of Durham. The Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board says that nearly 100 teachers could be facing layoffs this school year. The chair of the school board, Diane Lloyd, was quoted in our local media saying that many other school boards across Ontario are facing similar challenges. In the Durham Catholic board, notices of redundancy were sent to 88 teachers. We have all read the media articles today about the challenges facing the Toronto District School Board. In the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board, 27 elementary schools are facing the possibility of being closed.

School closures, layoffs and deficits are in the future for many Ontario schools. This government could start to show some leadership with the delivery of the \$550 million promised to rural schools that are closing in Ontario. Unfortunately, Ontario lacks any plan or direction from this government and its policies that will protect communities and retain front-line staff in schools.

Mr. Speaker, you know that you in your riding and those in every riding in this House should be concerned and expressing our sincere concerns for the quality of education for our young people. It's not just about re-jigging the governance model for the Toronto District School Board. The closing of swimming pools, the closing of community schools-there simply is no plan for education, and our young people are at risk in the province of Ontario.

19 ON THE PARK

Ms. Helena Jaczek: On Friday, April 11, I had the pleasure of attending the groundbreaking ceremony for the future 19 on the Park, an initiative in the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville within my riding of Oak Ridges-Markham.

Mr. Speaker, 19 on the Park is the concept name for the restoration and development of the historic former town hall at 19 Civic Avenue in the downtown core of Stouffville. I wish to applaud my community, which has independently raised \$300,000 to support this splendid project. I'm also proud to announce that this project's completion has now been assured because of provincial funding under the municipal infrastructure investment initiative. Our Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal has provided a grant of \$930,000 to assist the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville in realizing its vision of having its own vibrant and growing multipurpose community arts and cultural centre.

Nineteen on the Park will feature a variety of activities, including exhibitions, films, live dance and musical performances, corporate and social receptions, meetings and workshops, and many other community events. The centre's flexible space will complement the meeting place role of Civic Square and Memorial Park and will promote increased pedestrian traffic along Main Street in downtown Stouffville.

Thank you to the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and the government of Ontario for providing the means to permit this cultural hub to become a reality.

HORNEPAYNE SAWMILL

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I want to spend but a few moments reflecting on a family and a community. Almost two years ago, a fire devastated the local sawmill in Hornepayne, a community of about 1,200 people which is 100 kilometres north of Highway 17, north of Lake Superior. It is a railroad town. Canadian National is still the largest employer, but it is only a shadow of what it once was and what it was expected to be.

The sawmill is the second-largest employer in town. It was founded by Olav Haavaldsrud, and continues to be operated by the family. The Haavaldsrud family and their employees decided to rebuild the mill, a decision the family freely admits was about the community, the workers and, yes, their own family. They do not claim it to be solely a business decision.

With the assistance of the forest prosperity fund, the northern Ontario heritage fund, northern Ontario grow bonds, a new banker and, most of all, sheer determination, the mill is now reopened with a state-of-the-art sawmill line. The company now produces top-quality lumber at competitive prices.

This family, with their employees and with the support of the province of Ontario, has produced good, sustainable jobs in the forest industry in very challenging times. I want to congratulate the Haavaldsrud family, their employees and, most of all, the community of Hornepayne.

NIAGARA WEEK

Mr. Kim Craitor: This week is Niagara Week at Queen's Park. This week has become a great tradition here in Toronto. I want to welcome back to this assembly the chairman of the region, and in fact a former member of this House, Peter Partington. Welcome. Joining him today are many mayors, councillors, economic development officers and business leaders, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention my mayor from Niagara Falls, Ted Salci. Welcome, Ted. As the regional chairman has said to many of us, this is the week that he wants to thank our government for the investments

we have made in the Niagara region.

As well, this week is about showcasing the new Niagara: bigger, bolder and better than ever. We have a great park system, a growing agricultural community, many superb attractions, including two casinos, four- and five-star hotel accommodations, several championship-rated golf courses, a world-class professional theatre, a new convention centre in the works, and one of the nicest places to visit and in which to live in Ontario.

I need not remind the members that Niagara has extremely fine VQA wines and great restaurants that feature Ontario-grown produce. But I do want to remind you that we will have a chance to sample some of the great Niagara regional wines and foods at a reception later this evening. I'm hoping that all the members will be there. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone, including you, Mr. Speaker.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm seeking unanimous consent. It's National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, and the Ontario Trillium Gift of Life Network has asked that we wear these green ribbons and that they be made available in both lobbies.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COSMETIC PESTICIDES BAN ACT, 2008 / LOI DE 2008 SUR L'INTERDICTION DES PESTICIDES UTILISÉS À DES FINS ESTHÉTIQUES

Mr. Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Pesticides Act to prohibit the use and sale of pesticides that may be used for cosmetic purposes / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pesticides en vue d'interdire l'usage et la vente de pesticides pouvant être utilisés à des fins esthétiques.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: I will make a statement during ministerial statements.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

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

Mrs. Jeffrey and Mr. Qaadri exchange places in order of precedence, such that Mrs. Jeffrey assumes ballot item 25 and Mr. Qaadri assumes ballot item 22; Ms. Pendergast and Mr. Levac exchange places in order of precedence, such that Ms. Pendergast assumes ballot item 30 and Mr. Levac assumes ballot item 20.

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

Agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 22, 2008, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Crozier, Bruce	Oraziotti, David
Albanese, Laura	Dhillon, Vic	Phillips, Gerry
Arthurs, Wayne	Dickson, Joe	Pupatello, Sandra
Balkissoon, Bas	Dombrowsky, Leona	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Duguid, Brad	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Duncan, Dwight	Rinaldi, Lou
Best, Margaret	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Sandals, Liz
Broten, Laurel C.	Gravelle, Michael	Smith, Monique
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Sorbara, Greg

Brownell, Jim	Jaczek, Helena	Sousa, Charles
Bryant, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Takhar, Harinder S.
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Chan, Michael	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Colle, Mike	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Craitor, Kim	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Sterling, Norman W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Murdoch, Bill	
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 31.

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

Agreed to.

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES**

PESTICIDES

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's my honour to rise and tell the House about important legislation that, if passed, would ban the sale and use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes across Ontario. This is the first step in Ontario's new toxics reduction strategy, which we announced last November. This proposed bill is designed to protect our people's health, particularly that of our children.

Our government understands that by acting now, by tackling toxics in our air, land and water, and in consumer products, we can help safeguard our environment. More and more, we understand how our health and the health of future generations is linked to the amount of chemicals seeping into our environment. It's up to us all to take a stand and make a difference.

To that point, I would like to acknowledge Jan Kasperski, with the Ontario College of Family Physicians, who is in the gallery today. She's joined by Susan Koswan, Sari Merson and Tania Orton, with Pesticide Free Ontario; Doris Grinspun, of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario; Gideon Forman and Farrah Khan, of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment; and Irene Gallagher, with the Canadian Cancer Society. Welcome to each and every one of them, and thanks for the hard work they have done on this issue.

Jan is the CEO of the Ontario College of Family Physicians, and tells the story of how her grandson was running onto a lawn that had just been sprayed with pesticide. He was too young to read the warning sign. He picked up a ball and put it in his mouth, and became gravely ill. As she states, "We need to choose the health of our children over the odd weed in our yard."

Our government agrees. We listened to Jan and to others throughout the province on this issue. We also listened to medical experts, who have made a convincing case for reducing our exposure to pesticides, particularly for children who are susceptible to the potential harmful effects. Our proposed legislation benefits from their input, as well as from the insight of diverse groups representing environmental, agricultural, industrial and municipal interests, as well as many others.

Our government would like to recognize the good work of the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Care Ontario and so many other organizations that fight this terrible disease and support those who suffer. The Canadian Cancer Society has expressed its concern over growing evidence that exposure to pesticides may cause an increased risk of some types of cancer. Numerous other studies have also shown that pesticides can negatively affect human health.

Therefore, since the cosmetic use of pesticide has no health benefit, and does have the potential to cause harm, and since there are environmentally friendly alternatives for lawn and garden care, our government is proposing this ban on both the use and sale of pesticides. Pesticides, including herbicides, insecticides and fungicides, would be banned for use for cosmetic purposes; for example, sprays and chemicals that are applied merely to improve the appearance of lawns, gardens, parks and schoolyards.

The proposed legislation would allow pesticide use in Ontario's agricultural and forestry sectors, since they already have strict rules on the storage and application of pesticides through certification and licensing processes. An exception will also be made for golf courses; however, that exception would only be given if golf courses comply with the requirements set out in regulations that would be made if the legislation is enacted, through integrated pest management programs. It would also allow pesticides to be used, as needed, to ensure public health; for instance, to fight West Nile virus.

If passed, this legislation would authorize the province to develop a regulation listing the specific pesticides and active ingredients in lawn and garden products that would be banned. We're also posting the proposed legislation on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry. We ask that interested parties follow the link on the Ministry of the Environment's home page to review the legislation and provide their comments by May 22 of this year. We hope that the proposed legislation will be passed and a ban will go into effect for the 2009 growing season.

Today we proposed a ban on the cosmetic use and sale of pesticides across the province. This is an important step towards protecting Ontario's children and families from needless exposure to harmful chemicals. I urge all the members of this House to support this legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

PESTICIDES

Mr. Toby Barrett: I will say off the top, on behalf of myself and many of my caucus colleagues, that we support the concept of eliminating, obviously, the non-essential use of pesticides, albeit to protect the health and environment of this province. We might even support this bill-although I see it's only three pages-provided it's not, as we've heard in the media today, public relations puffery, which this government is renowned for.

Now, as far as an outright ban-a ban on the sale and use-well, that's why we have debate. That's why we have public hearings. That's why it's so important to review the literature, to review the research and the evidence.

To be more specific, we support a science-based approach to ensuring our health and environment are protected when it comes to the use of chemicals, not only on our food, but on our parkland, our lawns, our gardens, our farms, our golf courses. This is a very important issue, not to be decided on emotion or based on a gimmick presented during the very important Earth Day celebration that goes back decades and not to be rushed through as a mere three-page bill.

I can also say that to achieve our shared goals, take a look at farmers and what they've achieved in reducing their pesticide use by 52% over the past 15 years, through proper, informed use that stresses the benefits of IPM-integrated pest management. Clearly, we can learn from the example our agricultural producers have set, farmers who are required to go through training and certification every five years, as I think you've just mentioned.

I certainly look forward to debating this legislation's place within the myriad, the constellation, of rules and regulations, legislation that's already in existence, not only here in Ontario but right across Canada.

For instance, in the province of Ontario, pesticides and their use are already regulated federally: The federal Pest Control Products Act controls the sale and use of pesticides in Canada. The Food and Drugs Act allows for the setting of maximum limits for pesticide residue in foods. The Environmental Protection Act includes numerous provisions to protect the environment and human health from injury from pesticides. The Fertilizers Act requires registration of the fertilizer-pesticide mixtures. The Feeds Act is to prevent contamination of livestock feeds. And here, within our own province of Ontario, as we know, we have the Ontario Pesticides Act, we have the Municipal Act, we already have the Weeds Act and the forest sustainability act.

We have met with stakeholders on all sides on this issue in the wake of the government's publication of its proposal on the Environmental Bill of Rights. I do note there's very real concern that emotion does not override what we can learn from science and from experience, from advice and regulations as we see from the federal PMRA-the pesticides management review agency.

I also do note-I hear concerns-that it is important to be clear of definitions of cosmetic use distinguished from curative and public health issues. There's confusion. Are we talking about cosmetic use or cosmetic pesticides? As well, in rural Ontario, the current proposal has led to questions emanating from the possible introduction of a ban on the use of Health Canada-approved pest control products in urban centres, while permitting their use in rural settings. Some do point out that this precedent establishes two standards for health and safety for Ontario residents. Clearly, where our health and the health of our environment are concerned, a double standard is neither desirable nor acceptable.

1410

Further, I hear in rural Ontario the concern that this proposed legislation may well be a slippery slope. It seems to suggest that there's something inherently wrong with the various herbicides,

insecticides, fungicides, and I would go on to mention algaecides and rodenticides, whether they be used in farming, forestry, on golf courses or on homeowners' properties. Is it okay to walk on a sprayed lawn but not on a sprayed golf course? Or, is it okay to eat food that has been treated with some of the products we're discussing today?

PESTICIDES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: New Democrats look forward to ensuring that the bill that's been presented by the minister actually has the teeth to deliver the ban on the aesthetic use of pesticides that Ontarians want.

Let's be clear that praise today should be for Ontario's municipalities, like the city of Toronto, and Ontario's activists, many of whom are here today: the RNAO, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, and the David Suzuki Foundation—a variety of people who over a long period of time have worked hard to make sure that action would be taken in this province. They've done the heavy lifting on this issue.

It was actually the city of Toronto that, 10 years ago, first brought forward in this province the legislation, and was joined by 30 other municipalities like Oakville, Georgina, Caledon, Guelph, Newmarket, Markham, Vaughan, London and Peterborough. Those were the pioneers. They were the people who went through the heavy-duty fights in the council chambers to make this happen.

In January I had the opportunity to talk to a fellow in London who had been on the other side of this fight when London brought forward its bylaw. He had been a pesticide applicator in the lawn care business. He found that, in the end, when that bylaw came into effect, he did extraordinarily well switching to analysis of lawns and their need for nutrients and feeding lawns with nutrients as a way of having them resist pests and weeds without using herbicides or pesticides—a huge business opportunity for him and a huge business opportunity for this province as a whole.

So it was the city of Toronto and these activists who fought the chemical companies all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. That's what these folks did, and we need to thank them today, on Earth Day. They have been the leaders.

I want to say to you, Speaker, and to those in the gallery who are listening today that they've gone quite a distance. But I have to note to them that an act that was the key recommendation from the Walkerton inquiry, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, has not yet been proclaimed by this government even though it has been passed. So my caution to all of you: You've come quite a distance. This act may well be passed in this Legislature. Will it in fact be proclaimed?

A second point: If proclaimed, will it be enforced? Last year, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario reported widespread non-enforcement of environmental laws in this province. His report was entitled *Doing Less with Less*. In fact, there are not adequate resources with the Ministry of Natural Resources or the Ministry of the Environment to enforce the laws that are on the books. Those laws that are on the books but going unenforced may just as well not even be on the books.

I have to say to the people in this Legislature and to those who are present in the gallery today that you have to be prepared to go the next few steps to make sure that if legislation is passed that's useful, then you have to make sure it gets proclaimed so that it comes into effect. Then they will have to act to ensure that it is enforced. Those are things that have to happen. It is not good enough to simply put a law on a table, declare a virtue and walk off. The other steps have to be there.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We welcome a number of guests to the Legislature today.

On behalf of the member from Hamilton Mountain, in the east members' gallery: Elyse Bantum.

On behalf of the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, in the east members' gallery: Mark Mackenzie, his Green Party opponent in the 2007 provincial election.

On behalf of a number of members here in the Legislature today, we would like to welcome students from the environmental club from Cathedral High School in Hamilton and their teacher, Mrs. Salciccioli: Cristina Silvestri, Natasha Laroque, Natalie Lolua, Stephanie Santos, Chandal Kilgor, Amy Pachai, Codie Taylor and Linh Hoang. They're located in the east members' gallery.

In the west public gallery, members of the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology: Roger Courvette, Candy Lindsay, J.L. Roy, Sabrina DeGirolama and Shirley Wood. That's on behalf of the member from Trinity-Spadina.

On behalf of page Michael Thomas-Fulford, we'd like to welcome this afternoon to the west members' gallery: Sally Thomas, his mother; John Fulford, his father; Patrick Thomas-Fulford, his brother; and Patricia Fulford, his grandmother.

On behalf of all the members from the Niagara region-many of them have been introduced-we'd like to welcome the mayors and councillors from the Niagara region visiting Queen's Park for Niagara Week.

On behalf of the Legislature, in the west members' gallery: Mr. Peter Partington, the member from Brock in the 33rd Parliament.

Welcome to all of our guests today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

NATIVE LAND DISPUTES

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I have a question to the Premier regarding the expansion of native protests across Ontario. Over the last number of weeks, Six Nations protestors have been blocking access to a number of construction sites in Brantford. Yesterday, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk raised the fact that Six Nations protestors are now blocking a development on the Ancaster fairgrounds. Yesterday, we learned that native protestors had set up a blockade on County Road 2 in Deseronto, and have been occupying a nearby privately owned quarry for some time.

Premier, whatever your government has been doing in Caledonia for the last two-plus years clearly isn't working. Native protests are expanding. What do you plan to do about this escalating situation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Just as an update to the subject that the member raised, the blockade erected by Mohawk protestors in eastern Ontario has in fact come down. It came down at about 10 a.m. today.

I note as well that the chief of the band council of the Tyendinaga Mohawk Council said yesterday that that council, and he as chief, did not-I repeat, did not-sanction a blockade of the busy southern

Ontario highway.

I think it's important to note that, in fact, the blockade is down and that the chief and council exercised some leadership to indicate that this was not something sanctioned by their First Nation. Those streets are now free, and we're pleased that it ended in a peaceful fashion.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We're pleased that it's ended, perhaps temporarily, in a peaceful situation. But the reality is that we're not aware of any charges being laid. By failing to enforce the rule of law in Caledonia and Brantford, and refusing to shut down HDI—which is making what everyone would classify as extortion demands, and may fall under that classification in the Criminal Code of Canada—you are in fact giving tacit consent to further protests and further blockades. Developers are being told by the government not to pay the fees, but you do nothing to stop the situation in Brantford and others areas.

Minister, what are you going to tell the people of Brantford, Ancaster and Deseronto who are worried about their safety, their homes and their businesses? That they should steel themselves, because, as your Premier said to another issue, "This too shall pass"?

1420

Hon. Michael Bryant: I was speaking to Haldimand county council today. In attendance were a number of citizens; obviously, the full council and the mayor were there. Issues around what we are doing next were discussed. The answer is, negotiations are being encouraged that would see those who are on the street and at the work sites come off the street and off the work sites and allow for discussions by way of negotiation.

Based on the recommendations of the Ipperwash commission, it is the recommended course of action not to escalate the tension but rather to de-escalate the tension and, most importantly, to come to a lasting solution. That lasting solution will only happen if the parties sit down and negotiate, and that's exactly the goal that we're pursuing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary. The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington

Mr. Randy Hillier: Premier, your government is creating a culture of violence and confusion. In Napanee and Deseronto, we expect nothing less than one law for every man and injustice for no man. You choose not to protect our communities from armed thugs, nor do you defend legal title to our properties. When will you stand up and protect property, stop the violence and end your policy of different laws for different people?

