



No. 167A

N° 167A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

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

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 2 May 2007

Mercredi 2 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 mai 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GRANDCHILD

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: May 2 is going to be a special day for my wife, Joan, and me in that we are welcoming our seventh grandchild, a new granddaughter, Jordan Eleanor Stearns, to Ontario and to the Kingston part of Ontario. Her brother Jackson and sister Samantha are ecstatic. Her parents, Jarrod and Rhonda, are wonderful parents, and I know that we will have another great Progressive Conservative in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): We are now in the final days of the 38th provincial Parliament, and the McGuinty Liberal government is in its death throes.

Unable to defend his government's actions or answer questions on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming scandal, and now the Minister of Citizenship's political slush fund, last Friday the Premier resorted to the lowest form of attack, no doubt devised in the Liberal campaign war room, and then refused to apologize.

As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, last March it came to light that millions of dollars had been paid out by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. in dishonest lottery ticket claims, meaning thousands of Ontarians were robbed of money that was rightfully theirs, all this while the minister responsible for lotteries ignored the issue until he was caught by the Ombudsman and the opposition.

Our caucus is continuing to investigate that scandal at the standing committee on estimates. Our members on that committee are serving the public interest in an effort to get to the bottom of what really happened. While the Premier has refused to attend the committee to answer our legitimate questions, his representative has been stonewalling at every turn.

Soon it will be the turn of the minister responsible for lotteries to account for his actions at the estimates com-

mittee. No doubt the Liberal war room is writing his script as we speak and counselling him to repeat the canned lines he has recited in this House. Let's hope he doesn't follow the Premier into the gutter with his responses.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Yet again the government refuses to do what the opposition, and I think the media and many Ontarians, are asking them to do, and that is to make sure that the auditor is able to get to the bottom of what is the slushgate affair.

We know the facts. The facts, as they are presented now, are that there is money that has gone out the door in two successive end-of-year runs when it comes to the provincial budget. Money has gone out the door at year-end, and they've given that money, without application, to particular groups whose only claim to fame in some cases—and I don't say all—is that they have very deep and direct ties to the Liberal Party.

We in the opposition and others in the media are saying this is wrong. We in this Legislature are the stewards of public dollars, and it is our responsibility to make sure that every dollar that is collected by way of taxes in this province is then expended in a way that makes some sense when it comes to financial accountability and that it does positive good at the end. I'm sure that some of this money is going to good. That is not the issue. The issue is that of accountability.

I say to the government across the way, yes, we as the opposition will do what we have to do to shed light on this situation, and if we have to use the rules of the House to do that, we will do so until this government wakes up and does what it is charged to do, and that is to be responsible to the citizens of Ontario and those who pay the taxes and the bills in the province of Ontario.

So we're saying to you, call the auditor in. Have the auditor do what is necessary in order to shed light on this situation so that Ontarians and everybody can be clear as to what has happened and to make sure it doesn't happen again.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I rise today to talk about the renaissance happening in the health care sector thanks to the McGuinty government.

Nowhere is this more evident than in my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings.

When the Tories were in office, they were in a rush to cut health care funding in their reckless quest to find efficiencies in government spending. Province-wide cuts were made to hospitals, totalling \$557 million in their first two years in office. This was felt in my community of Prince Edward–Hastings and in rural ridings like Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. The Tory government cut a total of \$5.8 million from hospitals in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, an average 8.9% cut in funding. The cuts were felt at every hospital in the area and by local families who depended on them. They then closed the Pembroke Civic Hospital and its emergency department, just one of 28 public hospitals and more than 20 emergency rooms closed during their time in office. In fact, in their rush to close the hospital, it had the dubious distinction of being the first public hospital closed by their government.

Our government is embarking on an ambitious plan to overturn these years of neglect. We have invested an additional \$2.4 billion in hospitals since 2003. We have a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan. There are more than 65 major hospital projects set to proceed across the province. This includes emergency room expansion or improvement projects in Arnprior, Deep River, Pembroke and Barry's Bay.

The Tories left the people of my community and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke having to drive to another community for care. We're bringing care back to their—

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

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): The scandal-plagued McGuinty Liberals were in full panic mode yesterday as the Liberals stooped to new lows in House decorum and character assassination of this member. The McGuinty Liberals' fear of a John Tory-led government which is accountable for taxpayers' dollars and provides leadership in solving our health care system problems and fixing our economy, which has lost over 100,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector—and the member from Windsor, who talks about other ridings, should focus on his own riding. There are thousands of Windsorites out of a job, and they're going to be looking to him for answers and looking for his seat.

I'm proud to be led by John Tory, and I'm proud of my record as MPP for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, which has seen unprecedented investment in long-term care, new schools, a new RVH hospital with two MRI machines, cancer care and kidney dialysis for closer-to-home service, the return of GO Transit and a university-styled Georgian College. The new portable radiation machine announced yesterday was through the efforts of MP Patrick Brown and Minister of Health Tony Clement. They got that ball rolling. It wasn't this government. They were out there working with RVH.

I've stood up for my constituents in this House, and allegations by a do-nothing, scandal-plagued Minister Caplan are a new low in decorum in this House. I'll stand for election on October 10 with John Tory, and we're going to win the next provincial election.

WORLD ASTHMA DAY

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise today to commemorate World Asthma Day. World Asthma Day is an effort by the Canadian Lung Association to heighten awareness about this potentially dangerous disorder.

Recent studies indicate that a large proportion of the general public is at risk of developing asthma, and according to the burden-of-asthma report released in September 2006, an individual in Ontario has a 40% risk of developing asthma before they reach the age of 40. The risk of developing asthma is greatest in childhood, with 20% of children being diagnosed with asthma by the age of 12.

1340

The good news is that asthma can be controlled. With the proper medication and proper precautions, many who have this disorder can live a normal life. I am one of those examples. Today in the members' gallery, we are joined by members of the Ontario Lung Association, including Cindy Scherban. I'd like to welcome them today. Welcome to Queen's Park. The lung association is one of Canada's oldest voluntary, not-for-profit organizations. The Ontario Lung Association was incorporated in 1945 and has community offices across the province. This organization is a champion in informing the public in prevention and control of asthma, chronic lung disease caused by smoking and with air quality and its effects on lung health.

For their tireless work, I sincerely congratulate them and welcome them. The Ontario Lung Association has a saying that I believe rings true: "When you can't breathe, nothing else matters." I'm here as an asthmatic to tell you that asthma can be controlled.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I arrived this morning at the Caledonia convoy kickoff and was met by a lady from Six Nations and another from Grassy Narrows. They presented me with a pin as a show of good faith. This positive approach has continued throughout today. In front of Queen's Park this morning I read a number of signs. One said, "Forgotten, frustrated, and flicked off." Another read, "McGuinty, you bought it, solve it." Caledonia residents came to Queen's Park on Dalton McGuinty's invitation. They're hoping to stimulate a more informed policy debate. They ask for one law for everyone. The policies over the past 15 months have been vague, ineffectual, passive, based on dubious assessments and constantly changing commitments. We need a new formula. The current formula is not working.

Fifteen months of disruption for an entire community that has been forced to bear the brunt of a national issue—yet the Premier, who invited residents to Queen's Park, hasn't been to Caledonia and wouldn't meet with them today. Caledonia residents are using the phrase "R2R." It means many things: road to revival and, hopefully, road to resolution. We must reverse the policy of weakness and deceit. There is no other option.

I welcome the people from Caledonia.

