

## Official Records for 4 May 2010

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Given that today is World Asthma Day, I am especially delighted to introduce Christine Hampson, the President and CEO of the Asthma Society of Canada; Joanne Di Nardo from the Ontario Lung Association; and Carole Madeley from the Ontario Lung Association. Welcome to you all.

### ASTHMA TREATMENT

**Mr. Dave Levac:** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Asthma affects approximately 13% of our children who are under 12 years old and 8.4% of all Ontarians over the age of 12. It's a leading cause of hospitalization among children and one of the largest causes of school and work absenteeism. When I first started teaching, the average number of puffers in a school was three to four per school. When I left, it was about three or four per class.

There are constituents in my riding whose children are directly affected by asthma. They are concerned about the adverse health effects that are associated with asthma. Many years ago, I lost my father to asthma.

I ask the minister: In light of World Asthma Day and for all of us who have gone through the pain of asthma, could you please tell us what our government is doing to better serve Ontarians who live with asthma?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Thank you to the outstanding member for Brant. When it comes to asthma, one of the most important things we can do is phase out the use of coal-fired power generation.

Today, it's the lowest it has been in 45 years—down 70% since 2003. This is good news for our health. The air pollution caused by coal-fired generation has been linked to 670 premature deaths a year, 1,100 emergency room visits a year and over 300,000 other illnesses, including headaches, coughing and other respiratory symptoms. By closing these plants, we're bringing down the number of respiratory-related illnesses in the province, including asthma.

We're also bringing down the cost of generic drugs for all Ontarians, including people with asthma—

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

**Mr. Dave Levac:** I thank the government for its work in improving the causes for people with asthma. I'm very proud of the work that the government has done, especially for the kids. However, my constituents would be interested to know where the results are in regard to the asthma action plan. The

plan itself in investment is good, but results are better.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Dave Levac:** Unlike the heckling that's going on from those who don't understand about asthma, I would ask you to give us specific examples of how the implementation of the plan and the investments are working so that our communities can better deal with asthma.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I'm very encouraged by some of the results that we are seeing in our asthma plan of action. Last year, we invested \$4 million, and we're starting to see the results. Let me share those with you.

We have a primary care asthma pilot project involving 1,400 children and adults with asthma in eight sites across the province. Here's what they found: a 50% reduction in emergency room visits for asthma and significant improvements in asthma control, including a 46% reduction in nighttime symptoms of asthma. The patients are very satisfied with the care they're getting, as are the staff.

These reductions are a significant result. It really is encouraging that we know we can do more when it comes to looking after people with asthma.