Hon. Michael Bryant: This comes from a member who-

Interjection: Shot deer out of season.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Well, shot deer out of season and blocked Highway 401.

If I'd closed my eyes, I could have heard the words of Mike Harris, when he said-

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Those are patently untrue. Unless that minister has evidence, I would ask him to withdraw those comments.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's not a point of order, but I do remind the members again to be conscious of their language. We've got a full gallery here again today. Anything that's going to evoke stress within this chamber isn't useful to any of us.

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: standing order 23(k)-

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member for the reminder.

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member makes reference to violence. In fact, the most violent confrontation, the one that gave rise to a public inquiry, was the Ipperwash confrontation, and in it, the recommendation from Commissioner Linden was very clear:

"It is inappropriate for the government to enter the law enforcement domain of the police. Law enforcement properly falls within the responsibility of the police. To maintain police independence, the government cannot direct when and how to enforce the law...." It is for the police to decide "whether and when arrests will be made, and the manner in which they will be executed."

We will continue to follow that advice.

ELIZABETH BAIN

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Attorney General. It has to do with the rather extraordinary circumstances surrounding the Robert Baltovich trial and the decision by the crown today to call no evidence and no witnesses. Of course, the judge directed the jury to come in with a not guilty verdict.

To the minister: I think this cries out for some elaboration and explanation. This is almost four years from the appeal court's decision that there should be a new trial. Mr. Baltovich has had his life turned upside down. The Bain family, the parents of Elizabeth Bain, have been twisting in the wind, essentially, for the last number of years. I would ask the Attorney General to elaborate on what happened today and why it happened.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Leader of the Opposition is correct. This is a tragedy for the Bain family. It's a tragedy for the parents of Elizabeth Bain. They do not have any closure, and my sympathies and, I know, all members' sympathies go out to them.

For Mr. Baltovich, he was found not guilty today, and I hope that he will be able to get on with the rest of his life. As the member knows, and as all members know, a new trial was ordered as a result of an appeal process. There were certain decisions made by the trial judge with respect to the appropriate evidence in light of changes in the law. After those rulings were made, the crown made an immediate determination, based on advice from the chief prosecutor and the head of the criminal law division, that there was not a case to proceed with, indicated that quickly to the court this morning, and the not guilty verdict has resulted.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'm not sure when the judge made those as yet unspecified changes, in terms of pretrial evidentiary rules, but it seems passing strange to anyone on the outside that they would go through the process of scheduling court time, empanelling a jury and then standing up and saying, "We're not going to call witnesses; we're not going to present evidence." It seems to me that this could have been dealt with in a much more timely way, and I think it calls out for much more elaboration than the Attorney General has given at this point in time. I again ask him to make an effort here today to explain a more understandable rationale for the decision, especially for Elizabeth Bain's family.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member will want to know that the victim services people have been of assistance to the Bain family throughout these proceedings.

The member is quite right: My understanding of the process is that the trial judge was making ongoing determinations with respect to evidentiary matters, as is not uncommon in cases of this size and complexity. He made some determinations of certain evidence and determined it was not appropriate to be introduced. There were some changes in the law, and as a result of those, the crown made the determination to seek further advice, and got advice from the chief prosecutor, from the director of the criminal law division, and, pursuant to the crown's duty, advised the court that it would not be appropriate to proceed. That is in the highest traditions of the crown office. Quite appropriately, the jury returned the only verdict available, which was not guilty. It had to be done that way, because the hands-

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think that the Bain family, whether they are meeting with victim services or not today-not only the Bain family, but the public at large-deserves a more fulsome explanation of what happened here. If there were changes in evidentiary rules and the crown opted no to appeal, based on advice from the chief prosecutor, I think that the public and the Bain family have a right to know. You're not really explaining why it took so long, why it went to this process of getting court time and empanelling a jury.

I would suggest that if it was purely a question of not enough admissible evidence, why not stay the charge while attempting to gather additional evidence? It strikes me that this calls out-this is an extraordinary situation-for a public inquiry. Will the minister commit to doing just that?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As the member knows, this matter has gone through an appeal process, and a new trial was ordered. It was entirely appropriate to proceed with the new trial.

In the course of the new trial advancing, the trial judge made certain evidentiary rulings based on changes in the law. Some of those rulings meant, before the case got too far in, that evidence that the crown thought was going to be available was not appropriate to be introduced. On the basis of those rulings, the crown made the determination it must make. The crown sought advice from the chief prosecutor; the director of the criminal law division determined there was no case to answer.

Again I say this is a tragedy for the Bain family. Our heart goes out to the parents, and our condolences to them. The memory of Elizabeth Bain will not be forgotten. I know the parents will always be wondering. Our hearts do go out to them in this difficult time.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question for the Premier: When will you present a fully funded and detailed climate plan for the people of this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my friend, who has a passionate interest in this issue, must have missed much of the good news that we've been putting out in recent times regarding our climate change plan. It includes everything from specific targets to a broad array of approaches that we are taking to arrive at our targets. The single biggest thing that we're doing here in Ontario, which will result in the single largest greenhouse gas reduction in the country, is to phase out coal-fired generation. We're one third of the way there. We look forward to proceeding and achieving more success on this particular file, but that is the single biggest source reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the entire country, and that's an important component of our plan.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier says he has a plan, yet he's allowing garbage incinerators to go forward that put out 30% more carbon dioxide than coal plants; for gasification we're talking 90%. Why, if you have a plan, are you allowing these greenhouse gas belchers to go forward?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, just so we understand what we're after here, our green targets for greenhouse gas emissions are 6% below 1990 levels by 2014, 15% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. Those are pretty ambitious. Again, we think the single most important feature of that remains our phase-out of coal-fired generation, but there are other components to our plan as well, including Move Ontario 2020. I'd love to have the member opposite's support in this regard. It's the single greatest investment in public transit, not just in the history of our province, but in the history of the country. It's \$17.5 billion, which will result in all kinds of new opportunities for people who are presently using cars to remove themselves from the comfort and convenience of their car and to move towards the comfort and convenience of a modern public transit system. Again, that's just one other dimension of a very comprehensive climate change plan.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, all interesting points, but not a plan. Your Minister of the Environment about a month ago said that you would be bringing forward a climate plan in two or three months. Which of you is right?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just remind the member of some parts of our plan that have been out for some time now. In addition to our green targets for greenhouse gas emissions, we have a green power plan, which is another dimension of our plan—\$150 million to assist homeowners in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving energy and adopting green technologies. There is Move Ontario 2020, the plan which I just referenced—a \$17.5-billion investment in public transit. There's the creating-jobs-by-going-green part of our plan, which includes our \$1.15-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund. There's also another dimension to our plan, our grow green dimension, which is 50 million new trees to be planted in southern Ontario by 2020. Those are just parts of a very comprehensive and very exhaustive climate change plan which we're proud to prosecute on behalf of the good people of Ontario.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is for the Premier. The onset of climate change and its implications for the environment and economy will require significant investment in green technologies in areas such as energy generation. Here in Canada, Quebec is home to the sole manufacturer of large wind turbines. Quebec has aggressively pursued investment in new manufacturing facilities through the introduction of a fully refundable manufacturing tax credit. When will the McGuinty government do the same and adopt the NDP's 20% manufacturing investment tax credit to attract green jobs to Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The NDP keeps talking about the refundable tax credit. That's a particular

approach, but we haven't adopted that. We've gone with an immediate retroactive cut to capital taxes, which puts results in the hands of our manufacturers immediately.

But I do agree entirely with the member opposite when he says there are economic opportunities to be found in going green. We are the fastest-growing renewable jurisdiction in all of North America. We've got wind turbines popping up around the province. We're putting up the largest solar farm in the world just outside of Sarnia. All of that is good for the economy. It's creating good, new, green jobs and it's going to produce more revenues to support good-quality public services.

Mr. Paul Miller: Last August, the McGuinty government directed the Ontario Power Authority to seek 2,000 megawatts of renewable energy, much of which will come from wind. This is an opportunity to create thousands of well-paying green jobs in Ontario.

Why won't the Premier commit to the NDP's 50% Buy Ontario policy for any future Ontario turbines paid for by the province's hydro taxpayers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I am very proud of our renewable plan. We're certainly leading Canada, if not North America. The OPA, the Ontario Power Authority-it is true: We've gone from, I think, 15 megawatts of wind power four years ago; we now have 500. We've got another 1,300 under contract. We've gone from last to first in Canada in terms of wind generation. On the solar, as the Premier just mentioned, a few days ago we announced a solar plan in Kingston, and we announced a solar plan in Sarnia.

These are real jobs being created to develop these projects, to produce these projects, to construct these projects. We are, as I say, leading the way in North America on clean, renewable energy, creating jobs for that and creating clean, renewable energy for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Paul Miller: The Ontario manufacturing sector has lost more than 200,000 jobs under the McGuinty government. Competing jurisdictions are catching the wave of the green manufacturing as a way to create new well-paying jobs. Last year, there were eight million green jobs in US industries. That attracted \$148 million in investment, an increase of 60% from the year before.

Ontario can attract some of these green jobs with a 20% green manufacturing investment tax credit and a 50% Buy Ontario strategy. What is the government waiting for?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: We're not waiting. My colleague the Minister of Research and Innovation has a specific job fund, a job fund to ensure that we encourage manufacturing sectors here for clean, renewable projects. That's happening. That's a significant financial investment there.

We are also insisting, on behalf of the people of Ontario, on doubling the production of electricity through renewables. As I said earlier, we've gone from virtually no wind to 500 megawatts now and we have another 1,300 coming on stream. These will create jobs; these will create manufacturing jobs. With my colleague the Minister of Research and Innovation, with our future job fund-I think it's \$1.2 billion-that too will create real manufacturing jobs for our clean, renewable sector.

We have a leadership role that we're playing. We are doubling the use of renewables that will create effective wind and solar power, but also manufacturing jobs, which we're seeing across the province right now.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier. Premier, today you and the three House leaders received a letter from Randy Rath, the president of the Queen's Park press gallery, advising that at their AGM today press gallery members voted unanimously to raise concerns about the timing of question period under your proposed changes to the standing orders.

The letter raises the same concerns that we have raised; that is, that having question period in the morning will limit media access to the Premier and cabinet ministers and will interfere with their filing for noon newscasts.

I ask you today, Premier, are you prepared to seriously consider these concerns and change the timing of question period to 1 p.m., as we suggest?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the House leader.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Yes, this bombshell arrived on my desk this morning. You know, it's one thing to get into a fight with people who print ink by the barrel, but it's another thing to face the wrath of Randy Rath. So it is with shaking hands that I respond to his invitation, where he says he would "welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you." It's hard to imagine Mr. Rath saying that he'd welcome the opportunity. He'd probably say something-well, I won't say it here. I would welcome the opportunity, of course, to sit down with Randy Rath and with the press gallery and discuss this matter in a fulsome fashion.

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Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think all these words ring hollow when you look at the process involved in the discussions with the House leaders. There was no discussion, so your promise to Randy Rath and the gallery probably is the same. But I would ask you today, will you meet with the House leaders and the press gallery this week in order to discuss changing the timing of question period to 1 o'clock in the afternoon so that we can have freedom of the press and make sure that you don't-

Interjections.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: -and that we can ensure that your current plan doesn't move forward, because your current plan, as you know, is attempting to avoid media scrutiny and, in turn, public scrutiny.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I know the Free Randy T-shirts are being printed as we speak. I confess to having some concern with this. The idea that the media wouldn't have access frankly is very troubling to me. So I'm going to have to seriously take a look at this and we're going to have to talk about this further.

In all seriousness, the original proposal in fact was to have a 9:30 question period start, which would have addressed all of these issues, and instead, in response to the opposition, we compromised. The bottom line is that Mr. Rath has asked for a meeting with either himself or the entire press gallery-my preference is the entire press gallery-and I look forward to that meeting.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Attorney General. On August 30, 2007, Minister Bentley, then Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, promised to extend collective bargaining rights to college part-time workers and sessionals. Why did the minister, now as the Attorney General, send his lawyer to the labour board last Thursday to argue against these very same workers for those rights?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for his question. It gives me an opportunity to reiterate our government's commitment to extend bargaining rights to part-time workers in Ontario's colleges. The honourable member is well aware of that commitment and our work with Kevin Whitaker, who we commissioned to do a report on this. We thank Mr. Whitaker for his report, which was made public on February 1. We've had an opportunity to review his report and consult with stakeholders, and I hope to be reporting back to the Legislature in the near future.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Minister Bentley, for the answer.

I would say that the report of the adviser, Mr. Whitaker, said this to you, government: "Part-time employees should be immediately granted the right to unionize." That's what he said on page 34 of this report. That was 82 days ago and you're still studying the report, it seems.

What we know is that the Ministry of the Attorney General argued strenuously against letting part-timers and sessionals have their say on union representation. That's why the question was to Minister Bentley. Roger Couvrette, president of the provincial organization of part-timers, is here, with many others. He and the thousands and thousands of workers who have signed cards would really like to hear the minister's response: Why did Minister Bentley promise to extend collective bargaining rights to college part-timers and sessionals in August and, by April, argue against these workers' rights to good wages, benefits and stability?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, we thank Mr. Whitaker for his report and I hope to be reporting back to the House in the near future on living up to the commitment that we made last August. It's funny that in his question, the honourable member forgot to point out that when the NDP were in government, they put forward a bill on this same matter and never let it go beyond second reading.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I regret raising a point of order during question period, but again I refer to standing order 23(k), and I ask the Speaker to reflect upon the reply of the government House leader to the question from the Conservative Party, Mrs. Witmer, with reference to a legitimate communication from the Queen's Park press gallery and his mocking of it. His mocking of it, his trivialization of it, his disregard for that body, representatives of the fourth estate and fifth estate here, is, I submit to you, at the very least the type of abusive and insulting language that's contrary to standing order 23(k).

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I appreciate the member's point of order. I would remind all members that perhaps it's good for all of us to take some time to read the standing orders. I think it would be a good refresher for everyone, because 23(k)-and I say this to all members of the House-is very clear: for any member to use "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder" in this House. I'm not speaking directly to the point he just raised. We had another point raised earlier. I'd just remind all members of 23(k) and trying to maintain some order in this House and language that causes disorder in the chamber.

Hon. Michael Bryant: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker-obviously not on that point, because you've made a ruling already-I just want to be clear here: Are you making a finding that abusive or insulting language was used in my answer? If not now, then perhaps you would review the transcript and report back to the House. It would be helpful, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I am not directing my comments at any member. I'm asking each of us to think about what we say and how we say it and what it causes within the House. I'd just ask you to think about the language you use.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. The Ontario Institute for Cancer Research is an independent, not-for-profit organization making a huge difference in the lives of Ontarians and people around the world through its focus on prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment of cancer. I'm proud to say that the institute is partnered with researchers at the McMaster Institute for Molecular Biology and Biotechnology. Will the minister please outline the steps our government is taking to make sure this fundamental part of Ontario's fight against cancer can continue to do its important work?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend from Hamilton Mountain for the question. I would share with her the sobering statistics that one in three Canadian women will develop cancer, one in two Canadian men will develop cancer and one in four Canadians, regrettably, will die from cancer, so I think it falls upon all of us to try to fight cancer.

What we did back in 2005, before the member was here, was that we created the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research. We committed some \$347 million over five years to send a clear signal that we wanted the full range of cancer research to be done and coordinated and for our researchers to collaborate so that they weren't duplicating their efforts, and, as you said, with clear goals of prevention, detection, diagnosis and treatment, all in efforts of trying to find a cure.

I'll answer your question in the supplementary. I just want to say, on behalf of all of us to our colleague the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, who himself is recovering from cancer surgery, that we hope, Ted, to see you back shortly.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Dr. Yonghong Wan, at the McMaster Institute for Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, is receiving over \$600,000 in funding for research into vaccines that can engage the immune system and attack tumour tissue without harming normal tissue.

At McMaster, rapidly moving research from concept to clinical trials is a priority and is in line with the goals of the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research, which looks to quickly turning discoveries into treatments. This funding provides opportunities for internationally renowned scientists to come to McMaster and continue their work, as well as opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to become the groundbreaking researchers of tomorrow. Would the minister outline the ramifications this funding will have locally and globally?

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Hon. John Wilkinson: I had the pleasure last week of joining Dr. Tom Hudson, who is the president and the scientific director of OICR, for the announcement of some \$60 million worth of cutting-edge, globally significant research. I want to commend Dr. Wan and his team at McMaster for being

successful in receiving one of these grants.

We can imagine a day when we can actually be vaccinated against cancer. I say to my friends here, we know that there is a new vaccine for cervical cancer, so that our daughters one day will never have to suffer from cervical cancer as women. I remember last week, we made an announcement with Sanofi Pasteur about their new, \$100-million global research centre sited here in Toronto, which is looking for vaccines for melanoma and for colorectal cancer.

I believe that day will be found here in Ontario because of the hard work of our researchers. We commend Dr. Wan and his team for being part of that bright new future.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Madam Minister, under your former adoption disclosure legislation, Bill 183, children's aid societies could file a disclosure veto to protect the identity of victims of severe child abuse who were removed from their parents and then adopted. Your present Bill 12, which is in front of the standing committee, removes that protection, meaning that a child who is raped by her birth father, rescued by the children's aid, and adopted after September 1 of this year will have no way to prevent her natural parents from finding out her adopted identity once she turns 19. Why are you removing this important protection for victims of severe child abuse?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I appreciate the question coming from the member of the opposition party. It's a good question. It's a question that we asked ourselves in drafting this new legislation. But the McGuinty government strongly believes that all Ontarians should be able to learn more about their own personal history. That is why the government has decided to introduce this legislation. The proposed legislation does not include a determination of abuse.

We have discussed this issue with our stakeholders and their advice was that we should treat adults like adults and not like children. So the intent of the proposed legislation is to open adoption records for adults, not children.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: May I quote the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' submission before the committee: "Children who survive rape as infants, attempted murder, torture, or are starved and exposed to other forms of neglect should be afforded the opportunity to rebuild their lives in loving, adoptive homes. Adoptees should not have to live in fear that the perpetrators of those acts of violence have a legal entitlement"-that's what you are giving them-"to learn their names at age 19 and then track them down...." That's what the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies says.