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR AGRI-FOOD INNOVATION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): This past Friday I had the opportunity to represent the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for the inaugural Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence ceremony in Elmwood. This program received a five-year, \$2.5-million commitment as part of the 2006 provincial budget. It recognizes farmers for being innovative in the running of their businesses and has been designed to foster even greater innovation across the province's agri-food sector. Fifty-five regional awards have been presented under this program to recognize the significant contribution that Ontario farmers make to rural communities and our economy through innovation, new market opportunities and value-added products.

Regional awards were valued at \$5,000 each and were distributed to six recipients. To highlight a few of the recipients of this award, Chesley District High School was awarded for its innovative specialist high skills major program, which promotes agriculture business education. West Grey Premium Beef was recognized for their innovative vision in building a successful, value-added agri-food chain, and the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative was awarded for their leadership and innovation in growing a stronger market for dairy goat products.

All of these award recipients are entrepreneurial success stories, each of which started with a single idea and incredible fortitude to see their project through to successful completion. I wish to add my congratulations to all of the successful recipients.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to remind the Speaker that that was my riding and I was there also.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the hot issue of climate change. As the world becomes more aware of the causes of climate change, our government is working hard to combat them.

Near my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, we already have the largest wind farm in Canada up and running. Last week, we announced more good news on this subject—with Ontario to be the home of North America's largest solar farm. That's 40 megawatts of emission-free power

by 2010, enough to power 6,000 homes. The week before that, we announced that our government was banning inefficient light bulbs by 2012.

These recent announcements build on the good work already done by the McGuinty government. It's too bad the members opposite, like the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, want to turn the clock back, but he should know that Ontarians aren't interested. While the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and his party think we should keep coal plants open, we remain steadfast in our commitment to phasing them out. This single act would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 30 megatonnes alone, the largest single greenhouse gas reduction initiative in Canada. And while he thinks that conservation can't happen because "[we're] depending on total compliance with a third party which is the people of Ontario," on this side of the House we believe that the people of Ontario, when given the tools, will be conservation champions.

The McGuinty government looks forward to working with Ontarians to help them to be part of the solution in combating climate change, rather than doing nothing, like the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke suggests we should.

CANDIDATE'S COMMENTS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to address an issue of serious concern in my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West. Frankly, this concern is a serious concern in all rural ridings. That issue is the metering of private wells.

Again, Cathy Galt, the PC candidate in my riding, has not yet learned the danger of sending out false information. I'm getting more than a little tired of Cathy Galt continuing to spread misinformation to our neighbours and friends in Northumberland-Quinte West. She did this to the Northumberland Hills Hospital about wait times without researching the facts, which caused the Leader of the Opposition to have to apologize for this misinformation.

I have here in my hand a petition sent by Cathy Galt which clearly blames Dr. Robert Kyle, the medical officer of health from Durham region, as being the source of fear-mongering about the metering of private wells. I also have here the official response categorically denying he ever made those statements. The good doctor has gone so far as to send this information to Mimi Singh, senior solicitor for Durham region, should further legal action be required.

Our government has no plans to meter wells, period. To lay the blame for this malicious rumour at the feet of a respected and honourable public servant such as Dr. Robert Kyle is reprehensible. When will the Leader of the Opposition call for the candidate to apologize to Dr. Kyle?

Let's hope tomorrow does not bring more false accusations—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I notice that where the member from Northumberland received this information was from Warren Kinsella's latest—

The Speaker: That was not a point of order.

VISITORS

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It is my pleasure today to introduce our page, who was the page captain today leading into the Legislative Assembly, Matei Leshchyshen; his parents, Dmytro and Luba Leshchyshen, who are here; his grandfather, Petro Holiad; his grandmother, Ruth Leshchyshen; his great-aunt, Olive Antonyshen; and his younger cousin, Olena Leshchyshen. They were here to acknowledge and honour Matei as he became a page in the Legislature.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last week, members of the Portuguese Canadian community celebrated the 33rd anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, which took place on April 25, 1974.

I am pleased that today in this House we are joined by one of the brave military officers who stood up against the dictatorship of Portugal at the time. I'd like to welcome Colonel Jose Marques Goncalves Novo, and his wife, Teresa Goncalves Novo, who is the vice-president of the Portuguese National Nurses Council in Lisbon. They are joined by two members of the executive council of the 25th of April cultural association here in Toronto, Carlos Morgadinho and Emmanuel Martins. Welcome to all of them.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have the very distinct privilege today of introducing to the House two wonderful guests, one from the great city of Hamilton here in Canada, Dottoressa Giovanna Maio, who is accompanying, direct from Italy, the most distinguished stylist, the most modern artist in style, from the beautiful province of Umbria, the city of Macerata, Dottore Vittorio De Marchi, the most distinguished stylist and artist in Europe. They are here with us today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

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

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

Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 187, Loi

concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: Shall the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs with regard to Bill 187 be received and adopted?

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Racco, Mario G.
Balkisson, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bartolucci, Rick	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Bentley, Christopher	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Bountrogianni, Marie	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Broten, Laurel C.	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Brownell, Jim	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Cansfield, Donna H.	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Caplan, David	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Chan, Michael	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Crozier, Bruce	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Di Cocco, Caroline	Phillips, Gerry	
Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ferreira, Paul	Munro, Julia	Yakubuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Murdoch, Bill	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 43; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 11, 2007, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 2, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Gerretsen has moved government notice of motion number 337. 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 1401 to 1406.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Broten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	McGuinty, Dalton	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ferreira, Paul	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 26.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION WEEK

SEMAINE DE L'ÉDUCATION

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm proud to report this week that we are celebrating Education Week in Ontario.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize our partners in education:

—the parents, for helping out with homework, making the lunches and taking an active interest in what's going on at school;

—the students, for doing their best in their studies, getting involved in school activities and always, always dreaming about what's next;

—the school support staff, for playing their essential and invaluable role in enhancing the quality of the learning environment in our schools;

—the principals and administrators for their leadership and for giving students a guiding hand and a sympathetic ear.

Et, bien sûr, je veux également remercier nos enseignantes et enseignants. Le enseignantes et enseignants de l'Ontario comptent parmi les personnes les plus dynamiques, des plus passionnées et les plus optimistes que je connaisse.

Of course, I also want to thank our teachers. Ontario's teachers are among the most energetic, passionate and optimistic people I can think of. I have often said that Ontario is a province of great teachers. I know that, because when we offered them enhanced training, on an optional basis, on their own time, they packed the place. I know that, because when we asked them to embrace change and work with us on behalf of our kids, they met us with open minds and tremendous professionalism. I know that, because we set the bar high for student achievement, and student performance is improving year after year after year.

Earlier today, I recognized the very first winners of the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. These awards are yet another symbol of our commitment to supporting and celebrating excellence in our public schools.

Our award winners are with us in the gallery today. They are the following individuals: Celina Cada-Matasawagon, Carla D'Elia, Jerry Powidajko, Ruby Charron, Gretel Reid-Willis, Maria Nunes, Jerrold Karch, Peggy Morris, Dale Zimmerman, Kathy Elmer, Dina Dalia, Amare Demesie, Kelly Stapleton-Korber, Denis Sauvé and Dyson McLaren. Please join me in welcoming, congratulating and thanking our award winners.

I feel privileged, as I'm sure we all do, to work with all our education partners, and I want to thank all of them for all they do for us, day in and day out.

Working together, we've come a long way in three and a half years. Before we started, public education was a combat zone. Teachers were demoralized, and the education of our students was suffering.

Nous avons retroussé nos manches et nous nous sommes attaqués à la tâche. En seulement trois ans et demi, nous avons transformé l'éducation et nous avons obtenu des résultats dont nous pouvons être fiers en travaillant tout simplement ensemble.

In short order, we rolled up our sleeves and got down to work, and in just three and a half years, working together, we've turned education around and we're getting results we can be proud of.

Together, we worked to achieve labour peace. The result? There has not been a single teachers' strike since 2003.

Together, we wanted to come up with a way to keep our 16- and 17-year-olds engaged, no matter their learning style. The result? Our new learning to 18 law, giving young people the opportunity to reach their potential either through co-op programs, apprenticeships or work placements.

I should tell you that recently I had the opportunity to meet with the Minister of Education from the United Kingdom; I don't mind saying that in years past, I've been there and looked for ideas with respect to improving the quality of education. I've brought some of those ideas here. It's just great to know that the Minister of Education for the UK was here to get a better understanding of our learning to 18 program to see how he might replicate that in the UK, and I'm very proud of that.

One dimension of our learning to 18 program has to do with student success teachers. We now have teachers in all our high schools without immediate classroom responsibilities but who have direct responsibility to target young people who are at risk of dropping out, students who are struggling.

One story about one student success teacher: This particular student success teacher established a remedial hour over the lunch period. A young grade 9 student was involved in that program and volunteered to come during the lunch hour. This student success teacher, at the end of the semester, placed before all the students in the remedial hour a survey. The student asked, "So what's this all about?" The teacher said, "Well, we want to get a better understanding of how to improve this program because we didn't have it before." And he said, "You mean you didn't have a remedial hour before?" The teacher said, "That's correct." Then the student said, "You mean you just let us fail?"

Speaker, we will not let young people in the province of Ontario inside our publicly funded schools fail. We'll give them all the supports they need to succeed.

Together, we wanted to get class sizes down and test scores up. The result: We have reduced primary class sizes, and now 93% of them have 23 students or fewer, and test scores are rising year after year. Together, we knew we needed more teachers to give our children more attention. The result: There are thousands of new teachers, each bringing a fresh enthusiasm, and we've added a million new textbooks. Together, we wanted to fix our school buildings to make them safer, cleaner and better for learning. The result: Thousands of schools are being repaired and new schools are being built. Together, we worked to make our schools safer, because we owe it to our families to make sure their kids will be safe at school. I'm pleased to report, as well, that schools themselves are working together to share their best practices and support each other. The bottom line is that, together, we're getting results, and there is still more to do.

Continuing to move forward together means believing that public education is the very best education. It means

supporting our public school educators and strengthening our public school system. It means ensuring that public dollars fund public education and only public education, the system that educates 95% of Ontario children. I'm proud to report that we've invested more in public education in three and a half years than the previous government did in eight.

Notre succès en éducation publique n'est possible que grâce au dévouement de nos partenaires en éducation et au soutien durable des Ontariens et Ontariennes pour leur réseau d'éducation.

Our success in public education is only possible because of the dedication of our education partners and the continuing support of Ontarians for their school system.

I know we all agree: Our children are our most precious resource. Giving them the best public education builds the foundation for a strong economy supported by the best workers, and a caring society supported by the best citizens. This week, we celebrate in Ontario how far we've come in public education, always keeping an eye on all that there is left to do. If we keep working, building and dreaming together, there is nothing we can't accomplish for our children in our province.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED SERVICES AUX PERSONNES AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE INTELLECTUELLE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I rise today to share the good news from our 2007 budget for supporting developmental services. I want to acknowledge the support of the Premier and my colleagues. With so many important and worthy but often competing needs across the province, the McGuinty government has once again been on the side of vulnerable Ontarians with a wide spectrum of needs.

With the commitment of more than \$200 million in additional funding over four years, our transformation of developmental services takes another giant step forward. For the first time, developmental services agencies can count on planned, multi-year increases for wages and services. This year, agencies will get more than \$22 million for base funding, which will compound annually over four years.

1420

In addition, agencies will get \$20 million for targeted wage gap funding to address the lowest-paid employees in this sector.

Base and wage gap funding will grow to \$181 million by 2010.

Le budget prouve l'engagement constant de notre gouvernement à créer un système de services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle fort, durable et tourné vers l'avenir.

Nous investissons dans les services et nous améliorons les programmes. De plus, nous augmentons les

mécanismes de soutien aux familles qui s'occupent chez elles de leurs membres ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

Une injection de 20 \$ millions renforcera la capacité de l'initiative d'aide passeport pour l'intégration communautaire et du programme de services particuliers à domicile, ainsi que des soutiens en établissement et des services cliniques spécialisés.

We are investing \$7 million in the passport mentoring initiative. By 2008, more than 2,000 individuals will have received passport funding, and we are expanding mentoring to Toronto, Peel and Six Nations.

We are investing \$3 million in special services at home. This will help to support an estimated 400 more individuals and families and work to maintain zero wait-lists across the province.

We are investing \$6 million in residential supports. This will create more than 70 new community spaces for individuals on residential supports wait-lists.

The ministry will continue to promote accountability in all these programs as part of our vision for a transformed developmental services sector.

With this budget, our government's total investment in developmental services climbs to more than half a billion dollars since 2003.

But, as we all know, transforming the developmental services sector is not just about money. To transform the developmental services sector we need innovation, we need partnerships, we need volunteers, we need forward-looking communities and agencies—agencies like Surrey Place, which I visited last night to celebrate their first annual June Callwood Awards ceremony. Awards were handed out to a number of forward-thinking individuals who created the Get In-line event. This has become an annual in-line skating event held in Toronto to raise awareness about developmental disabilities and funds for Surrey Place. I invite every one of you who is good in in-line skating to join the group.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partner agencies, their staff and their volunteers for all their work. People with a developmental disability rely on their services, their families rely on their support, and our government relies on them because governments cannot do it alone.

Dans les années à venir, des centaines de plus de personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle retourneront dans nos collectivités parce que nous remplissons un engagement de 30 ans concernant la fermeture des établissements.

Nous nous devons d'appuyer l'intégration communautaire. Des pensionnaires d'établissement attendaient avec impatience des occasions de voir la vie communautaire s'ouvrir à eux. Et leurs familles—dont bon nombre avaient d'abord émis des réserves au sujet du changement—sont les premières à nous dire que le gouvernement McGuinty fait ce qu'il fallait faire.

Ce budget renforcera les services et les programmes partout dans la province. Les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle seront en mesure de trouver du

soutien à proximité de leur domicile, dans leurs collectivités, et non pas dans un établissement éloigné.

C'est la raison pour laquelle nous transformons notre système de services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

We have made great strides and we still have a long way to go. This budget expresses our ongoing commitment to working with our partners to build stronger, more inclusive communities, not only for people with developmental disabilities, but for all Ontarians.

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

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On behalf of John Tory, the leader of the official opposition, and the Ontario PC caucus, I want to pay tribute to the leaders of the Ontario education system, and that includes teachers, principals and education support staff, whose combined efforts help our students achieve all that they can in school and throughout their entire lives.

Because this statement was to be all about honouring the award recipients, I chose to leave aside the partisan barbs I was tempted to include. I do, however, want to say this: I believe the Premier, the Minister of Education and the Minister of the Environment do owe the students, the education stakeholders in this province, an apology for their Flick Off campaign that they have wreaked upon the people of this province.

We can never show enough gratitude to our teachers as we celebrate their single-minded dedication of professionalism and commitment to teaching excellence that shapes the minds of our children and the social, cultural and political contours of our society, now and in the future.

A long-time teacher and Catholic priest of St. Michael's College in Toronto, Father Thomas Mulcahy, who, just before he died, received an honorary doctorate in education for, among other achievements, the establishment of schools in four different Ontario communities, had this to say when asked what the greatest honour he, as a teacher, had ever received:

"I received a note from a student that I keep in my coat pocket that said, 'Thank you for being my favourite teacher and for helping me learn to read well. It is a skill that came in handy in law school and I have dedicated my doctoral dissertation to you.'"