Why don't you take these people's advice, who have tremendous experience in this area, whom we entrust many of our children to? Why don't you have a heart and protect these children in their adulthood from these very abusive and violent people?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, the proposed legislation does not include a determination-of-abuse process. We have consulted with our stakeholders and the advice that we've received is for open adoption. So this is to modernize the legislation.

We're not the leader in that area. Many provinces across Canada have this type of legislation. It's to open the adoption records, and that's what we're doing. People are allowed to know where they come from. That's what this legislation is doing.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a question to the Premier. The Premier heard the government House leader reply to the question of the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, wherein she referenced a letter that had been written to the Premier by Mr. Rath, the president of the Queen's Park press gallery.

He heard his minister respond in terms that were derisive, mocking, abusive, insulting and an effort to generate cheap laughs. Does he approve of that behaviour on the part of his minister?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the House leader.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Again, I say that the letter that was sent from the press gallery to myself asked for a meeting. I agreed to the meeting. As far as I'm concerned, that's the end of the story. If there were any remarks in there that were in any way mocking, frankly they were self-deprecating to the speaker. I look forward to continued debate on this very, very important matter.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Again, to the Premier: The members of this chamber, as well as scores, if not hundreds, if not thousands of people listened to your minister mock and speak derisively and dismissively of Mr. Rath when Mr. Rath, on behalf of journalists here at Queen's Park, attempted to raise some very serious matters on behalf of, yes, the Queen's Park press gallery.

Will the Premier stand up and condemn his minister for that behaviour?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Speaker, I just want to reinforce that the question that was put in the letter was, in fact, to state a position and ask for a meeting.

Interjection.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'm trying to answer the question; the member apparently wants a question, and I look forward to getting it.

I think the gist of this was, can we have a meeting? The answer is yes.

I appreciate the words of advice from the leader of the third party and certainly will be checking Hansard to see the language that he has used in the past—a member who has shown up on the legislative grounds dressed up, literally, in a dog-and-pony outfit, lecturing people in this Legislature about their conduct. I do look forward to having the opportunity—or your having the opportunity, Speaker—to make a ruling on whether or not those words were in violation.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Almost daily, I hear concerns from the constituents of my riding of Mississauga South about the quality of the air we breathe.

Recently, a study was done to look at pollution and particulate matter along the QEW in the Clarkson area and the effect it has on air quality. The Clarkson Airshed Study concluded that we have higher areas of ambient air pollution along the Lakeshore and QEW corridor in my riding of Mississauga South. It has been identified that a great deal of this pollution comes from vehicle congestion on our roads, especially from transport trucks.

On this Earth Day, can the Minister of Transportation please tell the residents of my riding, as well as the House, what the ministry is doing to ensure that air quality in my riding does not get any worse?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to thank the member for an excellent question today. There is no doubt this is an important issue, not only to his constituents but to people across the province. That is why we have moved to address air pollution through our speed-limiter legislation, which is now before the House.

If passed, this legislation will cap the speed of large trucks built after 1995 at 105 kilometres per hour. Studies have shown that between 30% and 60% of large trucks speed in excess of 105 kilometres per hour on the 400-series highways. By limiting speeds, this proposed legislation will listen to this—allow for a 280,000-tonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions each year. To put that in perspective, that's like taking 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each year. It also means conserving more than 100 million fewer litres of diesel fuel by the trucking industry each year. We expect that will reduce us by about 2% in our goal towards—

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

Mr. Charles Sousa: Again, to the Minister of Transportation. I would like to applaud him and his ministry on proposing this speed-limiter legislation. I will also be supporting this initiative as it progresses through the legislative process. However, speed limiters on trucks do not address the other concern of congestion on our highways. With studies showing that cars and trucks make up about 26% of greenhouse gas emissions, with close to 50% of that coming from passenger vehicles, can the minister please tell us what is being done to get these cars off the roads?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speed limiters?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, the speed limiter might be put on the member for Timmins-James Bay's car with some justification. I don't know that.

What we are doing is this: We are putting an unprecedented investment into public transit right across the province. You will know now that \$314 million was transferred to municipalities this year, in our portion of the gas tax. That was very much appreciated by transit commissions and transit authorities right across the province, including, I can assure you, in the regional municipality of Niagara, Niagara Falls, Welland, Port Colborne, St. Catharines and those places.

Also, you know we have the \$17.5-billion rapid transit action plan for the greater Toronto area to reduce that challenge that we have. We know this will help build a strong, prosperous economy, and we're investing this in every municipality in Ontario to reduce the use of—

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

PLANT CLOSURE

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: On Friday, the remaining 120 workers at CanGro in Niagara were summoned to hear the very unfortunate news that the deal to purchase and invest in the facility fell through, and they would be out of work. The Premier knows a private sector consortium,

led by respected Niagara business leaders, was bringing about \$20 million to the table to keep the plant open and was looking for provincial support. Premier, why did the province of Ontario walk away from the table and allow CanGro to close?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll speak to the first question; I know my colleague will want to speak to the supplementary.

Let me tell you that we worked as hard as we possibly could to pull out all the stops, to find a way to bring parties to the table and to ensure that parties might be willing in terms of ensuring some kind of succession plan for this business. We know this is really tough on the families. We have a number of programs in place, close to \$2 billion now by way of special programs, including our Next Generation of Jobs Fund. I know that the minister could speak to the details of this, but my advice to my colleagues was to do everything we possibly could to see if we might land some kind of a succession plan for this particular enterprise. Unfortunately, it was not there. We could not make it happen. It is with great regret that the ensuing result has been made apparent, but we will work as hard as we can with those workers in that community, and throughout Ontario, to find new jobs.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I say to the Premier that municipal leaders, business leaders and tender fruit growers would have a completely different view, indeed, about the lack of activity of the province of Ontario to try to save this plant. The Premier also knows that this impacts on some 150 growers representing 2,600 acres of pear and peach land in the peninsula. They're now being pulled out of the ground.

Premier, when it comes to the greenbelt, you have become an absentee landlord. You find a way to give Magna Corp. some \$50 million, and they're paying their CEO some \$40 million per year. Last week, you gave a foreign-owned pharmaceutical plant some \$14 million, despite their \$4 billion in international sales.

Premier, I ask you, why do you give big grants to foreign-owned multinationals, but walk away from tender fruit growers and workers in Niagara?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm very happy to address this, and I want to say first off that the very premise of the member's supplementary question simply is not based in fact. I have to say that we have had ongoing discussions on a personal level, both my ministry and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, with Lord Mayor Burroughs. There are members who are leaders from the Niagara region who are in the House today who will attest to the work that we in my ministry have done on a personal level on this particular issue. We have worked very hard to try to keep CanGro in operation in the Niagara region as the last remaining canning opportunity here in Ontario.

When we were at the table, making the offers that we have made, we needed to have the company at the table with us. Unfortunately, CanGro was not in a position to want to work with the numbers of people that we brought to the table to try to do a deal. That's a very unfortunate outcome. We will work very diligently with the economic commission of the Niagara region, as we have in the past. The leadership is here today that will prove that that has in fact been the case and will continue to be the case, to find good jobs-

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

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines: Can the minister tell us why the McGuinty government is awarding Platinex Inc. new mining rights to 72,000 acres of land in northern Ontario while First Nations leaders from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug who oppose mining exploration on their traditional lands are sent to jail?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm not in a position to comment on that, in the sense that I'm not aware of any particular permits that have been given to any other land that's out there. In terms of the situation with Platinex and KI, we very much regret the situation that has resulted from the legal challenges, and I'm not able to comment on those either. In terms of your specific question, I'm not aware of any such arrangement being made.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Well, I-

Hon. David Caplan: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: Standing order 23(g) says that the Speaker shall call a member to order if they refer to a matter that is subject to "a proceeding that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination."

I believe the member has just done this. His House leader, earlier today, referred to standing order 23 (k). I ask for your ruling in this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A couple of points on the point of order. First, as Speaker, I'm not aware that it is an issue that is before the courts right now. As well-

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I recognize and thank the finance minister for his comment. I also recognize that the leader of the third party, in his questioning, I'm sure, is going to be conscious that it's not going to in any way interfere in any proceedings.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm simply referring to historical fact now. Historical fact is that the leadership of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation are in jail. They're in jail because they stood up for their constitutional rights to be consulted and accommodated before mining rights were handed out to a mining exploration company.

On the other hand, Platinex, the company which sued the First Nation for \$10 billion and almost bankrupted the First Nation, is getting an additional 72,000 acres of mining rights from the McGuinty government, mining that would involve Webequie First Nation, Marten Falls First Nation, Fort Hope First Nation, Neskantaga First Nation and Gull Bay First Nation.

I'm simply asking, is this the message the McGuinty government wants to send to First Nations, that if you stand up and ask for your constitutional rights to be recognized, you can go to jail while the mining company gets mining rights half the size of the city of Toronto?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: There is no confirmation of these particular permits or claims. I have no confirmation of that, but regardless, we continue to work in terms of respecting our duty to consult. That's been an important factor for us. It was acknowledged that, indeed, we met our duty to consult. We absolutely feel terrible about the situation in terms of KI and what has resulted in terms of the court case, but again, I can't discuss that in any detail.

We continue to work-there are some great stories out there in terms of First Nations working very

co-operatively and positively with mining companies. Memorandums of understandings have been signed, and impact benefit agreements have been signed with a number of First Nations. We have a great example in the Victor Diamond Mine in Attawapiskat, again, in terms of a process whereby there are very positive impacts for First Nations communities. Certainly I don't think there need to be the constant attempts to be very negative about something that could be very positive for many, many First Nations in the north.

1510

MINING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I have heard some very negative comments coming from the opposition benches that Ontario is not a desirable mining jurisdiction. They say that Ontario is not a good place to invest. It sounds to me like they're getting their cues from another Ontario politician who holds a similarly pessimistic view of this great province.

I must ask the minister this question: What is the status of mining in Ontario and how do we stack up against other jurisdictions?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member from Huron-Bruce for the question. Everyone in the House will know that the largest salt mine in North America is in Huron-Bruce, in Goderich, and that's a fabulous story.

Interjection.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Yeah, that's good news.

Certainly we know that mining is being received very positively in terms of the economic impact. We know that Ontario's mineral production increased to \$10.7 billion in 2007—a record level. We know that Ontario is forecast to lead the country in mineral exploration in 2008, with over \$629 million in exploration. We also know that mining sustains some 100,000 direct and indirect jobs in the province and is a supplier of all the raw materials that drive 21st century society.

As I said in my earlier remarks, as well we have the first-ever diamond mine in the province of Ontario, the Victor diamond mine. So we're very keen about the fact that mining is indeed one of the great places in terms of the economy of Ontario, and we're very proud of that fact.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Minister, for providing that information. I'm very heartened to hear that the industry is showing such investment in Ontario and that we indeed are attracting that investment. They are truly impressive figures, and a great level of activity on the industry side as well.

I know that the mining sector is one of truly province-wide importance. From the salt mine in Goderich to the diamond mine in Attawapiskat to the trading floor of the Toronto Stock Exchange, it covers from border to border.

What I'm also interested in specifically is what the McGuinty government is doing to foster growth in the sector and also to address the issues that mining is facing today.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, I thank the member from Huron-Bruce and I look forward to visiting your salt mine next month.

I want to assure the House that my ministry is hard at work to meet the challenges head-on and maintain an attractive investment climate here in Ontario. To that end, one of the things we are doing is undertaking a review of the Mining Act. We have initiated public discussions about improving consultation with our First Nation communities, and in fact we've already implemented some transitional measures based on what we've heard.

We're also very proud to say that we've launched Ontario's first-ever mineral development strategy—greatly supported in our 2008 budget—as well as a four-year, \$20-million geological mapping initiative that will bolster Ontario's mineral exploration sector and identify new areas of economic opportunity. Certainly we're very proud of that, as well as our abandoned mines rehabilitation program: \$90 million committed by our government over the last six years, working very closely-

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

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Norm Miller: A question for the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. The Ontario Convenience Stores Association estimates that as many as half of Ontario's 10,000 convenience stores will not be able to comply with the new retail display ban on tobacco products set to take effect on May 31. My question is simple: Will the minister help these convenience store owners by extending the deadline to comply beyond May 31?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member for asking the question. I know he has an interest in this issue.

I said in the House last week that we have been working very closely with the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and also with the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. I had the chance to meet with them last week and we will continue to work with them. If there are issues, we will sit with them and work out those issues. It is in our interest to do that because they contribute enormously to the prosperity of our province.

Mr. Norm Miller: Does the minister not see it as his job to assist small businesses, especially in light of the fact that the government waited until this January before it issued its guidelines? In Belleville, workshops designed to help retailers only started yesterday. You gave store owners weeks, not years, to comply. Convenience stores should not be penalized because this government failed to act until the last minute. I've now asked six times to provide more help for these store owners, and still you refuse to do so.

If the minister is truly committed to helping small businesses, he will extend the deadline and give store owners enough time to avoid being hard hit by this government's heavy-handed enforcement. Will he make that commitment today? Will he extend the deadline? Will he finally do something to help small businesses in this province?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I am very proud of our small-business community, and we have been working very closely with them.

I read a statement in the House last week from Dave Bryans, president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. Let me just read it again. He said:

"I would like to take this opportunity to briefly thank you for all the help and support that you, your cabinet colleagues and the Premier have given to Ontario's independent family-run convenience stores.... As I have said in the past, all OCSA members will comply with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act."

I have great confidence in our small-business community, and we continue to work with them and will address their issues if they face any problems complying with this legislation.

FIRE IN HAMILTON

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. The fire at the Biedermann packaging plant in Hamilton sent tonnes of pesticides and other harmful toxins into Spencer Creek, killing thousands of fish initially, and ultimately endangering children, pets and the broader ecosystem. Why is the McGuinty government keeping information about the toxic Biedermann fire secret, while refusing to call a full public inquiry into the environmental disaster? Ten years later, has nothing been learned from the 1997 Plastimet fire?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As I've indicated to this member before, right after the Biedermann fire, there were a number of tests done over the next month or so that indicated that the amount of toxins that were in the water as a result of the fire were being reduced at all times.

As a matter of fact, we continue to work with the city of Hamilton, we continue to work with the enforcement branch that's been out there as well, to make sure that everything is as best as it can possibly be. It's my understanding that about a month after the fire, in effect, the water quality was roughly the same as it was when the fire first happened. But we continue to be concerned about it. We continue to monitor the situation and work with the city of Hamilton on this particular issue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister should know that "just trust us" doesn't cut it in Hamilton. I've been trying to get the Biedermann fire reports from this minister's office since February using freedom-of-information laws. I was promised the material by April 18, which was last Friday, but only if an unnamed third party gave approval for that release. The legal deadline has come and gone, and still no information from this minister's office.

The McGuinty government continues to interfere with the community's right to know what happened that day and what has happened subsequently. What I want to know is, what dirty environmental secret is the minister trying to hide? Why not hold a public inquiry?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the member to withdraw the comment, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdrawn.

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, our toxics reduction law that we intend to introduce as a result of some of the work that we're doing in the whole toxics area-as a matter of fact, today is a good day. Today, we introduced a bill that will ban the cosmetic use of pesticides and the sale of them throughout this province. But as she well knows, and as I've indicated to her a number of times, our toxic reduction law will include the right-to-know law.

We will continue to work with this particular member on the issue of the Biedermann fire, which I

know is of great concern to her. I will make sure that the information that she's talking about will be released to her as soon as we can do it, after we've spoken to our legal experts within the ministry. We will continue to work with this member to make sure that she has all the information she requires.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Mike Colle: My question is to the Minister of Labour. This government places the highest priority on the hard-working people of Ontario, as we all do in this House, and it's committed to making sure workplace health and safety is a given for all Ontario workers. This government takes seriously, I hope, its responsibilities as a full partner in workplace health and safety in Ontario. We certainly cherish our hard-working citizens who pay taxes and put bread on their tables.

I'd like to hear from the Minister of Labour just exactly what this government is doing to protect, on an everyday basis, the health and safety of Ontario's workers.

1520

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member very much for his question and for his advocacy to help this government improve the health and safety of workplaces right across this province.

I guess it was in 2003, about four years ago, that the previous Minister of Labour set a goal of a 20% reduction in workplace injuries. At the time it was seen as too dramatic and very risky, but this government was determined, working with our partners in the health and safety sector, to reach that goal. I'm very pleased to say that we're well on the way to reaching that 20% reduction goal.

But it's not something we can do alone; it's something we've had to do with our partners. Just yesterday I was at the Industrial Accident Prevention Association conference-over 6,000 people attending, 350 exhibits. These people were not just inspired, they were inspiring to all of us. They're dedicated to working with our government to improve the health and safety in workplaces right across this province. We're proud of their efforts and we're proud to work with them.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity to welcome the former member from Brampton North in the 36th Parliament and the member from Brampton Centre the 37th Parliament, Joe Spina. Joe is in the west members' gallery. Joe, welcome back to Queen's Park today.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: the government House leader, earlier in today's proceedings, accused me of shooting and killing deer out of season. I said it was patently false and untrue and I ask that minister to withdraw the remark. It is false. If he has evidence, I ask him to turn around and speak to the Attorney General and have me charged. Otherwise, come out of the House and say it, Mr. Minister. I would ask the Speaker to review Hansard and censure that minister for his allegations.

Hon. Michael Bryant: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the Belleville Intelligencer of December 15, 2005, a picture of a dead deer with cabinet minister Leona-

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the member to come to order. Minister of Transportation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask all members to come to order.