Another great teacher was none other than the father of the Premier, Dalton McGuinty. His work in social studies demonstrated a great depth of insight into the human condition, as those who knew him will attest. He brought that knowledge to his role as a member in this House, providing a great example to his children, one of whom strove to follow him here. The sign of a truly remarkable teacher will always be when their students do just that.

We are forever indebted to our teachers, and in celebrating the achievements of those who have been especially set apart for their exceptional commitment to

education, we celebrate them all and reaffirm our appreciation for their efforts and their example.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I am very pleased, on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, to respond to the announcement by the Minister of Community and Social Services. I want to make it very clear that we all support government increasing assistance to Ontarians with developmental disabilities.

However, there is no new money in what the minister is announcing today. She is just repeating what the finance minister announced in the budget. I know that all members of this House are committed to helping our developmentally disabled citizens lead full and meaningful lives.

We support help for those who want to be able to enter the workforce. We also believe that workers in the field need a decent wage. I am also very proud of what our PC government did to help the developmentally disabled. A multi-year plan for developmental services was announced in the May 2001 budget. This plan had great results. More than 380 new spaces to live were created. Over 2,300 more people received special services-at-home funding. Over 700 more people received out-of-home respite. More than 370 additional people participated in day programs.

Since the introduction of the foundations program in May 2000, 1,500 young adults participated in 60 projects. So I hope that the money the government is promising in the budget will benefit the developmentally disabled in the way that our PC government's commitments did.

The government might also think of taking some of the money in the slush fund accounts and giving it to groups such as those who help the disabled, groups that know how to get value for money, groups that want to help those in need without getting money due to their Liberal Party ties.

I want to end by thanking all of the volunteers and the professional staff who work tirelessly on behalf of the developmentally disabled community in all of our ridings.

1430

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I say to everyone that New Democrats celebrate Education Week. We acknowledge those teachers whom the Premier has awarded the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence and we acknowledge the work of all teachers in our educational system for all the work they do.

We know that many teachers in the education system do more than just teach: they are police men and women; they are psychologists on a regular basis; they have to play social workers on a regular basis; they have to play mothers and fathers on a regular basis. The job is im-

portant and it's big, and it's getting much more responsible in terms of the work they have to do.

We acknowledge many of the educational assistants in our school systems, including the one that is leaving my Palmerston school—the meeting I went to last night—because we're losing educational assistants everywhere.

We acknowledge the work of maintenance workers, technicians and custodians who clean our schools.

I want to acknowledge that the Liberal regime is a much nicer regime than the previous one, but I say, we have to raise the bar a little bit higher than that—just a little bit; I'm not asking for much.

On Bill 52, which the government claims is a great bill that will allow students to go out and be taught by any Tom, Dick, Harry or Mary and be taught by non-teachers, the ones we celebrate, I say to the Premier that this is wrong. He wants to save money by having these programs taught by non-teachers, and I say it's wrong. More and more teachers, once they find this out, will oppose Bill 52.

I say to the Premier, we have fewer ESL teachers under a Liberal regime than ever before. We now have more students integrated in the regular classroom who have special education needs. We now have more students from grades 4 to 8 than ever before. Our classes are higher, and we have the regular teacher having to do all of that, having to teach ESL, special ed, split classes, now more than ever before, in the Liberal regime.

I want to say that in the Liberal regime we have fewer librarians than ever before. Only 35% of schools have a physical education teacher. This is a problem under the Liberal regime.

We have seven boards that we looked at, Premier. Seven boards have raised—because since 2005, we know how many dollars have been raised by the schools. Seven boards have raised \$125 million alone, and the minister says it's okay for boards to raise money to fix a school, to build a gym or whatever.

We've got a lot of problemos in the Liberal regime that we need to fix, and we hope to do that on October 10.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): In response to the Minister of Community and Social Services, New Democrats support increased funding for developmentally disabled adults and their support workers, but I have to ask you: What took you so long? The question is, why did it take you four years to get to this position?

We do, however, have a real question about this: whether the money you have brought forward at this very late date is enough to do the job you intended to do. Sixty-two million dollars for 40,000 people leaves each person with about \$1,550 each. It is hard to believe that this money you are putting forward with such fanfare will be able to fund important programs and improve the

wages of the support workers. This is a lot of ado about really not very much at all.

What we're really surprised about, however, is that the minister continues to ignore the problems associated with the long-term-care-home access protocol for adults with developmental disabilities. Mr. Keith Powell, the executive director of Community Living Ontario, wrote to your deputy minister expressing his deep concern that your government is moving people into long-term-care homes in order to ease the burden on the developmental services sector. We looked in your announcement, and there is absolutely nothing at all about it there. We saw the terrible circumstances of Mr. Croteau, a developmentally challenged man who was in a nursing home and was brutally killed. It was a terrible and preventable death which your ministry should have done something about, and the announcement today should have included that.

VISITORS

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise today to give recognition to the accounting profession. One of the great pillars of the accounting profession was Clarkson Gordon and Co., who morphed into many other accounting professions, and there are three great pillars of that community here today with us: David Crack, John Martin and Bill Beavers. I just wish them to be recognized for the great contribution they've made to the quality of business in Ontario.

ORDER AND DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Members will have noted that I have been attempting to guide them in the parliamentary manner of asking and responding to questions.

To this end, as discussed in House of Commons Procedure and Practice, "Any member participating in debate must address the Chair, not the House, a particular minister or member, the galleries, or the television audience." By doing this, members are less apt to engage in direct heated exchanges and personal attacks when their comments are directed through the Chair rather than to another member. If a member directs remarks towards another member, not the Speaker, he or she will be called to order and may be asked to rephrase their remarks.

I point out that this manner of conducting proceedings is commonplace in Parliaments based on the Westminster model, including all of those in Canada. It's not a novel concept. Indeed, Ontario's unfortunate current practice is well at odds not only with our not-so-distant past, but with all other Parliaments I've alluded to.

Because this method has fallen by the wayside, I've provided on each member's desk an excellent illustration from the House of Commons of Canada to guide members. I strongly believe that if this assembly can return to this more impersonal tone in question period and debate,

we can retrieve some of the lost dignity we have suffered here.

I have mentioned a number of times recently my profound respect for this institution and the unique role that the Speaker plays. For my part, I intend to be rigorous in attempts to maintain order and decorum, and I look forward to the co-operation of all members.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Speaker, my question is through you to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I want to follow up on my question to him yesterday concerning his role in the Liberal slush fund scandal.

Yesterday, I asked the minister why an established organization that has been providing services to the community since 2001 through their office in Richmond Hill was denied funding by his ministry and was forced to shut down. The minister refused to answer my question, but I answered his, because the minister asked me to name the organization, and I did: My Canada Integration and Settlement Services.

The minister now has had 24 hours to think about my question. I would ask the minister now to respond to the question I asked him yesterday and am repeating today. Why did he deny My Canada Integration and Settlement Services funding?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The question asked yesterday—hopefully, I indicated to the member that there are many organizations that for years never received any funding. In fact, if I recall correctly, the gentleman in question, who is the executive director of that organization, I think I met at a round table in York region where we were talking about expanded opportunities now as a result of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, where organizations are now finding that federal spending has increased dramatically all over Ontario so that organizations like his or others are now able to apply for funding for language training and for job search programs they never had before. Most organizations are seeing a dramatic increase in the availability of funding they never saw before as a result of the agreement.

1440

Mr. Klees: That executive director, Mr. Hashim Ali, is in the gallery today. He's here today because he too would like to remind the minister of their face-to-face discussion and his appeal to the minister for funding for My Canada Integration and Settlement Services. What Mr. Hashim Ali would like to know today is why his organization, which had provided services to York region refugees and immigrants since 2001, was bypassed for funding when an organization with no history—no one

knows what they have done, no service to the community ever—received \$200,000 from this minister, which is in their account today and is providing no service. And this organization was forced to shut their doors today. Why?

Hon. Mr. Colle: One of our priorities has been to extend services into York region, because what has happened in the last number of years is that there was an out-migration of newcomers who are going from the city of Toronto and moving into York region and especially Peel region. There is now an increased number of services in that area. We've met directly with the York region United Appeal. We've met with a number of agencies. Many new services are being provided in York region because of the attention we've paid, and also because new resources are available as a result of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, which flows the money directly to new programs, which flows the money directly into government of Canada programs that were never funded before. New agencies, big and small, have never had so much access to money as they have now because of that agreement. The money goes to those programs directly.

Mr. Klees: Mr. Hashim Ali, who is observing the minister's response, takes no heart from that. What he's hearing the minister say is nothing that addresses his circumstance, the 200 volunteers who have worked through his organization, or the many refugees and immigrants who are dependent on the services his organization provides and who have none today, because the \$200,000 that the minister did dump into the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre's account is doing nothing. There is not one service that's being provided as a result of that.

I want to repeat my question, through you, to the minister: Why has he denied and shut down an organization that is providing essential services to refugees and immigrants and refused to fund it, but has put \$200,000 into a shell company for no reason at all?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are a number of NSP partners, settlement agencies, that we've partnered with for years. We continue to fund their programs. We continue to also get the federal government involved now in expanding services. We've paid a great deal of attention to those services, especially in York region. We sometimes try to build capacity in new organizations. Sometimes organizations may not meet the standards of the federal government program; sometimes they don't meet the provincial program's. What we do is we continually try to find ways of building more capacity. In fact, we're building a multi-agency program, in co-operation with the federal government—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having great difficulty hearing the minister.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: In fact, soon to open in York region is a York region access centre, which is going to be a

multi-agency program that's going to get \$3 million from the federal government's investments in Ontario to offer programs in York region that have never been offered before.

Expansion is happening, and we're working with all organizations, big and small, to do that.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Klees: To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: The minister stands in his place today and talks about a new organization that is going to provide services at some point in the future with some \$3 million of funding. That's not my question. My question is: Why do we have Mr. Hashim Ali here, who has a history of providing services and was denied funding, and \$200,000 of taxpayers' money is sitting in a shell account attributed to an agency where seven of the directors are all closely aligned with the Liberal Party? One of those directors will be confirmed as the Liberal candidate this weekend. Another director is, in fact, the president of the local Liberal riding association.

Speaker, will you agree that something smells here, and should the minister not respond in a straightforward way and tell us how he can justify \$200,000 in a bank account while we have a service agency that closed its doors today?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, there are agencies across the province that for years have had little attention or little investment. They're all over the province. We keep on working with agencies to get through troubled times. We've had the provincial funding. Now there is \$920 million of federal funding. We are seeing agencies across York region, the city of Toronto, all across the province, that are hiring people, increasing funding for ISAP, for host programs, settlement workers in schools. Now those gaps are being filled.

We also tried to make investments in areas where we could build greater capacity to provide even more services. Every agency, big and small, has different needs. Sometimes, there are different periods of financial difficulty. We try to help as much as we can, and we continue to do that. Overall, there's much better service delivery than there ever has been before.

Mr. Klees: The minister talks about filling gaps and building capacity. What he has just done is—he has created a gap. He shut down, this morning, My Canada Integration and Settlement Services. Shut down. We locked the door this morning. I was there.

I want to point something out. In the minister's own eligibility criteria for his settlement program, here are two of the three criteria: First, it must be incorporated as a not-for-profit organization for at least two years. His \$200,000 shell corporation, which was incorporated three days before he deposited the funds, didn't qualify. Second, it must have at least two years' experience of delivering programs and services to newcomers. None. That's \$200,000 in a bank account, with not one service delivered. Compare that to My Canada Integration and Settlement Services, since 2001. Why?

Hon. Mr. Colle: In many cases across this province, we were trying to create increased capacity to provide more services in areas that needed services. This organization that the member talks about was more than happy and more than able to apply for the new federal programs. The federal programs were there to fill the gap because we could not fund all of the programs. So the federal government has stepped in. This agency was more than able to apply for the new programs for language training, for job connect programs, for counselling services. They were all there for this agency to apply for. Because the provincial government could not meet all of these needs, the federal spending goes directly into programs. This agency could have easily applied for those dollars.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Final supplementary.

Mr. Klees: This is bizarre. For the last number of years, we've heard from this minister about how the provincial Liberal government has built capacity, how much more they are investing in newcomers. Now this minister is saying they couldn't give \$36,000 to My Canada Integration and Settlement Services but could give \$200,000 to a shell company, and this minister is directing My Canada to the federal government after all their boasting about what he, his minister and his government are doing for newcomers. Something stinks here.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the minister, through you, to explain why \$36,000 couldn't be put on the table for this organization, for Mr. Hashim Ali's organization, but they could find \$200,000 for a Liberal slush fund on the other side.

1450

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: I think the member opposite still does not quite understand the federal-provincial agreement. This is one agreement that—for nine years, while he was in government and a minister, he never stood up in this House once and asked for fair funding for York region or Ontario; he never did it once. As a result of our hard-fought battle to get equity for Ontario, the program ensures that these existing federal programs, which only provided \$800 for a newcomer in Ontario, are now going up to \$3,400. This does not come to the treasury of Ontario. The dollars go directly into program expansion, and that is why they are available for all agencies to tap into, because those program dollars are there; they have never been there before. That member never asked for one cent from the federal government to help newcomers. Now that resource is there.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. On Friday, when the Premier answered a journalist's question, he implied that oppo-

sition members were racist because they asked questions about the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund. Later Friday evening, the Premier was forced to issue a statement that his answer to the journalist's question should have been "No."

My question today is this: When is the Premier going to apologize to opposition members for casting aspersions of racism, and when is the Premier going to do the right thing and ask the Auditor General to implement an immediate investigation and report on the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I want to take this opportunity to express my unreserved and unwavering support for the 140,000 immigrants who arrive in Ontario on an annual basis, and to ensure that we continue to provide all the necessary supports to ensure that each and every one of those new Canadians has access to all the opportunities they need to succeed and become integrated in the economy and in our society generally. I think Ontario is blessed. At a time when so many parts of the developed world have entered into a competition for immigrants, we are blessed on an annual basis to admit 140,000 new Canadians, who enrich us in every possible sense of the word.

Mr. Hampton: It's part of the Premier's job to set the tone of debate for the McGuinty government. I have to say that the Premier certainly did that. Just two days ago, a number of McGuinty Liberal backbenchers, rather than debating the opposition motion calling for the Auditor General to investigate and report on the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund, rather than addressing the unfairness to community groups left out of the slush fund, levelled thinly veiled accusations of racism against opposition members.

Premier, I ask you again: When are you going to apologize?

The Speaker: The leader might want to rephrase the question.

Mr. Hampton: When is the Premier going to apologize? When is the Premier going to show some leadership to his own backbenchers? When is the Premier going to do the right thing and ask the Auditor General to conduct an immediate investigation and report on the slush fund?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We will continue to be very aggressive in terms of standing up for the rights of immigrants in the province of Ontario, and that's in accordance with the policy changes that we've already made.

One of the things of which I'm most proud is that I was able to sit down with then-Prime Minister Martin and negotiate the first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement that ensured that an immigrant arriving in the province of Ontario received the same amount of financial support as did an immigrant arriving in the province of Quebec.