I will take a look at the Hansard. I would remind members that, at the immediate time, if they have concern with an issue, they should rise and speak directly to the issue that they take exception to. But in this case, because of a number of comments that were made today-and it's not a practice that I want to engage in on a regular basis, reviewing Hansard of all members, because as a Speaker I cannot hear every comment that is made within the chamber-I will take a look at it.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: You're a liar.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment that he just made, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Mr. Speaker, I have much respect here-

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask the member to withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw the comment.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition from the First Christian Reformed Church in Owen Sound and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

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

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

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

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

I have signed this and I will give it to Georgia.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have a petition signed by hundreds of people, some of whom are here in the gallery, and I've got thousands of other people in an informal petition that is not accepted by this assembly but there are thousands of people who have signed it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas car culture has destroyed and alienated our communities and dominated our public space; and

"Whereas equitable mobility is a right and transportation is a need to all, including the young, the elderly and those who refuse to drive; and

"Whereas Ontario is sorely lacking in infrastructure for active and public transportation (i.e., in most of the province there's no choice but to drive a car); and

"Whereas a reported 26% of Ontario's economy is directly linked to an auto manufacturing sector that year after year has proven volatile and unsustainable, requiring billions of dollars in government loans and subsidies, under the constant threat of layoffs of thousands of workers at a time; and

"Whereas Ontario has covered hundreds of thousands of acres of our country's most fertile farmland with concrete highways and suburban housing developments; and

"Whereas our imported food supply is increasingly threatened in this time of climate change; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment issued 39 smog alerts in 2007, a year with 86 days of air quality worse than 30 AQI (air quality index); and

"Whereas pollution from smog is directly linked to asthma, breast cancer and leukemia, and the sedentary lifestyle of the auto-dependent is linked to the epidemics of diabetes and obesity that increasingly plague our country; and

"Whereas Toronto Public Health reports that 440 deaths per year in the city of Toronto are directly linked to pollution from cars, and the Ontario Medical Association estimates 5,800 deaths yearly in Ontario from smog; and

"Whereas the Canadian Institute of Child Health cites traffic injuries as the leading cause of injury and death in Canadian school children; and

"Whereas billions of dollars are currently spent on the health system to treat accident victims and victims of smog, and on treatment of disease linked to our society's reliance on the automobile; and

"Whereas financial decisions made by the Ontario government have a drastic impact on global climate change and the ability of our biosphere to support life;

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

"Stop any tax breaks, subsidies or loans to the automotive sector; and

"Create a public awareness campaign exposing the ill effects of automobile dependency; and

"Ban the advertising of automobiles, just like cigarettes; and

"Immediately allocate money to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, public transit and an intercity train system, including programs to help shift our labour force into these sectors; and

"Amend the Highway Traffic Act, making street closures for community festivals distinct from closures for general road construction; and

"Put a halt to development projects that do not support the use of public and active transportation; and

"Create programs to encourage the development of small-scale mixed organic and natural farming of food for the local market, with tax breaks for hiring labour instead of labour-saving, pollution-creating machines; and

"Measure the cost of all government spending with a triple bottom line, including social, environmental and economic impact"-

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to summarize the conclusion of the petition, please?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. The conclusion is, "Make policy decisions considering the value of life over the value of money."

I appreciate your tolerance.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition to stop unlawful firearms in vehicles. This petition is in tandem with Bill 56 introduced on Thursday by the member from Eglinton-Lawrence. This petition reads as follows:

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I am delighted to sign it.

1530

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Mr. Currie Phillips, from Elmvale, for sending me this petition:

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

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I agree with this petition, and I have signed it.

HOME CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to present a petition from the SEIU union and the people of Hamilton and Burlington.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

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

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I agree with this petition and hereby sign it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Central East local health integration network (CE-LHIN) board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

I shall affix my signature to that and give it to Ida.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank Rev. Rose LeClaire for forwarding this petition to me, on behalf of herself and her congregation.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition and send it to the table with page Adam.

DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

Mr. Michael A. Brown: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

"We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special, fixed permit as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act."

I agree with this petition and thank the Bikers Rights Organization and, in particular, Michael Warren from Iron Bridge for this.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from SEIU and the people of Cambridge, Guelph and Kitchener.

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

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

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and send it with Bethany.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

I support it, and I've signed the petition.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition that's been sent to me by Dennis Foerster from R. R. 1, Neustadt. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature"-

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Mr. Speaker, I have heard that this may not be true and that the Minister of Transportation has said this, so I hope in his statement he will correct this and that that will be fine. We'll listen for his statement.

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

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

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

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

I have signed this. I'm sure that the Minister of Transportation will agree with me and will-

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 21, 2008, on the amendment to the motion by Mr. Bryant to amend the standing orders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last dealt with this matter, I understand the member for Hamilton Centre had the floor. I return to the member for Hamilton Centre.

1540

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I certainly did have the opportunity-I think it was just yesterday-to make a few remarks on the standing order changes that the government's brought forward. I think much of my remarks yesterday focused on a little bit of frustration around the government's lack of consultation and/or acknowledgment with a particular committee that was set up to undertake a particular job, and that is to talk about how to make this place more amenable to family relationships for all of the members who are privileged to sit here and represent the people of their riding.

Unfortunately, as people who watched yesterday's proceedings will know, the government has not only not consulted with that committee but they haven't even really officially struck the committee. Myself and a member from the Conservative caucus were eagerly awaiting that call to arms, if you will, in terms of trying to obtain the opportunity to sit and have a dialogue about these issues. Unfortunately, the government never did see fit. To this day, April-what's the date? April 22; something like that?-the government has still not seen fit to have that committee meet. So notwithstanding the government couching this in terms of anything to do with families, the reality is, and I think everyone knows, it's got little, if anything at all, to do with that.

But having said that, I'll set that aside, because I did deal with those issues in my remarks yesterday. Just this very day, just a few shorts moments ago, we learned in this House that it's not only the Conservative caucus and not only the New Democratic caucus that have some concerns about these standing order changes; in fact, the government House leader was provided with correspondence from the press gallery. The Queen's Park press gallery are the people whose job it is to report on the happenings of this very place and to ensure that the public gets information about what happens here through various media sources of all kinds: print media, television media, radio media-

Mr. Jim Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm just wondering if we have quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The table will ascertain if there's a quorum.

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Hamilton Centre.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's an interesting request for a quorum count because the suspicion is-many people here think that once the new rules come into place, quorum won't be able to be obtained very often under the new rules. There will be members, particularly on Thursdays, who won't be bothered to stay here for something that the government pretends is being lofted up to some kind of very high degree of import in terms of expanding this section of our agenda, which people in the community might know as private members' bills.

The government is suggesting that adding a third private member's bill time slot in debate is raising the profile or highlighting the import of private members' public business. But I have got to tell you, it's been our experience, and in particular the experience of my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, that once a private member's bill is debated in second reading here in this chamber, the next piece of the process is that it goes to committee. In the committee process then, there's a discussion about how to handle the bill. The way it normally works, because government has the majority of people in the committees, is that the government business is brought to the top of the heap in terms of priority within the committee. People understand that; it's part of the process.

In this particular committee, Bill 6 was brought forward and there was no other business on the committee agenda-no other business. There were no government bills. There was nothing else for this committee to do, save and except lonely little Bill 6, which was brought forward by my colleague from the Hamilton area, the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. Lo and behold, what happens when this committee is charged to meet and deal with bills that come before it? What happens? Of course, you would think what normally happens is that the committee would do the job that it is struck to do, which is to bring forward this bill and go through the process of public hearings, of clause-by-clause, and eventually get it back to this House for third reading debate.

But lo and behold, this particular private member's bill, again, private members' bills that this government is pretending-if people recall yesterday, when I made these remarks, the government House Leader did talk about how private members' business was going to become oh so much more important. I said yesterday, and I repeat today, that the government House leader was talking a big, big fish tale when he was talking about what he thought these standing orders meant. I think everyone around this chamber would agree that it was a big fish tale, because it has nothing to do with vaulting private members' business into greater import because now there are three bills that are going to be debated instead of two.

We saw what happened with Bill 6; I'll go back. The fact that the government members of the committee-just like in this chamber, all of the committees have a majority of government members. It's all proportionate: Just like they have a majority in the House, they also have a majority in committee. So in the committee, the government members decided that they didn't want to know anything about Bill 6. They didn't care about Bill 6. They didn't care that the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek had actually worked really hard to put Bill 6 together. They didn't want to hear anybody from the province of Ontario who might be interested in Bill 6. Let me tell you what Bill 6 is about. Bill 6 is about justice for workers. Bill 6 is about making sure that workers have economic justice when it comes to situations they have no control over around the closing of their plants.

I think that's important. I guess, coming from Hamilton, I would think that's important. You would think that every single member of this Legislature who has a single plant that has closed in their riding would at least think it was important to hear from workers across the province, and from people who represent workers across the province, as to the efficacy of Bill 6, which might help workers across the province. But just like this Premier refuses to deal with job losses in this province, their committee-a majority of government members-refused to deal with Bill 6, a bill to deal with the pain and suffering currently being felt by many, many a family across the province of Ontario and particularly in the area of Hamilton and other industrial-type cities. But no, they didn't want to hear from this member-this member's private member's bill-they didn't want to hear from workers across the province and they didn't want to hear anything at all that had to do with any kind of solution or any kind of effort to help workers in this province, and shame on them.

For the government House leader to get up and pretend that these standing orders changes have anything to do with private members' business, I think, is a bit of a stretch of the truth, and that's where that fish tale comes in, right? The fish is really this big, and by the time the tale about the fishing trip gets told, the fish is actually this big. I have to tell you, even though the member from Timmins-James Bay has lots of fish in his riding, as does the member from Nickel Belt, who is joining me in this afternoon's debate, it's not appropriate for the government House leader to tell fish tales when it comes to what these standing orders changes really mean.

In fact, even though three bills will be debated with the new changes, when now only two are, what the government House leader is not telling you is that those bills get shorter shrift. We used to have an hour to debate a private member's bill, and under these new changes, we might get 45 minutes. We're getting shorter shrift. We're being cut back by 15 minutes apiece. I don't know if the government backbenchers know that their private members' bills not only don't get an hour's hearing anymore-they only get 45 minutes-but also that they get 45 minutes on the very last day of the week

in the afternoon, when the vast majority of people are not going to be inside this Legislature. They're not going to be here.

In fact, speaking of ringing the quorum bell, I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts that on a Thursday afternoon when we're here debating private members' business, we're going to have quorum bells constantly, because nobody is going to be here listening to your lowly little private member's bill, and you're not going to be able to get a whole bunch of people here to cheer on your private member's bill. The media are going to be long, long gone; they're not here on Friday. They're not going to care a bit about your private member's bill. Government backbenchers be warned: Your private members' bills are going down the tubes with your government's changes to the standing orders.

I've had enough to say. Our leadoff speech is coming from our House leader a little bit later on, and we look forward to those remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to indicate today that I'll be sharing my time-oh, I'm on a two-minute. I'm watching the clock here.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No, you're on your 20 minutes. There are no questions and comments.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Okay, I'm on my 20 minutes-

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member has the floor, and I look forward to your comments.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to share my time with the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, and I'm pleased to talk about the amendments to the standing orders.

I'll focus my remarks on the hours of sitting, which currently extend regularly into the evening. For me, the most important amendment we are making to the rules of procedure of this House will be changing the primary sitting hours to normal business hours: 9 to 5:45, with evening sittings being limited to the last eight days of the spring and fall sessions, much more like those of us who have had the opportunity and privilege to work in other fields, where we work primarily during the day, as do our constituents.

1550

I want to lend my voice, with respect to the proposed amendments to the standing orders, to the pilot project. In my view, these changes will have a positive impact on the willingness of women to run for provincial office, their willingness to stay, to contribute and to succeed in the political realm-a role which I've been privileged to serve in and continue to serve in on behalf of my constituents in Etobicoke-Lakeshore and one in which I think women have made over the years, and will continue to make, a strong impact.

When we talk about balancing our work life and our family life, I guess it's something that we're always in search of. As a mother of two two-and-a-half-year-old boys, I don't know that I have the secret to finding that balance. I think the reality is that it's a very difficult thing to achieve. I think we can best describe it as trying to integrate two things that you love passionately-your work, your family-and that you try to balance ebb and flow throughout your career, throughout your children's lives, back and forth; and that you, hopefully, by the end of your life have achieved a life with some balance.

A family-friendly approach for the governance of the Legislature is one to make it easier for women to make the decision to run for public office in the first place. If we do that as a society, as a province, as a Legislature, we will benefit from the tremendous contribution that women will make in political life. The laws will be better. They'll be more inclusive when we have greater diversity in this place.

I don't say that as someone who's trying to make us feel good, or from the perspective of being a do-gooder, but I think it's something that we can certainly learn from business, because it is a model that business has studied and business has learned over the years.

I want to share with you a business concept that has been really expanded by the business writer James Surowiecki. I'm reading now and I certainly encourage folks to take a look at this book by a Harvard law prof, *Off-Ramps and On-Ramps*. It really studies the career trajectory of women.

"James Surowiecki writes: 'The basic premise is that diverse teams make better decisions.'

"Surowiecki assembles a great deal of evidence to show that homogeneous groups become progressively less able to investigate alternatives, to bring new and different people into an organization, and even if they are less experienced, they actually make the group, as a whole, smarter, simply because what they know is not the same as what everyone else in the group knows.

"A woman who grew up on the wrong side of the tracks and attended a small Baptist college has had very different life experiences from an upper-class white male who attended Yale. Introduce this woman into a group of Ivy League-educated men and the thinking will change. Any kind of difference-race, class or gender-can have this kind of effect."

I think that business model is one that we can learn and have observed in this Legislature as to the benefit of bringing diverse voices, diverse perspectives, to the table. We can learn a great deal from business leaders and corporations across North America and around the world who have sought to go the extra mile to ensure that women succeed within their business organizations.

You can name a few: Ernst and Young, Lehman Brothers, Johnson and Johnson, Cisco, General Electric. Many of those companies-again, outlined in this very extensive analysis by Professor Hewlett-have gone the extra mile to find ways to help women balance their careers. In so many of those instances, the very request made by women who had highly demanding, challenging jobs, as we do, as legislators-what they asked for was the opportunity to spend that critical time with their children from 6:30 to 8:30. They sought that flexibility.

I would have to say that for me, with young children, as I know my colleague across the House, who also has young children, has said, you're up early, you're ready to be here, you're hard-working, you love your job, but you love your kids. And when you don't get home for that 6:30 to 8:30 time slot, it is so critical. I notice a real difference in my ability to spend quality time with my kids when I miss dinnertime, when I miss bath time, when I miss bedtime. It's a real struggle to find that balance that we're always searching for.

I want to just talk a little bit about some of the other institutions similar to this. I know that my friends across the House might say, "You can't compare litigation"-which is what I did before coming to this place-"and courtroom hours to what we do here." I would suggest to you that you can, to a great extent, contrast and look at and find similarities among a number of hard-working professions.

I know we all work in our community in after hours attending events, giving speeches, but we make the decision and it's not imposed upon us to be here filling time until 9:30 in the evening. I would suggest that if we don't think we can make these changes here, we should look to the parliamentary

systems which we have inherited and brought into Ontario.

I have an article from 1999: "Scottish Parliament Puts on a Friendly Face.

"A report released Friday recommended the new Scottish Parliament make a clean break from many of the steeped-in-tradition ways Westminster clings to-and the Parliament in Ottawa inherited and still uses."

Members will have "more sociable hours than their Westminster counterparts, who have the mornings off but often sit late into the" evening. "The Parliament will meet during normal office hours and observe ... school holidays." Late-night sittings will be gone.

If we look to other Canadian jurisdictions, we are not the first to tackle this issue. Many of our other provinces don't have as regular sitting hours as we do into the evenings.

I just want to take a look at it and say, why do we need to do this? Yes, we have more women in the Legislature, and that is a good thing. But the reality is that the underrepresentation of women in Canadian politics has been documented time and time again. Royal commission after royal commission has examined this issue. In Canada, we are now hovering in and around and capping out at about 20% to 21% of women. The United Nations notes that a critical mass of at least 30% to 35% of women is needed before Legislatures produce public policy reflecting women's priorities and before changes in management style, group dynamics and organizational culture will take place.

We can look to other jurisdictions around the world, such as Sweden, which has 47.3% women parliamentarians. They've enjoyed that gender balance increasing from the 1970s. By 1985, they were up to 31%, and now they're at 47%. Swedish political scientists would now say that it is "unthinkable to form a government ... with fewer than 40% women."

So I think it's important to note that the Swedish Parliament, the Riksdag, parliamentary schedule is structured to provide balance between work, family and political activity, and their calendar reflects that.

I would say, as I come to the close of my statement today, that if women are prepared to give themselves to public life-and I think we will all benefit from increased diversity and representation-frankly, as parliamentarians, we benefit from having a balanced life, from being able to be out in our community, to be in the grocery store, to be with our kids, to understand the lives that our constituents lead and be connected with them. That will make this place a much better place for everyone. If we improve the quality of life and improve the quality of debate and we bring more efficiency and modernization to this place, we will all benefit.

I'll just close with reading one more segment of this book by Professor Hewlett. When she talks about women who are in extreme careers and the fact that businesses are seeing it as important to try to ensure that we do things-small things, large things-to make sure that they stay, she quotes Patricia Fili-Krushel, the executive vice-president of administration at Time Warner and the co-chair of a task force entitled the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force. She says, "These women who leave or languish, are, in effect, the canaries in the coal mine, the first and most conspicuous" casualties "of an outdated, dysfunctional career model." She went on to enumerate that there are other casualties: "58-year-old baby boomers who don't want to retire but are no longer willing to put in 70-hour weeks; and 28-year-old Gen X and Y men who want to be better, more involved fathers than their dads were, and need flexible work."

So I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that although I brought to the floor of this Legislature a very personal story today about my desire to be a good MPP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, to be a good legislator and contribute in this place, it is a challenge to do that and be here in the evening. I would

suggest that, as perhaps a canary in the coal mine, we will all have better quality in our lives, and that will make us better in this place if we modernize the way we do business here.

1600

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for sharing her 20 minutes with me this afternoon. I'm pleased to rise and offer a few comments on the motion standing before us today, which at its core is attempting to bring some reform into how business is conducted in this Legislature, as I understand it for the first time in five or 10 years.

I'm told that both governments that preceded us, both of other political stripes, brought in some of their own reforms in the early 1990s and then in the mid to late 1990s and early 2000s. So what is occurring here today is not necessarily the first time that anything like this has happened in the recent past. In fact, other governments of other political stripes have found reason to do the same thing that we are doing here today.

I believe that some of the people who are watching on television today may be watching for the first time and may be unsure as to what we are actually discussing and may have some uncertainty around why there seems to be some opposition from the opposition parties.

I'm going to read the motion quickly. It goes as follows:

"At 12:01 a.m. on the first Monday following adoption of this motion, the standing orders as amended shall come into force on a provisional basis until 11:59 p.m. on the fourth Friday, following the resumption of the House in fall, 2008.

"The provisional standing orders shall be deemed to be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, which is authorized to conduct a review of the standing orders during the 2008 summer adjournment of the House. The committee shall present its report to the House containing its opinions, observations and recommendations on the standing orders of the assembly no later than the first Thursday following the resumption of the House in fall, 2008."

I think it's important to read that because two of the reasons we've heard, or two of the positions put forward for opposing this, are that there might be some permanency around this issue and that there has not been a lot of consultation.

I would offer quite the opposite. As the motion clearly indicates, I'm not sure how much more consultation you can have than to have this motion referred, should it pass, to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly that's going to hold consultations around the province this summer, in 2008. I'm not sure how much more consultative we can be than that. As the first part clearly states, this is, by any definition, a pilot, and we'll have the opportunity to further review this as we move forward.

To further express a bit of a contradiction, I think it's important once more to read into the record the position of the leader of the official opposition, who was crystal clear during the last election when he told voters of his support for family-friendly changes to the Legislature: "You know, most people go to work starting at 9 o'clock in the morning.... I think, if you had the sitting start in the morning and finish at suppertime, it allows moms and dads and young families to be home more often with their family and to have the thing just a bit more family friendly. So I think it means you'd look more often to start in the morning and have your day proceed so that you could use those hours and finish by suppertime." There's clearly a bit of a contradiction going on from both sides.

I want to offer a few comments in the short time that I have on primarily what I see as two

fundamental pieces in this legislation: One is night sittings and the other is the suggestion by some that we are attempting to avoid some accountability, as the government, in this Legislature.

I have to tell you, on night sittings, as someone who arrived in this Legislature for the first time in October 2003, whose background as an elected official was at the municipal level, having served two terms—a total of six complete years—in the riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, I often like to describe what you do at the municipal level as attempting to succinctly, as quickly as you can, summarize an issue and make your case. If you don't, the chair of that particular committee in which you are discussing an issue will quickly call you to order and ask that you very much do that thing.

Much to my surprise, as someone who did not often follow the legislative proceedings on the legislative channel—and maybe there's a message there for all of us—when I arrived here in October 2003, like many of our first-time MPPs—and this was often a point of discussion; there were about 38 of us in 2003 who were here for the first time—what we experienced and found during night sittings, I'm not sure I have the language to describe. I will try to be as flattering as I possibly can and describe it as unproductive, theatrical, an opportunity for some people to speak perhaps in a manner that they might not otherwise speak in, should there have been a bit more focus on what was actually happening there—and perhaps some people sitting in the press gallery—while those goings-on were occurring.

I can tell you, as someone who's been here now going on five years, if night sittings are something that does not remain a part of the legislative system here in the province of Ontario, I, for one, will not miss them, because clearly, historically, they're an unproductive use of time, as I think most members view it.

Having said that, if we want to sit here till 9:30 at night or till midnight, as we did often in our first session, I'm happy to do that too, but not if it's going to remain as unproductive as it was, because clearly there are some things that need reforming here. Perhaps, if we're going to get a bit broader in our scope, it might be to empower the Speaker to have an ability to move members, from time to time, towards the topic at hand and try and keep them on topic.

The other thing I'll quickly mention is this issue that is occasionally being raised by some members of the two opposition parties, that we are somehow trying to avoid some sense of accountability to the voting public and to the members of the opposition party by putting these reforms forward. I want to remind some folks who may be watching this afternoon on television of some of the things that we did in the first four years of our mandate, which I think speak directly in contradiction to that argument.

It was a great surprise to me when I came to this place and found out that school boards, universities, colleges and hospitals—that the Provincial Auditor did not have the authority to go into those places and do value-for-money audits. He did not have the ability to go in and find out how the government was spending its money. Hospitals receive about \$11 billion or \$13 billion, \$14 billion—I don't even know what the number is now—of transfers from the province of Ontario. Until we brought in legislation, the auditor did not have an ability to go in. School boards, universities, colleges, hospitals—the total? I'm not sure what they received: \$15 billion, \$20 billion, \$25 billion, and we couldn't go out there and find out how that money was being spent so that we could report back to the people in the province of Ontario. It's incredible, quite frankly, when you think about it.

We had to extend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act to provincial hydro companies. For whatever reason, those two pieces of legislation did not extend to provincial hydro companies until we legislated it so.

Far from trying to avoid accountability and transparency, I would suggest that those two examples, and there are many more, clearly speak to what we try to do in here to make sure the people in the

province of Ontario know exactly how their money is being spent. We hear sometimes, when the sunshine list comes out, members opposite calling us and complaining and saying, "What are you going to do about the \$100,000 club?" Well, in fact, they wouldn't even have been able to know those numbers if our government had not passed legislation making this government more accountable for that type of information.

I have less than a minute to go, and I want to close by saying one thing. I saw a great example today of what needs to be reformed in this Legislature, beyond what we're doing here today. Our Minister of Aboriginal Affairs rose today and provided an answer to a question from the member of the official opposition party. And what did that breed? Somebody from the third party quickly jumping up in their chair, saying that our minister had mocked the person who asked the question, when in my opinion it was that individual member who not only was mocking our minister in his question, but was mocking the entire Legislative Assembly here and people who are watching on television, to try and make an issue out of that minister's response.

I would say that that's a bigger part of the problem about what's going on here in this Legislature than anything we're trying to do through this motion.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to rise for a few minutes and debate the amendment to the change in the standing orders motion that the government House leader is jamming through this place in three days, substantial changes to not only the hours in this chamber but when things like private members' business will be conducted and when question period will be conducted.

1610

The honourable member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan talked about a horrible exchange today. The worst thing I've heard in 17 and a half years, and not a word of a lie, is the Premier last week implying that if you're not sitting in this chamber at 9 o'clock in the morning, you're somehow not working. That was horrible and an insult to every member, and the government members should be as insulted as I was. I talked privately to a number of members who thought that was just horrible. Maybe the Premier didn't mean to do it, but that's certainly the way it came across. I reread the Hansard and it was mean-spirited. I know that only this Sunday did I get home in the last three weeks. I've been working the whole time-then here quite a bit of that time. I had to actually cancel constituency appointments and a business awards thing on the weekend because I was travelling on business. I admit it was for political purposes on the weekend, but it's still part of the job of representing your party and working.

This process started, as I recall, with my colleague the honourable member from Nepean-Carleton talking about, before the election and since the election, the need to make this place more family-friendly. I do agree with what some of the honourable members on the other side have just said, that debates that go on until 9:30 at night or midnight often are fairly unproductive, and tempers do flare. Our constituents actually don't want us sitting here at night. My constituents prefer that I be at home. They're not really too sure what we're doing here all the time. They always ask, "When are you coming home? When are you coming to my birthday party? When are you coming to my mother's wedding anniversary?" or whatever, and we all try to do that.

I don't mind, I don't mind and there's no one on this side of the House saying, "We don't want to work at 9 o'clock in the morning." Of course we do. We're here anyway. We might as well be in the chamber. This is our place to hold the government accountable. But some of the changes are just so cynical as to be unbelievable. To move question period to 10:45 to 11:45-I'll read a letter from the press gallery president that arrived today-that means that if you're a broadcast reporter, the most important part of question period is that hour we spend here.

I always remind school groups that Parliament is a substitute for war. In other countries, like Afghanistan, they shoot each other first and then have the debate. The reason the mace looks like a club is that it's a war club. The reason the distance between the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition is exactly the distance of two men with outstretched swords across the aisle is because this is a substitute for war. We cannot be charged with an offence in this place while we are in this chamber. We cannot be charged with slander. We have freedom. Our prayer reflects every day that we're going to cherish freedom and justice. Here we settle our debates and we should leave as friends. In fact, when I started 18 years ago, we used to leave as friends. It was very common to have a euchre game with members of the government side or the opposition party. It was very common to have a beer or a coffee after work-maybe too many sometimes. But we were friends, and part of making this place better is to get the camaraderie back. It's not going to happen when you move question period to 10:45 to 11:45.

The media can't do their scrum, be on the noon news and be filing for their noon news in those 15 minutes from 11:45 to noon, because we're also doing introduction of visitors at that time, in case you didn't notice; that got slipped in. So we may go right past noon. Any bad news that happened in question period-and this is our one hour that Her Majesty's official loyal opposition gets to hold the government accountable for things that might have happened in the previous 24-hour news cycle. You are changing the news cycle. So anything we told you that might come up as newsworthy probably won't make the noon news most days. And it's not just my theory; it's exactly what the unanimous vote of the press gallery is saying in a letter today, and I'll read it. But also you've got all afternoon, then, because then we'll come back in the middle of the afternoon, at 1:30 one day and 3 o'clock on the next day or whatever, a couple of days a week, and then we come back for routine proceedings. The government then, for the 6 o'clock news, gets to do the good-news stuff all afternoon. Today is Earth Day, so Minister Gerretsen did an Earth Day; that's your 6 o'clock news. Anything bad that happened in the morning during question period, you've got all afternoon to patch up before the 6 o'clock and 11 o'clock news. By 11 o'clock, whatever happened at 11 o'clock in the morning in question period is stale. So what you're doing is effectively taking any bad news off the air; that's exactly what you're doing. Some other cynical parties have done that. You're trying to say that because we're objecting to-and we're only objecting to the fact that it's going to be very difficult to keep the government accountable because of the timing of question period.

What was wrong with 1:30 in the afternoon? Your news in the morning reflected whatever happened the night before, as did your noon news. Then a new news cycle starts after noon for the 6 o'clock news and the 11 o'clock news. The people of Ontario pay big taxes, huge taxes in this province-in fact, we're the highest-taxed jurisdiction in many classes in North America-and they deserve to know what their politicians are doing, and they deserve to know that the opposition is holding the government accountable.

This place is very important. There are dozens of dialysis clinics now open in this province because I got to bring in a motion when the NDP were in in the early 1990s, which passed in this House, to open up dialysis clinics. Before we opened them up in my area, you had to drive through the snow. Many, many people died; forget about the aboriginal people in the north. You could only go to Wellesley Hospital or Toronto hospital. I had a constituent come to me who said that he was going to commit suicide. His wife phoned me and said, "Would you please come and see him?" because the snowdrifts were up over his garage. He was paying, at that time, a tremendous amount of money, \$260 a week, to take a cab for the three days a week that he had to come down to Toronto. Anyway, this place is important.

Today, Mr. Sterling-I should refer to him by his riding name; I'm sure you're going to correct me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Lanark.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Lanark. He made a very good point about an adoption bill, that there needs to be a clause put in to protect children who might have been raped through incest or criminal activity within their family-to prevent people, after they're adopted out, from getting their new names under adoption disclosure, so that there can't be reprisals there. That was a very good use of question period.

The Banting homestead: We had the largest rally from a single riding down here just a few months ago. No, sorry-the birthing unit in Alliston. We had busloads come down, thanks to Gibson's, which provided the buses. They came down, we had a rally, and we're making progress. This week-just yesterday-the birthing unit opened. We got an obstetrician who had been trained in Toronto but who had spent the last few years in New Zealand. She came back because she's got elderly parents just inside my riding. She's come back and the Alliston hospital opened.

When I first raised that in a meeting when we had the hospital board down, Mr. Smitherman's representative in the meeting said that they weren't going to do anything about it. He cited two other towns that had lost their local hospital birthing units, and he said that they got over it. Well, because we had the ability to hold the government accountable, to raise that issue and to bring people down, Mr. Smitherman, the health minister, came over to me right after that rally and said, "I've changed my mind. I'm going to help you," and he did. A supervisor was appointed, and they did the right thing. But if I hadn't had the opportunity to hold him accountable in question period at a time when my media could get it out on the airwaves, when it actually has some impact on public opinion and on what government does-as you say, just look at countries that don't have this place, that don't have this opportunity.

When I was a government minister for eight years, I enjoyed question period. I thought it was a great challenge. It wasn't something I shied away from. I knew that I knew my stuff fairly well, and I knew I wanted to help the honourable members. I was health minister-you've got to have a real heart for that-and there were some horrible stories that I had to help with, and I would probably not have had as much motivation if it hadn't been for the thousands of people who watch this every day-in fact, we're just trying to get the numbers from broadcasting-and the repeats on Sunday.

Hello, Mum. I know you're watching every day-anyway, the ability to keep the government accountable.

So that you don't think that these are just my theories, let me just read the letter from Randy Rath, the press gallery president here at Queen's Park. He says:

"At the annual general meeting of the Queen's Park press gallery today, members voted unanimously to raise concerns about the government's proposed new legislative calendar.

1620

"Gallery members have grave misgivings the new schedule would limit access to cabinet ministers and the Premier by reporters in the following ways:

"(1) The fact that post-question-period scrums would take place shortly before noon would make it difficult, if not impossible, for broadcast reporters to attend while they are filing for noon newscasts or doing live hits at noon.

"This creates an unacceptable gap in access between broadcast and print reporters.

"(2) On cabinet and caucus days, reporters now have two opportunities to scrum ministers, in the morning and again in the afternoon following question period. The new schedule would cut this access in half.

"The gallery considers that any reduction in access would undermine the function of a free press at Queen's Park." That's pretty strong language.

"(3) Losing the access to ministers after question period in the afternoons makes it more difficult for reporters to get reaction to news stories breaking later in the day.

"We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you."

This was sent to the Premier, the government House leader, our House leader and the leaders of the parties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm compelled to interrupt the member-and I apologize for doing that-to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning green economic investment. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

I return to the member for Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, because Lisa Freedman, one of our very able table officers, was reminding me I've been going off-camera, and I'd hate to do that.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Shame. You'll lower the ratings.

Mr. Jim Wilson: And there's so much of me. You'd wonder how you couldn't keep it.

Anyway, our proposal, the amendment we're debating here today, is: We'd love to work 9 to 6; fine. It just means that there are going to be a lot more hours. We don't have the assistants in opposition. I was just going through the phone book two hours ago. I have one executive assistant at Queen's Park, and two constituency assistants. So to get ready for question period that early in the morning is going to be very, very difficult. We don't have the researchers and we don't have the staff.

Let's just see what we're up against here. In aboriginal affairs there are 16 political assistants; ag and food and rural affairs, nine-and this isn't including the constituency assistants; Attorney General, 14; children and youth services, 12; citizenship and immigration, 10; community and social services, 13. It goes up to health and long-term care, and I know this figure is low, but in the bodies in the phone book there are 26 political assistants. I had five ministerial positions and the most I ever had was 14, and that was as the Minister of Health. I think that when I went to northern affairs I probably had four.

Talk about work. As a minister, I wasn't in here very much. I was here for question period, but I had a driver one time clocking 84 hours a week. He quit because he couldn't keep up. Ministers work hard. Everybody works hard, whether you're in here or not.

Let me see: Tourism has 10; the Premier's office has 72 political assistants. So that's a lot of people to help you read the Ontario newspapers in the morning and to go through your clippings and to see what the news was in the previous 12 hours.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Seventy-two.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Yes, and they used to criticize Mike Harris. It's well over twice what Mike Harris

had, and that's just in the phone book. You know how you hide them. That's not including the parliamentary assistants either, who all have their assistants. You get a lot more help and you can get to question period.

You're also going to drive costs up around here, by the way. Some of the bureaucrats are talking about-in the deputy ministers' offices, they're going to have to come in at 4 in the morning. Is that family-friendly for these people? They are going to have to come in at 4 in the morning. We're going to have to move the clips up to get them earlier in the morning. We're going to be trying to think up questions when the newspapers aren't even out yet. It's not family-friendly, and don't pretend it is. It's absolutely crazy.

You've got the media against you now. Maybe "duped" is too strong a word, but you certainly didn't follow the process you said you were going to follow when my colleague from Nepean-Carleton and my NDP colleague from Hamilton Centre-I'm not sure who was there from the government side, but there was a committee to be set up to spend some time and truly make the place more family-friendly. That didn't mean to change question period from 2 o'clock in the afternoon to mid-morning.

The committee, we heard today from the member for Nepean-Carleton, didn't even meet, or met in a cursory way. The government didn't pay attention at all. We did hear from the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan a few minutes ago that this stuff is all going to be reviewed and this is just a pilot project. Nothing gets changed, folks. I'm sure the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Bradley, who's the dean of this House, would tell you that they don't get changed back too often. How can we trust you? The committee that you set up in good faith, or we thought in good faith, to recommend some changes to truly make it family-friendly and get rid of those night sittings-the process was never used. We can't trust you there.

I remember the days when Dalton McGuinty said-he actually had it in his platform at one time and maybe even again in the last election-that he was going to respect members more, that committees were going to be more fair, that you wouldn't have the tyranny of the majority all the time that we seem to have in this place, and certainly he was going to respect the role of the private members.

In the last four minutes I have, I want to go back and talk about private members. There will be no one here Thursday afternoon when you do three private members' ballot items. There will certainly be no media to cover it. You've moved it to the most irrelevant part of the week. You know that so many members from outside town have to get into their cars or on a train or a plane to get home for their Friday and Saturday constituency appointments, and you are just completely demeaning the role of the regular member by moving it to the back end of the week. There is not going to be anybody here to listen to you debate. Attendance on Thursday mornings is bad enough, but it's a free democracy, so you're free to come and go. But to make it such an irrelevant thing and then to have as part of your speaking notes all the time that you guys just blab out over there, "Oh, we're going to do three ballot items now." You're doing three ballot items, there's a shorter time for each ballot item, and no one will be here. It will be completely irrelevant. I think you would even have problems keeping ministers here if it weren't for the rules. You'd probably have problems getting ministers here on Thursday afternoon.

But, again, I'll just repeat: You guys have the staff. You can order the bureaucracy in at 4 or 3:30 in the morning to get your notes and briefings ready. You have all that power and authority, but you're not being fair in this process. These are not good changes. If it's 9 to 6 or 9 to 6:30 at night, that's fine with me-make it 8:30-but move question period to where it's fairer for us to hold the government accountable. We need those precious couple more hours in the day to meet up with the news cycle that's occurring. The reporters need time to file, they need time to cover, and they need time to scrutinize and hold the government accountable too.

Finally, I did get some stats. They don't seem to have too many stats up to date, but in 1991, 140,000

households watched this thing live every day, I guess-I'm not supposed to quote-140,000. That's quite a few years ago, and I don't know if interest would have waned since then, but it might have.

Why don't we just take a step back on all this and get some of the people who have been around here a long time to try and truly make this place people-friendly? Allow the committee that you set up to actually have a couple of meetings. Let's not ram these things through in three days, because we'll be stuck with them for the next probably 20 years in this place, and it's just not fair. It's cynical politics. Fewer people will take any interest.

How are you going to get people down on a Thursday afternoon in the middle of rush hour? Because private members' is going to start at about 4 in the afternoon. You're not even going to get your interest group down here. No one is going to come to Toronto on a Thursday afternoon in the middle of rush hour. We're used to having groups, as I said. When I was doing the dialysis thing, we had dialysis patients down. You've just ruined the whole thing to do with private members' public business.