We also, I'm very proud to say, have in place now fair access legislation. It's the first of its kind in Canada. It

breaks down barriers in an effort to stand up for our immigrants, and we have in place for the first time ever, now, a fairness commissioner in the person of Jean Augustine, who is there to fight for and champion the recognition of credentials for our foreign-trained professionals.

Mr. Hampton: He tries to avoid the issue, and I say to the Premier, the issue is this: Legitimate community organizations, immigrant settlement organizations, receive no funding while organizations that have no history of providing immigrant or settlement services to new Canadians, but are closely connected to the Liberal Party, got funding of \$200,000, a quarter of a million dollars.

Premier, the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star, the Toronto Sun, the North Bay Nugget, the Brantford Expositor, the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, the Welland Tribune, the Sudbury Star and other papers across this province all say you're wrong.

My question is, when is the Premier going to stop casting aspersions of racism against members like me who simply want an accountable, transparent and fair process, and when are you going to call in the Auditor General to investigate your slush fund?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm sure the House would be interested in knowing what else we've done to benefit Ontario immigrants. In addition to our—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): We'd like to hear an apology, Dalton. Why don't you have the class to apologize?

The Speaker: Member for Erie-Lincoln. I really do need to be able to hear the Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In addition to our Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, which will provide us with \$920 million in additional dollars for federal support for language training and settlement services, in addition to our fair access legislation and our fairness commissioner in the person of Jean Augustine, we have also put in place something of which I am also very proud, which is our Ontario public service internships which is a program—the first of its kind in Canada—to launch six-month internships in public service and crown agencies for internationally trained professionals.

One of the complaints that we receive from immigrants on a regular basis is that they can't get a job because they can't get workplace experience here. So, what we've done, for the first time in Canada, and have in place in our own House, is a six-month internship which allows our immigrants to gain that precious workplace experience so that they can have a stronger CV when it comes to obtaining secure employment here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: I say to the Premier, there are many good settlement and immigrant organizations in this province. But the fact is, your government has been caught using that immigrant and settlement description to float money to organizations that don't provide those services—organizations that seem to be full of Liberal

candidates, Liberal riding association presidents and other members of the Liberal Party. We think that's wrong.

I want to quote from today's Toronto Sun columnist Christina Blizzard:

"It's no more Mr. Nice Guy for McGuinty. He is fond of telling us about growing up in a nice Catholic family with nine brothers and sisters. He often gives us some of his mom's homespun philosophy about how to get along in one big, happy family. I suspect one of the rules she laid down was to say you're sorry when you're wrong."

1500

When are you going to apologize, Premier, for casting aspersions of racism against me and other members? When are you going to do the right thing—

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: One of the other things we've heard from our immigrants that they really appreciate is that we now have in place a new loan system that provides up to \$5,000 per immigrant to cover assessment, training and exam costs.

One of the challenges you're faced with when you arrive here for the first time, if you've had professional experience, training and education elsewhere, is that you want to have those credentials recognized here in Ontario. Sometimes that necessitates that you participate in an upgrading program or some kind of licensure test—exams and the like. Many of those individuals don't have the necessary funds to participate in that, so we have in place a new program that gives up to \$4,000 per immigrant to cover their assessment, training and exam costs, all with a view to accelerating their entry into the workplace here in Ontario so they can help us further strengthen our economy.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier again attempts to avoid the issue. It would appear from some of your grants that it was all about participation in the Liberal Party.

This is what the people of Ontario have seen from the Premier: When the Parkdale-High Park by-election was going badly, the Premier responded with slanderous personal attacks against a United Church minister, Cheri DiNovo, who is now the member for Parkdale-High Park; when some of us questioned the Premier's 31% MPP pay increase, the Premier responded with attacks against us; and now, when some of us ask about this public money going to well-connected Liberal front organizations, the Premier says we are racists for asking these questions.

Premier, when are you going to apologize? When are you going to do the right thing and call in the Auditor General to examine and report on your year-end slush fund?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP is nothing if not creative.

One of the other programs that our immigrants are accessing readily has to do with bridge training. We've invested over \$53 million in more than 90 bridge training programs to help internationally trained people work in more than 100 trades and professions. Again, the ob-

jective here is to ensure that our new arrivals can be more quickly introduced into the workplace. Sometimes that calls for a little bit of a bump, a little bit of a boost to get them up to Ontario standards. We call that bridge training; we've invested \$53 million.

Everything I've heard from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tells me that that is an overwhelming success; it has been very well received by our immigrants. Again, it's all with a view to ensuring that as we begin to compete more and more for immigrants from across the world, they see Ontario as a great place to come to because you can be quickly introduced into the economy and our society.

The Speaker: Final supplementary—I would ask the leader to be careful with his phrasing.

Mr. Hampton: Here's the situation: When we question why well-connected Liberals get money from the McGuinty government and they're not providing any immigrant or settlement services, the Premier's response seems to be to cast aspersions that we're racist for asking these questions. The Premier's response seems to be that Ontarians should not expect accountability, transparency or fairness in how organizations receive grant money, and the Premier seems to take the view that long-established community organizations that didn't even know—weren't even told—about this year-end funding should not be concerned that they were completely left in the dark. All of this seems very inappropriate to the average person out there in Ontario. My question is simply this: When are you going to apologize for casting aspersions—

The Speaker: You'll probably want to rephrase that.

Mr. Hampton: When is the Premier going to apologize for casting aspersions of racism because I asked for accountability, transparency and fairness, and when are you going to call in the Auditor General to investigate—

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We've got some really good news on the health care front these days, with 500,000 more Ontarians now having access to a doctor than they did three and a half years ago. But one of the things that we must continue to do is to access our health care talent that's coming to us from abroad. A couple of important pieces of information on that score: We have more than doubled the number of spaces for our international medical graduates, from 90 to over 200, in our medical schools. Beyond that, we also have, for three years running now, issued more licences to practise medicine in Ontario to individuals trained outside of Ontario than those trained inside of Ontario, and that's for the very first time.

So we're making very strong efforts to access that talent, again, with a view to understanding that if we're going to be truly competitive, if we're going to continue to build on our standard of living and our quality of life, we have to be 13 million strong. That's why we will remain very aggressive in pursuing opportunities on behalf of all of Ontario's immigrants.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): If anyone watching these proceedings is wondering why the bells are going to be ringing today and tonight, we've had a perfect example of the Premier's refusal to answer and the minister's refusal to answer. It's embarrassing and it's shameful.

My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. We've just heard from the member for Oak Ridges about how My Canada Integration and Settlement Services has had to close its doors today because they couldn't get the \$36,000 they needed to stay in operation, despite the minister and the chair of the Liberal Party campaign having \$200,000 to help their Liberal Party friends in Richmond Hill perhaps try to buy the election in that riding.

Yesterday, in response to a question from the member for Erie–Lincoln, the minister said, "All of our funding partners who are NSP agencies were given an opportunity to access sectoral improvement funds."

My question for the minister is this: Given that the minister has said previously that these slush fund monies were paid out after he had contact with hundreds of groups and then said yesterday that there was a formal process, can the minister tell us what Mr. Ali did wrong?

Hon. Mr. Colle: In the last two years, I've been at Markham town hall meetings, city hall, I've met with the YMCA of York region, we've had round tables, we've opened new offices for Employment Ontario with the Jewish Vocational Service to service York region. We're going to be opening up an access centre with the federal government in the very near future. We also worked with York region on the needs assessment that they did. They pointed out the fact that we have to expand services, whether it be with CICS, which is a long-standing Chinese immigrant aid organization that's going to expand into York region—we're funding the expansion of that because many of the newcomers into York region are Mandarin-speaking. They have never been funded. Now there is funding to expand Mandarin-speaking services into York region.

These are the investments we're making in areas that were not invested in, because they never—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: We're not getting any answers from these folks because they know this is a sleazy piece of business.

He says there's a process, and then he says there was no process because there was no time and the money had to be shovelled out the door quickly. What's the result? My Canada closes its doors and the Liberal candidate in Richmond Hill gets \$200,000 to sit in the bank while he waits for the election to approach.

It smells. People across this province are asking questions in papers and on radio call-in shows. The minister and this government continue to live under a cloud, under the stench of scandal.

Why isn't the minister interested in clearing this up? Why won't he stop stonewalling, call in the auditor and ask for an immediate report on this sorry, sorry scandal?

1510

Hon. Mr. Colle: If I could say again, these were investments made with a particular expansion into areas that were underserved, especially in Peel and York regions, that for too long have been underserved. We've also ensured for the first time that our funding partners that provide settlement services were able to get a sectoral improvement grant to fix up their premises. They were provided to organizations across this province, from the African Community Services of Peel; the Arab Community Centre of Toronto; AWIC, which services the South Asian community in Don Mills; Bloor information services; Brampton Multicultural services—it goes on and on. These are organizations that under their government didn't receive one cent to help them improve their facilities—totally ignored for nine years. Now I hear them stand up in indignation when for nine years they totally ignored this sector and really didn't care about it.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Last week, the Premier admitted that his government has routinely dished out tens of millions of dollars in year-end spending without a proper application process. The Premier and this minister must know that this is public money, not Liberal Party money.

Minister, you've had an opportunity for two weeks to dispel all of this and you haven't done anything. My question is: If you have nothing to hide, when will the minister do the right thing, clean up this mess and have the Auditor General look into where the money went?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We have, for the last number of years, looked at ways of helping this sector. We've been helping on the operational side. Now, with the federal money, there is even more help on the operational side.

We're also trying to help on the capital side. This is an area where many of these organizations across this province never had any funding, whether it be the St. George Arab Cultural Centre or settlement houses in SISO in Hamilton. They never had that. So we were able to make an investment in improving their facilities or expanding their services that had never been made before. We also know that the system is now improved because we have a direct application registry online where we can track these better. We're making these needs much more of a priority because they've been neglected for too long. We've tried our best to address this capital need, and we're going to do even better.

Mr. Prue: The minister continues to ignore the question. This McGuinty slushgate has threatened the public confidence in the government's management of public money. This falls directly under the mandate of the Auditor General Act. It is also part of your mandate. When you were sworn in as a minister, you promised, "I will be vigilant, diligent and circumspect in the performance of my duties." You have sworn this oath, and you and only you have the right, as a minister of the

crown, to call for an audit. Will the minister do the right thing, call for that audit and live up to the oath that he took?

Hon. Mr. Colle: It is within the power of that office to look at any ministry, and he can do that. The thing that I've said before, and again, is that we have many partners who have long-established records, who are trying to service a new need. We have tried to extend services in areas that have been lacking in services. We're also trying to provide support to our diverse multicultural organizations. For instance, we've invested \$500,000 in the Casa dos Açores of Ontario. For 25 years, these hard-working Canadians who come from the Azores have been trying to build a heritage community centre. They got no response. We finally partnered with them, and they're going to have a centre where they can recognize their heritage and practise their citizenship in a true open fashion—

The Speaker: Thank you.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. I want to raise a question that's on the minds of rural Ontarians: water—more specifically, well water. I know you'll have lots to say about the misleading way that the Conservative Party is choosing to fearmonger in—

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Surely the member has been around long enough to know that that kind of language is certainly out of order—to use the term "misleading."

Mrs. Mitchell: I take that back.

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

Mrs. Mitchell: I withdraw.

Frankly, it appears the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is missing in action. Clean, safe drinking water is the birthright of all Ontarians, and we all have to work together to protect it. I know that the McGuinty government has taken many steps to protect our water, and I'm proud to have supported the Clean Water Act. But sadly, the member opposite seems to have forgotten Canada's worst environmental disaster: Walkerton. Why else would he have voted against making sure that Ontarians have the best-protected drinking water in North America? If the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke really cared about making sure that all Ontarians had clean, safe—

The Speaker: The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): In response to the member, I'd certainly say that Walkerton—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We're wasting time. The member for Durham is not in his seat. Member for Halton.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Erie–Lincoln. Minister.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I'm not surprised that my friends opposite don't want to talk about water, because the Walkerton inquiry found that the cuts by the Harris-Eves government, the reckless cuts and the legacy that they have left behind, contributed to that terrible, terrible tragedy here in our province. The documents clearly show that in 1997, when those members were in office, they knew the legacy they were leaving and they chose to ignore it. Worse is the fact that they were reckless in their actions. Now they stand in the way and have voted against our government's actions to implement all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations. And to make it even worse, their only contribution to their terrible legacy is scaremongering in rural Ontario. It is shameful.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I agree with the member from Huron-Bruce that if the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke really cared about making sure that all Ontario had clean, safe drinking water—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order.

Member for Northumberland.

Mr. Rinaldi:—he would have stopped fearmongering in rural Ontario, and that goes for all members of the Conservative Party who are spreading misinformation.

To the Minister of the Environment: Yesterday, I received a letter from Dr. Robert Kyle, commissioner and medical officer of health for Durham region, in response to the efforts of the Conservative Party petition, "Say No to Meters on Private Wells," being circulated. The letter states, "I am writing to confirm that the statement of the alleged 'secret agenda to require the installation of meters on all water wells in the province of Ontario' attributed to me is completely false." Instead of fearmongering, the members of the Conservative caucus should get their facts straight.

I know that the McGuinity government has no intention of metering private wells. Would the minister take this opportunity to enlighten the members opposite and let rural Ontario know what the truth of the matter is?

Interjections.

1520

The Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton will come to order. The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I urge the members opposite to stop fearmongering, stop mischief-making. Take a moment. Read the act. Stop raising issues in rural Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I am not going warn the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke again. Minister.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I know it is a challenge for the members opposite, but take just a few minutes. I ask them, read Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. Agriculture is exempted, private homes are exempted, institutions are exempted. Let me be clear: For the 100th time, our government has absolutely no plans to meter private residential wells in Ontario, and they know it.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): If I could regain my composure after those vicious attacks, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration concerning his slush fund. We're dealing with the fact that My Canada Integration and Settlement Services, which has been around since 2001, has had to close its doors because they couldn't get the \$36,000 they needed to stay in operation, but an animal welfare organization that had been around for barely three weeks managed to get a \$200,000 cheque, thanks to its ties to the Liberal Party. The minister has said that these slush fund payments had, and I quote, "to go through other ministers." One of those ministers is the Liberal Party campaign chair. My question for the minister is this: What direction did he get from the Liberal Party campaign chair with respect to the slush fund grants?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The organization he keeps on referring to is an organization that was incorporated in 2005, so his information is incorrect. I would also like to remind the member that these organizations across Ontario receive funding because there was great need to expand services. That's why the federal government has matched our desire to do that by unprecedented increases. For instance, the Brampton Neighbourhood Resource Centre has had a 104% increase in funding; the Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society, a 35% increase; Catholic Cross Cultural Services, 51%; Community MicroSkills Development Centre, 38%; Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre, 43%; Fort Erie Multicultural Centre, 68%.