You should be ashamed of yourselves, and you should be paying a little more attention to what you're actually doing. You've been given the sacred trust of a majority government, and people don't want to be looking over your shoulder and wondering why you're being cynical or how you're being cynical. They expect you to be fair to everyone because we're here to represent the taxpayers. As I said, they pay huge taxes. They expect us to conduct ourselves in the tradition of a free, open and democratic process. While I understand that being in the government and having a majority, you have to wield your muscle sometimes to get some things done, this isn't right. This is trying to make sure that your bad news is over with in the morning, and then you've got all afternoon to do your ministerial statements and debate items which may be of good news, and usually are of good news, to the government.

With that, I thank people at home for listening, I thank the honourable members here for listening, and I would ask the government to reconsider what it's doing.

1630

Mr. Peter Kormos: This is an incredibly important discussion. It's an incredibly important decision that 106 members of this assembly are going to have to make when this matter goes to a vote. There is not going to be a second and third reading. This is a motion; there is one debate. There is no referral of the matter to committee for consideration through the lens of members of the public or commentators. It's one debate, and upon the completion of this debate, the motion will be voted upon.

Look, I've been here just about 20 years now, and I tell you, I have been blessed to have served here with some incredible members of this Legislative Assembly from all three political parties. I was so fortunate, so very fortunate, so incredibly lucky to be here in the years before 1990. I watched and listened. And again, very much unlike the way it operates now, I didn't wait for House duty to come in here, because when somebody like Bob Nixon or Ian Scott or David Reville or Andy Brandt or a young Bob Runciman was speaking here on any number of issues, I sat in this chamber, way up there in that corner where Billy Murdoch is now, and I listened.

I remember the time in this Legislature-oh, I remember heckles. There were some great hecklers; there were some great verbal jousters. Dave Christopherson from the New Democrats was amongst those who-his heckles were at least loud. He thought they were clever, and most of the time, most people thought they were reasonably clever. And heck, go back again to that old guard-Scott, Nixon, Bradley; if a young neophyte was going to learn how to heckle here, they'd be well advised to sit at the feet of those great interjectors.

But I also remember a time in this chamber that when a party leader spoke in the leadoff, for instance, of an important policy debate, people of all three parties paused and listened. Again, the times have certainly changed. That change began most dramatically first in 1992. I remember that far too clearly. The second dramatic change to the standing orders was in 1997.

Let's make something perfectly clear: I believe that this has little to do with the family-friendly effort. Look, it's easy for me to say-I don't have a family, I don't have kids, and there are a few others here who don't have those obligations. It's easy for us to say-and I do-"Look, if you want to come here at 9, I'll come here at 8," to the chagrin of my caucus colleagues. Heck, I'll be here at 7, and I will indeed stay till 9 or 9:30.

So the extent of the point to which these standing orders accommodate people with families, I say, is as much an accident as anything else, because people's lives are incredibly different. It's incredibly different if you're a Toronto member as compared to a southwestern Ontario member or up Sarnia-Lambton way. It has nothing to do with getting home at night to take care of your kids or your spouse or parents or what have you, because you don't go home during the week-only very rarely. If you live in the far north, in remote regions, there are some weekends you don't get home just because Air Canada promises you that flight but the flight gets cancelled. So you turn around and go back to the exit ramp of whatever terminal the plane is leaving from and you go back to your Toronto apartment. You call your kids or your family or your constituents, and you've got to beg off and hope you can get a flight again the next day-maybe.

Even Toronto members-heck, do you think most Toronto members are going to go home in the evening to accommodate their spouses and kids and families? Probably not, because they're here in town. They'll be going to any number of events-like Mr. Hudak; and I wish we could during the week-church events, school events, PTA meetings, everything from the secular to the most spiritual.

So please, let's not frame this discussion in the context of family friendly. There will be any number of views about what constitutes family friendly. Let's acknowledge-and look, I gave the Premier credit.

Workdays? Where I come from, most workdays start at 6:30 or 7 o'clock in the morning, so please, let's not be overly self-indulgent, and a workday is a real workday. If you pour concrete or pour foundations, you're out there at 7 o'clock in the morning, in the cold, blizzard winter. They'll use the heaters to heat the cement mix and they'll salt it to keep it fluid. And it doesn't matter whether you've been up late the night before with a sick kid or arguing with a spouse, or whether you had too much to drink and you're a little thick-headed that morning, you get up at 5:30, 6:30, 7 or 7:30 in the morning. You don't roll over in bed and say to your spouse, "Honey, call the constituency office or one of my constituency staff and tell them I won't be in for the 9:30 a.m. meeting. Tell them I'm really sorry, I'm meeting with the Premier or something like that." Most working people don't do that.

Look, we're very privileged. We are incredibly privileged. There are only 107 members or persons of this provincial community who at any given time get to sit in these seats. We've just gone through a number of inaugural speeches by newly elected members, and those I wasn't able to be here and listen to, I've read on Hansard. I've been touched and moved, as has every member of this place, I'm sure, by the stories that people elected to this chamber represent, not just for themselves but for their families, for their family histories and the stories that they tell for new Canadians. I watched as members gave their inaugural addresses, and I watched as they had their parents, spouses, aunts, uncles and kids, some of them from the old country, sitting up there in the members' gallery. Even as a relatively seasoned member of this chamber, I couldn't help but be moved by what the stories of their elected son, daughter, wife, husband, granddaughter, grandson meant.

We're very honoured to be here-very, very privileged. And I don't want to get into the debate about

how much we earn, but we're paid reasonably well. I'm convinced as well that there isn't a single person-well, there may be one or two that I've witnessed in 20 years. But for those one or two, there isn't a single person who doesn't come here full of vim, vinegar and passion, thinking that they're going to do better than the guys who were running against them, or certainly wanting to. I don't deny anybody the right to say that about themselves here.

In 1992, there was an incredibly bitter debate in this chamber. The government of the day had a motion that dramatically changed the standing orders, radically changed the standing orders. I was reminded by Hansard of the opening comments on behalf of the Liberal opposition by Sean Conway. He may have been the opposition House leader at the time. Let me, if I may, remind people what Sean Conway had to say to the government of the day and to its House leader during the debate around that government's assault on the standing orders. He said:

"Let me be perhaps a bit indelicate"-very Conwaysque, "indelicate." "We have some members in this chamber who don't know the honourable member from Windsor-Riverside"-that was the government House leader who moved a motion with the radical changes to the standing orders.

1640

Conway said:

"We have some members of this chamber who don't know the honourable member for Windsor-Riverside as well as I do. I know him better than anyone in this place. I have been in the parliamentary trenches with the honourable member for Windsor-Riverside and I must say that it is a very particular and idiosyncratic pleasure to be with the government House leader in these matters.

"It is no secret that I relate to him like Stephen Lewis related to Morty Shulman. I don't like the member for Windsor-Riverside. In fact, on a number of occasions I can tell you that I have behaved badly because I dislike him so completely. I give him credit as a resourceful and hardworking fellow who has I think done very good bidding for his colleagues; I take nothing away from him on that account. But in my dealings with him I have often found him to be a man whose word is not worth the paper it is written on. I find him to be someone of a very disagreeable kind. I'll tell you, three years ago in a similar debate, I found his disagreeableness endless. I found that it verged on the despicable. I'm glad he's leaving,..." as the government House leader left the chamber.

I read that comment several times, knowing that I was going to be speaking here on behalf of the NDP caucus. I want to tell you that just as Sean Conway had served with the member for Windsor-Riverside, who was then the government House leader for many years, I've now had the opportunity to be here for a number of years with the government House leader and I want to be very, very clear: While Conway may have had his incredible, intense dislike for Dave Cooke, I have no dislike for Mr. Bryant. I found it a distinct honour to see him as a young MPP when he sat up here in the Liberal opposition, just sort of upwind from me, if you will, and I watched him, as a bright, young lawyer newly elected, work very hard at being an effective opposition member, and he became one. Do you remember that, Speaker? Bright, capable, hard-hitting, tough in question period. By God, did the government House leader, when he was an opposition member, ever court the media out there after that one-hour question period. He did. He did the stroll, as we call it. I don't want to be indelicate myself, but we call it the stroll. After question period, you have any number of government and opposition backbenchers strolling back and forth, looking for a reporter, saying, "Pick me, pick me," to interview them. The government House leader back in those days-and I remember him. We were both opposition members and we were opposition colleagues. We served on the same committees because of course he was the justice critic and, again, a newly elected member. I took great delight in getting to know him, working with him and watching him because it's a remarkable transition.

Yes, people know I'm a lawyer too. When I was elected here back in 1988, I came from a courtroom culture. I was in court literally every day. I did criminal defence work literally five days a week, and as many as probably 50 weeks a year; our courts were shut down at Christmastime. But in the courtroom there are some economies expected by heavy-handed judges who will, in their most generous moments, look at their watches as you're speaking as defence counsel or as Crown Attorney, or as often as not simply interrupt and say, "Are you finished yet? I think I've heard quite enough."

I have to tell you that the transition from that courtroom environment, that courtroom culture, where there was an economy expected in terms of the words that you used-not the types of words but the volume of words you used-to coming here was a far different story. It was. Dave Reville or any one of those guys would take me down to the justice committee and say, "Kormos, we can't let them get past section 16 before 6 o'clock"-do you remember having to do that at times, Mr. Bradley, in opposition?-"because, you see, we've got a group that's going to come here tomorrow and comment on section 17 of the bill that's in committee now and we don't want that section passed by the government until we get these folks here to comment on it because we think we might be able to influence the government about section 17, a section of the bill that we have great concern about. So, Kormos, get into that committee and make sure the committee doesn't progress past section 16."

I was as adept as anyone could be at talking about the exegetical "or" versus the conjunctive "or" and whether this comma was appropriate as compared to a semicolon; taking the exchanges into the most obscure with, admittedly, the goal-and I used section 16 as an example; it could have been section 85 or 100-of slowing down the progress of that bill in committee because there was a constituency out there that had something important to say about it that couldn't be in Toronto until tomorrow, and we didn't want the next section passed until they got there.

Let me make this observation as well, please. I've witnessed the massive sweep of the election of 1987. I witnessed the massive sweep of the elections of 1990, 1995 and then 2003. In those sweeps, people inevitably get elected who have never been in Parliament before, and because it's a sweep, they are more likely than not to be elected as government members. In the course of those governments-I'll say this to you because I've said it so many times; I've said it publicly and I have no regrets about saying it. It's an accurate, in my view, observation. In the course of electoral sweeps, inevitably, some people get elected who have no business being in the Parliament, and in the course of electoral sweeps, inevitably, some good parliamentarians get defeated as victims of a sweep.

But I'll tell you this: One of the regrettable things about being elected in a sweep-and I'll not speak for others, so I'll perhaps speak for people within the NDP so that nobody takes great offence-is that they come to this Parliament with no experience in opposition. I remember in 2003 some very bright, capable people coming to the Parliament. I knew their reputations. I spoke with them. I remember how dismayed they would be at the fact that a debate was going on for three days-not three solid days; three sessional days of, on a good day, two and a half hours each.

I remember people would be looking up here at the opposition with disgust: "What are you guys doing?" They would literally ask, what are we doing here? Of course, we would respond, "Well, if you don't know, then what are you doing here?" But they said, "What are you guys doing?" You see, these are people who have never been in opposition. I have been in opposition a lot. Even when I was in government, I was in opposition. I acknowledge that, and I have no shame. I have no shame about that, because I think I will mention to you that in 1992, when that government introduced and forced through rule changes, I stood up and condemned them. I've got to tell you that I didn't like doing that. I took no delight in doing it. It wasn't a pleasant thing to do. But I stood up and condemned them.

The sad thing is and the sad observation is, as has already been noted, that first of all, governments don't introduce standing order changes to assist the opposition. It's just naive and silly to think that

that's their goal. Least of all do majority governments-they didn't in 1992. They didn't in 1999. My friends, they are not doing it now, in 2008. These standing orders-some of which still remain enigmatic, because it was oh so difficult during some hurried meetings on Thursday mornings when House leaders met. It was so frustratingly difficult-nigh impossible-to get the government House leader to explain why a particular standing order was being amended. But this we know: Governments don't change standing orders to assist the opposition. Governments change standing orders to assist the government, and assisting the government inevitably means frustrating the opposition.

1650

Who was the member who, in the debate about the 1997 rule changes, said about the motion imposing the standing order changes at that time, the Baird standing orders: "The House and the people of Ontario should know what this motion is all about. It's all about making the trains run on time in Ontario. It's all about efficiency for the members of the Premier's staff, who are dissatisfied that they are unable to ram through legislation and other matters in this House in a period of time that they consider to be convenient to themselves"? Who said that? The member from St. Catharines, an experienced, long-time member of this House-indeed, one of its deans.

He also said this: "The government House leader says that previous governments have made changes. One thing members of this Legislature must know is that no future government will change the rules you implement; they won't, because it's convenient to governments. When you make this change, when you implement these changes to procedures, no future government will change those to make it easier for the opposition. That's why it's so important to defeat, to eliminate these changes today, because governments like the convenience."

I remember being here in this chamber when the member from St. Catharines said those words. I listened to them with the respect and admiration that I've had for him ever since I've known him, and that I continue to have for him.

He said as well, "The full purpose of this change this afternoon is to make it more convenient for the advisers, the unelected whiz kids, the people who have little regard for those of us who are elected, to get their way, and to get their way more quickly. It has nothing to do with anything else and people in this province should know that."

I recall being here and listening with respect and admiration to the member for St. Catharines, who I have respected and admired from my first acquaintance with him, indeed, until the present.

"This is originating in the Office of the Premier. That's where this comes from. That crew is not interested in this House. That crew is not interested in democracy. They don't want the careful analysis of legislation that all of us look forward to in this House. They're not interested in anything that would slow down the implementation of their radical, revolutionary agenda, which is designed largely to benefit the richest, the most powerful and indeed the most privileged people in this province. They don't want that agenda slowed down in any way"-the member from St. Catharines again, during that same debate.

"Let's not pretend under some category that this has anything to do with enhancing the role of individual members. It has nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with using the sledgehammer on the opposition and bulldozing legislation and other matters through this House."

As I spoke to you a few minutes ago about the amazement of newly elected government members as to why the opposition would want to debate a bill for more than one day, first of all, there's the incredible tendency on the part of government members to say, "Well, we just don't understand. We heard them the other night"-here during debate the other afternoon, saying that she looked forward to

unanimous support for that government bill. I said, "But why? Why is it in and of itself a good thing to have unanimous support?" There are various interests here in this province, and there will inevitably be people who don't agree with the policy position being advocated or being contained in a particular piece of legislation. Who speaks for them? More often than not, it's the opposition. And I say, just as more often than not it's the opposition that speaks for the minority, as often as not, it's the opposition that speaks for the majority too.

There's a sense that somehow legislation, once it's developed in the back room, should be sped through this chamber so that it can become law and public policy can be enacted. I say, on the contrary. There's a reason why parliamentary tradition has embraced first, second and third reading. It's so that you can't pass things in a New York minute with the snap of a finger. It's so that there has to be some sober consideration. It's so that there has to be an opportunity for the public to become aware of what's happening in their Parliament, be it here in Toronto or on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. The tool that they use is either the television broadcasts from here, or the noon news, the 6 o'clock news, the 11 o'clock news and the morning newspapers. That press gallery, that collection of women and men peering over your shoulder, Speaker, are in my view one of the most important, one of the most significant and one of the most potent players in a democracy, because they are truly the eyes and ears of the public. Quite frankly, I think people appreciate the diversity of the press gallery, because inevitably, when they read about a piece of legislation in the Sun, they may get a very different perspective when they read about that same piece of legislation in the Toronto Star, in the Globe and Mail, in the National Post or in Now magazine. And that's a good thing, too.

I say it's our responsibility to make sure that we don't build a system that so disarms the opposition that they can't strategically moderate the flow of legislation through this chamber. Why, indeed, it has been commented on before in this chamber. Let me read this Hansard extract for you, Speaker: "What is important is that debate take place over a period of time, so that the public at home watching this television channel or through the news media coverage of this place, or for those who are lucky enough now to have the Internet and a computer to get Hansard, because they can't get Hansard any more in the printed form through the kind of subscription they used to-it's important that those people know what the issues are before the House, that they know the arguments on all sides." Again, the member for St. Catharines said that in 1997. He said that as an experienced legislator, as a conscientious and responsible legislator, as a parliamentarian who, like more than a few others here, cherishes the important responsibilities, respects those responsibilities and understands the obligations by virtue of being elected here.

I say to you, Speaker, that it is a fundamental error for there to be that fascination, that obsession, with speeding legislation-indeed, on those occasions where this House has had to respond speedily to issues, it has. It has, it has, it has. Indeed, this was said as well in the Legislature: "I think one has to understand that the only way opposition-not just opposition members but any public opposition to any proposed piece of legislation-can be effectively dealt with or talked about under our system of government, under the parliamentary system of government, is through the opposition parties' ability to debate, and yes, on occasion even stall or slow down progress of a particular bill, and that has worked very effectively over the years against governments of all political stripes." Ernie Eves said that in 1992, and Mr. Bradley, the member from St. Catharines, quoted him with approval in 1997. Mr. Bradley, the member for St. Catharines, said, "I agree with Ernie. He was right on that occasion and he made that argument with a good deal of sincerity and a knowledge of how this House works."

Most people here know Professor Graham White. Graham White is one of Canada's foremost authorities on parliamentary tradition and, more importantly, on the democratic workings of Parliament. I suspect most members have in their office libraries his book, *The Ontario Legislature: A Political Analysis*. If they don't, they should, and if they don't want to have it in their office library, of course it's in the legislative library. Hopefully it's still available on amazon.ca. Professor White would be pleased, I'm sure, were people to continue to buy the book in its latest edition.

1700

Professor White worked here at the Clerks' table. He's familiar with this provincial Legislature. I'm looking at page 96 of his book now. He said, "In terms of members' attendance, media attention and overall political import, question period is arguably the most significant proceeding of the Ontario Legislature."

I believe that. It is the highlight of the parliamentary day, because notwithstanding all of the showmanship, bravado and excessive rhetoric that's employed in question period, it is the one opportunity that Ontarians, through their elected members, have to attempt to hold their government to account. I've always believed that that's the most fundamental role of the opposition parties.

I hope I'm not being tedious by pointing out the carvings on the walls here. The pages, I'm sure, already know this from their introductory sessions. But facing the government up there is an eagle. It's facing the government because it's symbolically encouraging the government members to be-

Interjection: It's an owl.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's right, the owl-to use wisdom. Facing the opposition members is an eagle. The eagle, of course, is sharp-eyed and sometimes aggressive, but it's symbolically calling upon opposition members to be sharp-eyed and aggressive, and yes, even forceful. The eagle can be up there flying and spot a prey down there that's just like a little speck of dust to the human eye, but it can swoop down and grab it. The wisdom of the owl faces the government; the tenacity and sharp-sightedness, and I suppose courage, of the eagle faces the opposition.

I've always believed that the opposition has a very important role to play, and I think that good government is as much a function of good opposition as anything else. But if the opposition has the responsibility to keep the government in check, I say that the government backbenchers have their own responsibility, and that's to keep their cabinet in check.

Their cabinet can't do anything, their Premier can't do anything, unless she or he or it has the support of government backbenchers. That's a very difficult thing to do, to call one's own government to task, because it means you don't get to be a parliamentary assistant with the extra pay and the extra staff. You don't get the other perk jobs with the extra pay. You don't get picked for the junkets, which are part of the mechanisms that whips use to reward good and obedient members. Indeed, you're not inclined to be sitting in the front row-although it does happen from time to time, doesn't it, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, back in 2003 promised parliamentary reform. Is this his idea of parliamentary reform? He promised more of a role for the backbencher. He promised to treat all members of this Legislature with respect and regard, including opposition members. Instead, we witness, day after day, a growing impatience with the opposition as if somehow they don't deserve their elected roles as much as government members do. I say to government members, the tides will shift. Don't brag to me about being elected in two successive Liberal sweeps. Come back here and get re-elected when there's a tide going against the Liberals. Brag to me then.

It's easy sitting as a government backbencher if you consider your only role to be to follow the marching orders. Then I suppose you simply wait for your turn at the cabinet door. But I say, notwithstanding the party system and party discipline, government members have as important a role here as they wish to seize for themselves. And I concede it's not easy.

We've already heard today about the position taken. Look, opposition members made it very clear at House leaders' meetings that while we didn't like some of the various standing order changes-I'm

telling you, we didn't like I think it's going to be the super Monday now or the super Tuesday, the six and a half hours of debate on a single day. Super Monday. We didn't like that because it was conceivable that a bill could pass second reading in that one day. In fact, the government concedes that's the case. That's why they've altered their standing order proposal to include the provision that a bill can't be called for the same reading in both the morning and afternoon of the same day. So it was true.

When the Premier talks about more debate time, let's understand that that doesn't mean more debate time, because a bill will be deemed time-allocatable after 6.5 hours of debate. In fact, the Speaker will automatically adjourn debate at the point of 6.5 unless requested not to by the government. So there isn't more debate on any given bill-far from it.

In fact, you're sitting there every day, watching and listening, and I've noticed a tendency for government members not to engage in debate around government business. I've witnessed a tendency for government members to think that somehow making the two minutes of questions and comments between other speakers constitutes engaging in debate, or using five minutes of a 20-minute slot.

Why is it important for people to participate in that debate, even government members? Because your constituents and mine have a right to know where we stand on any given issue. Your constituents and mine have a right to have their stories told in this Parliament. Your constituents and mine have a right to have their lives talked about in the context of government legislation and government policy initiatives. Your folks and mine have a right to a voice that they can hear when they tune in to the legislative channel or when they sit down and watch the 6 o'clock news or read tomorrow morning's Toronto Star.

Opposition House leaders have made it very clear that we understand the government's ability to change the standing orders. We've made it clear that we don't like the 6.5-hour super Monday. We've made it very clear that we think the quality of debate will be very poor at 9 or 9:30 a.m. We've made it very clear that we think that the three-hour private members' public business on Thursday afternoon has some frailties, that private members' public business loses some of its significance when you pop it into a Thursday afternoon, when attendance here is pretty sparse.

I'm going to tell you this: There will not be quorum calls, at least I hope to goodness there won't be. We'd be cutting our own throats to do a quorum call during private members' public business. But it'll be a heck of a time keeping a quorum, won't it? You're going to have to be making some pretty persuasive arguments to your colleagues when you want them to be here to support one of your bills on a Thursday afternoon. That's just the nature of the beast.

Do I like it that way? I'm here Thursdays. But then again, I don't have to drive all the way to Ottawa to get home. I don't have to drive all the way to Windsor. The members from Windsor drive four and a half hours to get to Windsor; I drive three and a half to get to Welland, which is a fraction of the distance but it's the QEW rush hour.

1710

But opposition members have made it clear that the important issue for us is question period. You know why? Because I believe, in no small part, that question period is the property of the opposition. We know that the government is the one that calls bills. In fact, a private member's public business bill is no longer a private member's bill once it has been discharged from committee. It then becomes a government bill because only the government can call it.

In fact, Speakers have had to rule on that, haven't they, Speaker? Remember that? We had a point of order when the government wanted to move private members' public business into an evening

session. We argued that you could only call private members' public business during private members' public business hour on Thursday morning. Your ruling was that no, this is a government bill. Government House leaders for years have said, "How do we get this legislation passed?" There's the whining tone: "How do we get it passed?" You call it; that is how you get it passed.

There are only so many opposition members. That's why we're in opposition. New Democrats delay a bill for an overly long period of time? There are only 10 of us. Do the math. After seven hours or so, debates are down to 10 minutes per slot.

I remember being elected here, when a lead could be an hour and a half, two hours, three hours, four hours-and some were. I remember being here when petitions could last all day. I remember being here when bells could be rung. The tactic was to challenge the Chair and force a vote, and then the three whips would not show up to call the vote, and the bells would ring until they did.

Want to know something? Talk to some of the old-timers, if you will-the ones who were here before 1990. More legislation got passed. More legislation was considered by committee. The debate was more meaningful. More government members participated in the debate in a meaningful way. There was the prioritization of issues so that the public could truly be involved in an active way in developing policy around fundamental issues that affected them, their lives and their futures.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: What happened?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sean Conway made changes.

Mr. Peter Kormos: We witnessed some modest changes in 1989, some very dramatic changes in 1992 and some even more drastic ones in 1997. Here we are in 2008, and has nobody here learned? As I say, at some point those Liberal colleagues of mine, the ones who are re-elected, will be sitting in opposition again. The ones who are defeated won't be here at all, but that's why the Liberals will be the opposition. I'm not saying it's going to happen in the next election. There are some who suspected it might have happened in the last election, but Lord knows, things didn't go the way they were planned, did they, Speaker? I've got to talk to that man someday, I've got to tell you; I've got some things to tell him. But someday, government members will be in opposition, the ones who are left, and just as I pleaded with NDP colleagues in 1992 and told them the same thing, I plead with members now to please use caution.

Opposition House leaders have made it very clear to the government that we'll sign off on all of the proposed rule changes, we will buy in, but question period is so fundamentally important. Question period deserves to be highlighted. Question period deserves to be positioned during the time in the day when it's most accessible for the public, either through their physical presence here or through the Legislative Assembly broadcast, and, most importantly, most fundamentally, by the media.

You know that earlier today a letter was sent by the president of the Queen's Park press gallery. That's part of this institution. Understand that. It's not just a gaggle of freelance reporters who wander in and out when they have to make a couple of bucks and write a story. Well, it's not. It's a very important part of this place, as the language is wont to call it. They are the eyes and ears of the public. If it's the opposition's job to keep the government honest, it's the media's job to keep all of us on the straight and narrow, isn't it? I've been here, once again, long enough to have known a whole lot of them, through a number of periods in time-periods in time when the culture here was different in oh, so many ways from what it is now.

I've got to tell you-and I had occasion to say this a couple of months ago when we were bidding farewell to two of our media colleagues here, two of the members of the press gallery. I wanted to thank them for the valuable input they had in helping me become adapted to Queen's Park and

become more effective to the extent that I am at getting a message out there to folks, like the folks down where I come from, and folks in other parts of the province. I am extremely grateful to the members of the press gallery, all of whom I've known here to a pretty significant degree.

I tell you, I find their input on this issue to be a valuable bit of input. Mr. Rath, on behalf of the press gallery, exhorts this government to not move question period to 10:45 a.m. Mr. Rath says:

"The fact that post-question-period scrums would take place shortly before noon would make it difficult, if not impossible, for broadcast reporters to attend while they are filing for noon newscasts or doing live hits at noon...."

"On cabinet and caucus days, reporters now have two opportunities to scrum ministers, in the morning and again in the afternoon following question period. The new schedule would cut this access in half."

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Manitoulin interjects. He obviously disagrees with the press gallery. They're all wrong. Old Jimmy Coyle, who's been a newspaper reporter for a couple of decades at least-not a couple, a few-has seen them come and go at Queen's Park. He's seen them rise and fall. Of course, he must be wrong. Randy Rath, the president of the press gallery, underwent some pretty vicious mocking earlier today during question period. Randy Rath underwent some pretty serious mocking-vicious mocking, I would call it.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member interjects. It wasn't very funny, friend, to see a serious position taken by the Queen's Park press gallery-this isn't a gaggle of freelance reporters who wander in or out whenever they need a few bucks by writing a story or a column. These are long-time, serious, professional journalists, yet they are, according to this government, all wet, and wrong on every issue.

Government members and the Premier may want to know that Professor Graham White, in addition to authoring the book that I referred to and his lengthy analysis of question period and its importance to Parliament, wrote, on April 22, 2008, to Howard Hampton, leader of the NDP. In this letter he writes:

"As mentioned above, while there is room to debate many of the proposed rule changes, I cannot imagine that any neutral observer could disagree that moving question period into the morning would very seriously detract from the strongest accountability mechanism available to the opposition...."

"In short, a vibrant, effective question period is essential to the health of democracy in this province.

"Moving question period into the morning would severely undercut its effectiveness. I understand that the government's initial plan was to begin question period at 9 a.m. While the revised proposed starting time of 10:45 a.m. is somewhat better, it would still leave the opposition in a very difficult position. Effective questions require planning, research and reflection. This is difficult enough when question period occurs early in the afternoon but would be all but impossible for a morning question period ... whatever changes are made to the starting and ending time of the legislative day, there is absolutely no need whatsoever to change the time of question period."

1720

There are enough copies of this letter circulating around here now. I won't use the limited amount of time I have left to read the rest of it into the record. I want you to understand this, Speaker: Opposition House leaders agreed to sign off on this motion but for the question of question period. We think it's incredibly important.

We understand the government wants to spend more hours each day debating. It wants to accelerate the pace with which its legislation passes. As a majority government, they can do that. We don't like it; we understand it. We indeed have always found evening sittings regrettable not because it's in the evening but because it's a sessional day with no question period. That's been clear. You want to sit Fridays? Have a question period on Friday. The New Democrats have been very clear at any number of points in the history of this government that we will be prepared to sit on Fridays. Let's have question period and then orders of the day. You can call whatever bill you want. How do you pass legislation, my friends? You call the bills on the order paper. It's as simple as that.

I want to make it clear as well that I regret the loss of that period of time-Mr. Wilson talked about it earlier today. While there are strong and heated adversarial exchanges here, during that Peterson auto insurance debate I think I held the floor for darned near a month, week after week after week on the government's Bill 68. Then it culminated when the government figured they were going to wrap it up with that overnight session. Murray Elston was the minister in charge of auto insurance. I remember that Bob Runciman was the critic for the Conservatives.

That was a tough, long debate. There was huge public interest in it. The opposition did what it felt it had to do-I think it was rewarded for doing that in the election of 1990-to make sure public attention was focused on the debate and make sure the government understood how important this was to so many people. Yet there was still an incredibly high level of cordiality between members, including opposition members.

That's why I wanted to be very clear, when I opened my comments today, that while Mr. Conway may have despised David Cooke, the government House leader of that day, I do not share that same emotion with respect to Mr. Bryant. I understand that the government House leader is effectively doing what the Premier's office wants him to do.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I want you to understand this and I want government members to understand this. This has not been a hostile Parliament. It hasn't. This has not been a dilatory opposition.

A few years back, when Mr. Stockwell was the government House leader, I remember his one reference to me as the House leader from hell. My caucus mates promptly got me a T-shirt that said "The House Leader from Hell," and I wore it with some pride.

I remember when this place was hostile. I don't want it to return to that condition.

Let me remind folks once again what my old friend Mr. Bradley had to say in 1997. This was during the debate around the Conservative government, the Baird standing order changes: "We had a circumstance where I thought we were coming into the last couple of weeks of this portion of the sitting of the Legislature where the mood was good, where people were trying to be conciliatory; not all the t's were crossed and not all the i's were dotted, but we were trying to be conciliatory. I thought we could have accommodated the government agenda, because they had been wise enough, for instance, not to include Bill 136, a very controversial piece of legislation. I thought we could have accommodated the government agenda and I genuinely believed that. There was a mood of co-

operation. When people asked for unanimous consent in this House, they would get unanimous consent.

"I can't emphasize how important unanimous consent is, because someday this government is going to make a mistake. It's going to lose a bill and it's going to ask the opposition if they can have unanimous consent to roll back the clock. Usually the opposition, although it has a strategic opportunity to thwart the government's agenda on that occasion, when it recognizes that it was simply a clerical error or an error of procedure, will grant the government that unanimous consent. Well, I'm going to tell you something: You implement this and you've seen the last unanimous consent."

So Mr. Bradley told John Baird in 1997, and it was a very unhappy place, I tell you, because Mr. Bradley, on behalf of his Liberal colleagues, indeed used every opportunity, however unfair, to retaliate.

Again, I'm not saying that New Democrats are going to put themselves in that position, but I'm telling you that all of us would far sooner serve in a chamber where we could retain some level of cordiality and where, from time to time, when a mistake was made, there would be an opportunity to cure that error.

We've seen it over and over again. We've seen the government House leader walk over to this side, saying, "X, Y or Z has happened. We didn't expect it. Will you give us UC?" That's the euphemism around here-UC-for some sort of remedy. "Of course."

I get the impression that government members see this as something of a joke, that they've been served poorly by the sources of their information. I don't credit Mr. Bryant with having authored this, because I'm confident it didn't come from him but it came from the Premier's office. And I'm equally confident that when it comes to the Premier's office, let's not kid ourselves, it serves the Premier's interests. Just as the Premier's interests aren't always the interests of the people of Ontario, they're not always the interests of his own backbenchers either because, if there's one single, most regrettable transition that's occurred here, it's the transfer of power from elected members to the Premier's office and, even more significantly, to the unelected people in the Premier's office, and even more significantly than that, to the unelected people who aren't even in the Premier's office, who are in any number of downtown law firms, corporate towers or consulting offices.

I'll be back on the Monday following the passage of these orders, ready to do question period, and so will nine other New Democrats. We'll debate bills for six and a half hours a day or longer, and so will, I'm sure, my Conservative counterparts. But I just say we are doing a very regrettable thing. It is truly unfortunate. My fear, my real apprehension, is that 10 years down the road, just as I have been able to quote members from the past who opposed similar rule changes, some of my Liberal colleagues here will be sitting as opposition members, reminding-

Hon. James J. Bradley: I don't have to speak now. You've put all my quotes in.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Bradley says-I appreciate your acknowledgement of those quotes, sir.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you. I'm really pleased you did that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're welcome, Mr. Bradley. "Thank you," then, goes into Hansard.

Regrettable. I'm not pleased, and I'm not particularly proud of this chamber right now, but we'll continue to do battle as we must.

1730

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm pleased to be sharing my time with the member for Pickering-Scarborough East. On October 10, 2007, my life changed. I have to say that being elected has been one of the greatest experiences of my life; to be able to represent the people of Hamilton Mountain in this House. I'm extremely proud of the work we do, and I'm happy to speak on the issue of the proposed changes of the standing orders to the Ontario Legislature.

I'd like to first state that I will be supporting the changes in the hours of the Legislature. I agree with the members of the House, the one member who spoke last night, when she talked about what it was like to be a politician and the workload that comes with it. She stated, and I agree, that when you put your name on a ballot, you know that it's going to be a 24/7 job. When I decided to run for office, I spoke to some members of this House who are no longer here. They told me in no uncertain terms that this job was going to be extremely busy; that the pace is very hectic and ultimately, "It will be the best job of your life." As a new member to this House, I can say that they were completely correct. I appreciate their candidness.

But as a single person with no dependants in this House, I have no doubt that for members who do have children and a family, there is a challenge. There's a challenge to spend time with their family. These proposed changes will make it easier to balance work and family life, encouraging more people to become active in politics so that they will not have to choose between work life and family life but they'll be able to enjoy both.

I'm looking forward to this change and being able to spend more time in my community. When the House starts at 1:30 and ends at 9, it's difficult to get back home to attend some important events. With this change, now I have the flexibility to attend some of those events when the House is sitting.

I believe that, with the opposition, we share the honour of representing the people of Ontario. The basis of our legislative workday has been around since 1893, but a lot has changed since then—penicillin, airplanes and now BlackBerries. Our lives have changed. I truly believe it's time that our Legislature change as well, to resemble the real lives of Ontarians.

What we're asking is to start the workday at 9 rather than 1:30 in this House. Our proposal would expand hours we sit per week by 35%. Our proposal would expand private members' opportunities by 50%. Our proposal will all but eliminate evening sittings. Our proposal makes sense.

It's also important to note that we have listened to the opposition. They proposed to move question period later, to 10:45 a.m., and to have a legislative committee review the calendar over the summer. Also, we removed the proposal to sit on Fridays. It is also important to note that this Legislature has seen many changes over the years. Working towards modernizing the Legislature is not something new. I think that these proposed changes will be beneficial.

As a new member who often has to sit late in this House—I think that that's part of being a new member; they give you extra House duty. But I have to say that I was really surprised when I was in the House a while back and I was listening to a debate about gummy bears. I have nothing against gummy bears, but as I sat back and listened to this debate, I wondered what my residents in my riding of Hamilton Mountain would think if they watched that debate. I had realized during that evening that everyone was tired and the quality of the debate was quickly declining. I'm optimistic that the proposed changes will encourage effective and meaningful debate in this House.

I would also like to read to this House some of the quotes that I've come across over the past little while about this issue. The Canadian Press reported on February 11 of this year that the member for Nepean-Carleton initially praised the government's proposed changes. She said, "I'm encouraged the

government is thinking outside the box and looking at ways to make the Legislature more family-friendly."

My hometown paper, the Hamilton Spectator, writes on February 13: "Government House leader Michael Bryant is on the right track in his proposed modernization of how business is done at Queen's Park. It's the sort of approach that's needed to work toward remedying the gender imbalance at the provincial level of government...."

"Bryant's proposed changes are a small but meaningful step in the right direction and could have a positive impact on the willingness of women to run for provincial office."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with that.

The Sudbury Star, on February 13, 2008, wrote: "Opposition reaction to the Ontario Liberals' attempt to reschedule legislative debate to daylight hours-including moving question period to 9:30 a.m. from 3 p.m.-has been unduly petulant...."

"Opposition parties need to climb down off their high horse on this one. There will be little sympathy from the public.

"Give the new hours a chance."

On February 12, 2008, the Toronto Star wrote: "Unfortunately, while losing its collegiality, the Legislature has retained some of its macho vestiges, including the late-night sittings (minus the carousing). In other words, it has the worst of both worlds.

"To his credit, Michael Bryant, the government House leader, is trying to change that with a proposed set of rule changes that would eliminate late-night sittings (to make the Legislature more family-friendly) and, at the same time, expand the time for debating private members' bills by 50% (to enhance the role of backbenchers)."

On February 20, the Collingwood Enterprise-Bulletin wrote: "Most Ontarians don't have a problem with their MPPs and their employees getting up early in the morning, just like they do, to go to work."

In the Toronto Star on Saturday, April 19, 2008, a dart was given to the provincial opposition parties "for making a big deal out of the trivial; for the past few days, the Progressive Conservatives and New Democrats focused not on weighty matters such as the economy or the looming TTC strike but on the Liberal government's plans to move the daily question period from the afternoon to the morning. The move, which will accommodate the elimination of evening sittings of the Legislature (an opposition demand), was variously denounced as 'cynical' and 'undemocratic' by the PCs and NDP. Their real concern: It will give them less time to prepare for question period. The solution: get to work earlier."

1740

The last quote is from the Leader of the Opposition. He was crystal clear during the last election when he told voters of his support for family-friendly changes to the Legislature:

"You know, most people go to work starting at 9 o'clock in the morning.... I think, if you had the sitting start in the morning and finish at supertime, it allows moms and dads"-

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the members of the House to refrain from heckling so that I can hear the member from Hamilton Mountain. The member for Hamilton Mountain has the floor.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: "You know, most people go to work starting at 9 o'clock in the morning.... I think, if you had the sitting start in the morning and finish at suppertime, it allows moms and dads and young families to be home more often with their family and to have the thing just a bit more family-friendly. So I think it means you'd look more often to start in the morning and have your day proceed so that you could use those hours and finish by suppertime." He said that on August 29, 2007.

I would also like to make one last comment in regard to a comment by my friend in the opposition, where he said that there was a time in this House where opposition members as well as government members, after the House sat, would get together and play euchre, have a coffee and be friends.

As a new member, I have to say that I don't think that changing the hours is going to eliminate the friendliness between the opposition and the government. As a new member, I have found everyone to be extremely respectful, and if I knew how to play euchre, I would enjoy a game of euchre after the House.

In closing, I would just like to say that I agree with the proposed changes and look forward to seeing the changes in the House.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm very pleased to join in the debate following the member from Hamilton Mountain. As a brand new member of the Legislature—frankly, I haven't been here all that much longer than she has; one mandate only—to some extent we're both still somewhat new compared to a few of the members who are here today who have a much longer history.

I just want to reflect on a couple of things in the seven or eight minutes or so that I have. I want to reflect briefly on the first few weeks that I spent here in the late fall of 2003. We were a new government. I think all parties, all three sides of the House, were testing their mettle, so to speak, in their new or adjusted roles.

During that very limited time we went through daytime sittings, we did evening sittings, the bells rang incessantly for a period of time, and we did a sequence of midnight sittings. That was in the late fall, and I'd proceed to drive home from this place around midnight, a quarter after 12, because I live just on the east side of Toronto, right at the edge now, with my new riding being Pickering-Scarborough East. I'd get home at about 1 o'clock, 1:30 in the morning, and I'd go to bed.

At that time, I was working with the Minister of Government Services, then-Management Board Secretariat, and the minister had the desire to have early-morning meetings and briefings. So I'd arrive back here by about 7:30 in the morning in preparation for an 8 o'clock briefing or an 8 o'clock meeting.

After about two weeks of that, arriving home at 1:30 in the snow and ice and arriving back here at 7:30 in the morning, I said to my wife, "What have I done to my life?" A lot of the time around this place, I think we feel that way: What have we done to our lives?

I'm anxious to see some changes made. I'm anxious to see this new schedule that better reflects a more traditional business environment, if I can call it that, where we start the formal part of the business on a regular basis at 9 in the morning and we finish it up for the most part by 5:30 or 6 in the evening. It's more reflective in the context of what we do day by day here, and more reflective of

what we might find in some other business environment along the way.

During the last mandate I was part of a select committee on democratic renewal. The principal mandate was to look locally, nationally and even internationally at electoral systems. That process was part of a government commitment to take a look, as we did during the election through a plebiscite, at alternate systems of putting people in this place.

Interestingly, during that process, as we did things in committee here and as we travelled-and those were members from all sides of the House-we consistently heard from a variety of people about the need to reform the way we do our business, or as we travelled and looked at other jurisdictions, we found that they did their business in a very different way. It became evident during that process that we needed to continue to look, explore and come to some conclusions on the way we function here. Whether it's the nature of the debate or whether in part it's the way we do business day to day, that's all part and parcel, I think, of what is transpiring.

Jurisdictions we looked at internationally, particularly in Germany and the UK, through Scotland and Ireland, tended more so to have a scheduling strategy that better reflected business hours. I can't recall off the top of my head who had 9 to 5, who had 9 to 6 and who met for how many days and which days committees were on, but I do recall a lot of discussion around, "We have a normal business day environment. We still have our political engagements and our constituent responsibilities, and weekends that go with that," but from the standpoint of getting the business done, it tended to better reflect 9 to 5 or 9 to 6, something more of that ilk. I think part of the ongoing discussion informed the process during that period as the electoral reforms looked at how we elect people, but I think it also informed the Legislature a little bit in the context of what other jurisdictions are doing.

I'll tell you that during that discussion, I had the opportunity to travel to Scotland, Ireland and Germany for a 10-day period. I heard, if not the exact words-I certainly heard the discussion. We talked to folks there. We talked particularly to women who were elected about the capacity to be able to manage family. We talked about, in essence, family-friendly; maybe not those exact words, but we talked about environments that were more business-conducive or more supportive of a family environment that gave people a greater opportunity to do things that we might normally want to do or have at least an opportunity to do, particularly as it relates to young families.

During this mandate, I have had the pleasure already of having been asked through government and/or caucus to engage in a couple of committees in addition to our normal role. Each of us finds ourselves on any number of committees and activities, whether it's our standing committee work or whether it's committees of the Legislative Assembly of one sort or another. I was just at a Board of Internal Economy meeting in which we were looking at estimates for various officers of the Legislature. I'm also sitting on a committee that deals with officers of the assembly. The reason I'm saying that is that we're trying to schedule meetings and we've agreed in one instance that 9 o'clock Monday morning works well. We can do some interviews during a Monday. We're going to fit the House schedule around that for those members. We're going to ask for some dispositions so they know we're each going to be missing someone out of the House much of the day, doing interviews.

The point I'm trying to make is that by having a schedule that allows for more businesslike hours, as you schedule those kinds of functions, it's much easier for members to be able to coordinate calendars around that. What I see happening when we try to schedule meetings is that as we're scheduling even weeks ahead, people are saying, "Well, I can't be there Monday morning. We don't have House duty and therefore I've scheduled a constituency activity on Monday morning." So you've already lost, in this instance, one member from each party or two or three members. Now you're constantly juggling, trying to find a schedule that works, and it keeps moving more and more distant into the future where committees can meet.

This type of scheduling would put people into a train of thought and a structure that would say, "Okay, from 9 till 6, Monday to Thursday, for the most part, that's when we're here," and we'll make the committees work within that context. I think it will be far more efficient for that supplementary role we play here, in addition to the debate role, the things that people don't see us doing as often, whether it's standing committees, select committees, subsets of committees or caucuses individually. People don't see that, but I think there will be a far more efficient means for us to be able to schedule those types of activities for all members of this House, on all sides of the House, and make it fit our schedules better and also create that more businesslike environment.

I'd like to note in the few seconds I have left that this legislative piece provides for a review. This is an opportunity, should this pass, for us to get up and running, but it also provides an opportunity during the summer for the legislative committee and then, subsequently, as we come into the fall, to review how it's gone and to be able to report back accordingly. It's not as though a decision now in this debate will necessarily be carved in stone. Certainly within this is a structure for formal review very soon as part of the process, as well as a review shortly after it starts: Is it working? Does it need an overhaul? Does it need tweaking? Or does it need to be abandoned?

I'm anxious to see the debate continue. I'm anxious to see us look at a new way of doing business here and the opportunity to review that if in effect this bill passes.

1750

Mr. Tim Hudak: In the time I have this evening, I want to note a few things. First of all, as has been said in the debate on this motion, this is, at least from my memory, the fourth consecutive government to bring forward significant rule changes. But I'm going to argue that this is the first to severely restrict the ability of members to hold the government accountable through the daily question period. Sadly, a second impact of these proposed changes is to send, what's very important to members of the opposition and members who are not in cabinet, private members' public business to the equivalent of the legislative gulag on Thursday afternoons, when I anticipate that not too many members will be here in the assembly.

My colleague from Welland outlined a number of things that had happened before. It was the Peterson government—Sean Conway—that brought forward rule changes in the late 1980s. I'm referring to an essay in the autumn Canadian Parliamentary Review by Adam McDonald, who was a former intern here in the Legislature and who had worked in the Liberal whip's office and had worked in my office, among others, as an intern. It gives an important history, an intelligent analysis, as you would expect Adam to do. He refers to May 1989, when "Peter Kormos, NDP member for Welland-Thorold at the time, rose on a point of personal privilege. He accused Premier Peterson of lying to the House, which is considered unparliamentary language. Mr. Kormos" at the time "refused to withdraw the word, and the Speaker named him."

Under the standing orders today, if a member is named, then he leaves the chamber. Under the standing orders in 1989, the Speaker's ruling could be challenged by individual members, and that's what Mr. Kormos and others did. Then, on May 29, 1989, the Speaker called members in to rule on the challenge to his ruling and to vote on it at 4:43 p.m.

"In those days, the whips of the parties used to walk into the chamber together to indicate that the members had assembled and were prepared to vote. In this case the opposition whip refused to appear and kept the bells ringing. At 6:32 on June 1"—again, this began on May 29—"the Speaker suspended the sitting and ordered that 'the bells are deemed to be ringing until the sitting is resumed at 9 a.m., Friday, 2 June 1989.' He repeated this order each day until Tuesday, June 6. The opposition's tactics had succeeded in disrupting the business of the House for an entire week."

Shortly thereafter, two days later, in fact, the government House leader at the time, Mr. Conway, brought forward rule changes, "saying that the government would get its business done and would do so without continuous obstruction from the opposition."

Mr. McDonald has an important quote here from Mr. Conway, but noting that the rule changes of the day were to try-whatever your opinion was of the debate at the time-to strike a balance between the opposition's ability to hold the government accountable and to use tactics in the Legislature and the government's ability to get things done. So Mr. Conway brought in rule changes in 1989 for that purpose and made changes to allow debate from the opposition, but took away some stalling tactics.

Similarly, in 1990-Mr. McDonald in his essay calls it a turning point-Mike Harris, then-leader of the third party, had some very strong opposition. Mr. Wilson and Mr. Murdoch and others here-and the Speaker as well-in the assembly were part of that caucus at the time. This was around the time, I believe, of the NDP budget that was going to spend the province out of recession.

One of the tactics the member next to me, the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Mr. Sterling, brought forward was a series of points of order during question period, followed by the time that "Mike Harris stood up to introduce a bill, the title of which contained the name of every Ontario body of water. Mr. Harris started just before 4 p.m. that day and the length of the bill's title (in addition to interjections from frustrated MPPs and the repetition of the title by both the Speaker and the Clerk, as required by the standing orders) carried the House to the end of the sessional day."

The Conservative caucus at the time used these tactics to express their strong displeasure with the NDP budget and other bills. The NDP, just as the Liberals and Peterson had done before them, brought in substantial rule changes. Interestingly, then-MPP Jim Bradley, in the opposition Liberal caucus, made some very strong objections to the rule changes at the time. The NDP brought in some highly restrictive rule changes, again, in their view at the time, to try to have the balance between the government getting its business done and the ability of the opposition to express itself.

The Harris government brought in rule changes as well in its time. We remember-I think it was Bill 26, when I think the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, Alvin Curling, who became the Speaker as well, sat here famously in the Legislature in objection because there was no rule at the time against abstaining-

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke remarks about a horse.

He was allowed to abstain, and that held up hearings for a number of days.

You may remember as well, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP brought in some 12,000 amendments to the committee of the whole House with respect to the City of Toronto Act at the time-again, tactics where the opposition, in their view, wanted to obstruct the government's agenda; they had strong objections to the bills of the day. The government of the day, under Mike Harris, responded with rule changes, to again, in the opinion of the government of the day, make sure there was a right balance between allowing the government to get its bills passed that it is duly elected to do and the ability of the opposition to object and to have their say.

Whatever you thought about the Harris or Peterson or Rae rule changes, they all gathered around and concentrated on the length of time members spoke in the House and on delaying tactics.

What I'm arguing now is that for the first time we are seeing an attempt by the government of the day to restrict the ability of opposition members to hold them accountable in question period and a move

to send private members' bills to a time that we will not see the kind of participation that we should for private members' bills. I think that's highly unfortunate.

What's doubly unfortunate is that they have dressed this up in the notion of family-friendly rule changes. Nothing can be farther from the truth. This is actually about limiting the ability of the opposition to hold the government accountable. I'm not sure, and correct me if I'm wrong-maybe the speakers on the government side opposite will tell me. The delaying tactics that the opposition, either the Conservatives or NDP, have been using in this Legislature: I don't think there have been any. I think you've had a responsible opposition. If we strongly object to a bill, we debate it; we carry it through. If we don't have strong objections or a compromise is reasonably achieved, then the bill is called to a vote or moved to committee. But I ask the members opposite to give me the equivalent of the lakes and rivers, the equivalent of Mr. Kormos's 17-and-a-half-hour filibuster against auto insurance, the equivalent of Alvin Curling's stay here in the Legislature, or the 12,000 amendments of the City of Toronto Act. I defy them to tell me about the obstruction tactics that the official opposition has used here in the Legislature.

In reality, this is about limiting our role to hold them accountable by moving question period to earlier in the day. If they were truly interested in family-friendly legislation, all they'd have to do is move orders of the day from the evening to the mornings and maintain question period at a predictable time. In fact, you can lock it in, as we have proposed, around 1 p.m. and move this delay that we see from various ministers' statements and introduction and such to another time of the day.

I want to congratulate my colleague from Nepean-Carleton, who has championed this issue of making Ontario a more family-friendly Legislature, particularly for young women who live outside of the city of Toronto-young mothers-to give a greater opportunity to participate here at Queen's Park and to attract more to run as MPPs in the first place. Sadly, in a shameful and, I'd say, cowardly way, the Premier and his House leader have used that as a screen to bring forward these proposals that limit the ability of the opposition to hold the government to account.

These proposals are an insult to those in the Legislature who have been working hard in a non-partisan approach to ensure that parents who don't represent Toronto and who have young kids can feel comfortable running for office. Sadly, this bill before the House will do quite the opposite, dressed up in a family-friendly approach.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I note that it's 6 o'clock. I wish to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 37, the question that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

GREEN POWER GENERATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Energy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or his parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I'm pleased to recognize the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

1800

Mr. Paul Miller: I won't be taking the full five minutes. This is a quick statement and question. Today, Minister Phillips, the Minister of Energy, made a statement: "We are the fastest-growing renewable jurisdiction in all of North America," as far as renewable green energy. I am not sure that that quote is correct. I have some statistics in front of me that would challenge that statement. For example, talking megawatts, California had a million megawatts of solar energy, Texas has 4,000 megawatts of wind power and there are several other jurisdictions in North America that are way ahead of the quote of the 501 megawatts for wind in Ontario. Even Alberta has surpassed us, with 523 megawatts.

All I'm saying is that if you're going to stand up in the House, hopefully you've got your numbers correct on energy. I would hope that if you're touting the line of the government on how wonderful they're doing, it would be good if you've got your numbers correct. I would just like the minister to provide us with the information that he assumed that the situation was better than it was.

We'd like a correction statement in the House, if possible, about these numbers. I'd be happy to share with the minister, if he'd like to follow up and look at them. If that correction could be done, I'd appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Niagara Falls to reply on behalf of the government.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to respond to my good friend's question, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. First, let me just say that our government has taken significant strides in developing renewable generation and cultivating green technology in Ontario. In wind power, we've moved from last place to one of the leading wind power jurisdictions in Canada. We now have four large, commercially operating wind farms, including Canada's largest in Sault Ste. Marie. New wind power, hydroelectric, biomass and solar operations are ensuring that Ontario meets its overall goal of ensuring that by 2025, Ontario will have 15,700 megawatts of installed renewable energy capacity, an overall doubling of the amount of renewable capacity in our grid.

We've also taken important steps through our renewable energy standard offer program that is making Ontario a leader in solar power in North America. That's clean power that will help to ease the strain on our electricity system, reduce air pollution and create new, high-skill jobs. We have, in fact, set a target of installing 100,000 residential solar systems in this province. We've invested \$14.4 million over four years to create a solar thermal heating incentive program for Ontario businesses, industries and institutions.

I'm also pleased to tell you that the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Energy was created to invest in and encourage research and development of competitive, industrially relevant technologies. The centre's goal is to bring these ideas to the marketplace in order to provide Ontarians with viable, affordable, long-term energy supplies while improving our net impacts on the environment. And Ontario recently invested \$2.2 million in a green energy project using innovative water turbines that will generate renewable power from the current of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Our Next Generation of Jobs Fund is a five-year, \$1.15-billion program that will create and sustain jobs, improve competitiveness, foster innovation and support our Go Green plan.

Overall, we are working across the government and with the private sector to promote investment and skills training that will continue to fuel our green power strategy.

Mr. Paul Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker-

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There are no points of order.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1805.

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