There are many new dollars available to centres across the province for programs, for language training—

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

Mr. Yakabuski: The minister tells us about his stories and his visits, but I am only concerned about one visit, and that's the visit from the Liberal Party campaign chair or members of his staff: whether or not you received any visits, phone calls or notes—any direction from them—about how to give out this slush money. The minister has been very careful not to answer this question directly, and his failure to deny that he was directed by the Liberal Party campaign chair or his staff suggests that he was. The minister can clear this up with a simple answer: Who was pulling the strings: the minister or the Liberal Party campaign chair?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I know the member opposite was making fun of my visits, but the visits I made to places like the Fort Erie Multicultural Centre or the Halton—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having great difficulty hearing the Minister of Citizenship.

Hon. Mr. Colle: When I go to CultureLink here in Toronto, to AWIC in Don Mills, to the Catholic Immigration Centre in Ottawa or visit the St. Catharines

multicultural centre, those are where the real people are delivering incredible services. They've been delivering these services—job counselling, language interpreter services, job link programs. They tell me that finally you've got a government in Ontario, finally you've got federal funds flowing into buildings and services that were ignored for so long. That's who I listen to. That's whose needs we've tried to respond to. I'm proud of the investments we've made in these incredible volunteer-based organizations that for too long were ignored.

The Speaker: New question.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, there are over 3,000 Tibetans in my riding, the largest community of Tibetans in North America. Last month I had the honour of meeting their President in exile. His name is the Honourable Rinpoche.

The Canadian Tibetan Association was here last week. They sat in that members' gallery. They want to know the answer to this question: Would the minister please tell this organization and the thousands of Tibetans that they represent why they were not considered worthy of funding from your year-end slush fund? Please answer.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The government of Ontario has been helping organizations for a number of years. We are now better able to help them. There are organizations of all different sizes and descriptions across Ontario. Some are providing a vast variety of services, like COSTI or SISO, which are long established. There are also emerging small organizations. We've tried to ensure that now there is funding available. It's very clear, if you ask all of the funding partners across this province, from Thunder Bay to Ottawa to Hamilton to St. Catharines, that there now is money available for these new language training programs, settlement services, even for new organizations. That's what is there. That's where the need is, and I'm glad to see that it's finally being met after being ignored.

Ms. DiNovo: With all due respect, the minister did not answer my question or the question of the Canadian Tibetan Association. They are an ethical organization; they follow His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They know a real answer when they hear it, so I'm going to ask again. Would the minister please tell this organization and the thousands of Tibetans that they represent why they were not considered worthy of funding from your year-end slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, we've tried to do our best to ensure that all organizations, big and small, all advocacy groups, have had an opportunity to participate in the new federal funding and the new initiatives by our government. I have been very proud of the fact that I have gone into communities across Ontario to let them know that they can be listened to, that I've been their advocate. We fought hard for their funding from Ottawa. We fought hard to extend new programs. We now have programs existing in Ontario that never existed before, like our new loan program for all new immigrants—never existed. Our expanding bridge training programs never existed to this

extent. We've got ongoing programs to help newcomers. Sure, there are many groups that maybe need to be part of a bigger program in the future. We're trying to do that. Not all of the groups' needs have been met. We know that. That's why we've been struggling to try to get them more help, and we are proud to keep on trying to do that.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I'm proud of the support for rural communities that our government has given, and particularly the \$67-million boost that the Ministry of Agriculture received in our recent budget. It's too bad that rural members of the Conservative caucus, including the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, voted against it. It's not shocking, though, as we all know he and future PC candidate Randy Hillier have many backward views when it comes to rural Ontario. They don't even support supply management.

Our investments in agriculture stand in stark contrast to when the former Conservative government, including many of the members sitting opposite us today, gutted the ministry and closed local offices. Since coming to office, our Premier and government have championed the innovation file across rural Ontario. Rural Ontarians and farmers need to be able to tap into all future economic potential that innovation can bring.

I understand the Premier's and minister's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence were announced in March, including 55 regional award winners. We know how important it is—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. The question has been asked, I think.

1530

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'd like to thank the honourable member for her question. She certainly is a very strong advocate for rural communities, and—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Some members have very short memories.

Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I have to say I'm—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm not going to warn the member for Niagara Centre again.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I have to say I'm very surprised. As you would know, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has lots to say in this Legislature. I'm very surprised that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has not told the members of this Legislative Assembly that constituents of his—wonderful agriculture pioneers, the Klaesi family—were the recipients of the minister's award this year. They received \$50,000.

I want to tell you about the Klaesi innovation. Fritz and Paul Klaesi of Renfrew county have adopted an-

aerobic digester technology on their farm operation. Unlike their member, who is in favour of coal, the Klaesis understand that it's very important to invest in innovation in clean energy. And our Premier has established awards to reward people—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Smith: I'm glad that our government is standing up for the people of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, because clearly their member isn't.

Along with innovation, it's also important that governments recognize the need to invest in rural infrastructure and rural development. In my riding, we recently received \$4.2 million of investment through the rural infrastructure investment initiative, and my local communities are delighted at the funding. We've also received over \$20 million in roads and bridges in COMRIF funding.

My riding is not alone. Other communities, like my neighbours to the east in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, have benefited from our government's investments in rural Ontario. We know the member opposite tries to stand in the place of progress and in no way acknowledges any positive initiatives, so I'm going to ask that the minister perhaps provide the House with more information on the good news of what's going on in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I don't know about you. I thought I heard the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke say, "Put some real money on the table." I'm very happy to say that our government has put some real money on the table for the riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and I have to say that I'm surprised, when the member has so much to say on other issues, that he's really quite quiet on the investment that the McGuinty government has made in his riding.

Let me remind the member that we have invested \$3.1 million through the rural infrastructure investment initiative, \$1.8 million to the rural economic development program and over \$12 million through the COMRIF program. That's in his riding. The people of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke won't hear that from him. I'm saying, as minister, that's the commitment that the McGuinty government has to the people in rural Ontario and to the people of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Citizenship—before I do, I want to say, boy, we're going to miss that Minister of Agriculture after October 10. Boy, oh boy—highly entertaining.

The Minister of Citizenship—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We're wasting time.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Labour will come to order.

Member for Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration concerning his slush fund: The minister knows that My Canada provided services in English, French, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Pashto, Afghani-Pashto, Pakistani, Farsi, Arabic and Spanish, to name but some. They had free seniors' computer classes, seniors' drop-in, a citizens' test preparation course, an English conversation café, and many more programs. I'd like to know from the minister exactly which one of these programs didn't qualify for the minister's slush fund.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Service provision across York region or Toronto is very comprehensive, and there are many agencies that deliver services of different varieties. The good news is that in York region, as I said, it has been a priority area for investment. That's why we've opened a new Jewish Vocational Service office with Employment Ontario to provide employment linkages there. That's why we've expanded the services in the Mandarin-speaking community of York region. That's why I've met with the YMCA in York region. That's why we've had round tables with Mayor Scarpitti in Markham. That's why we've had meetings with the Markham Board of Trade to hire more immigrants. That's why we've had meetings with the Brampton Board of Trade to hire more immigrants. That's why we met with the Mississauga Board of Trade we partnered with to hire more immigrants.

Services and programs for newcomers have never been as expansive in Ontario, in the GTA, as they have been in the last two years.

Mr. Hudak: Sadly, the minister refuses to answer a very simple question about My Canada before the assembly today. Services in at least a dozen languages, services to newcomers, computer programs, seniors' drop-ins—all programs that were alive and vibrant until today. They had to close down the facility because the minister turned his back on My Canada. Instead, the minister chose to give \$200,000, a whopping grant, to another organization stacked with well-connected Liberals, including, coincidentally, a Liberal candidate in the next provincial election. Any reasonable person would think that My Canada would qualify for funding. You'd think they would fit the bill, but evidently they didn't have enough Liberals on their board and evidently they didn't have enough Liberal candidates on their board. Evidently they didn't contribute to the right Liberal campaign. Will the minister come clean, fund My Canada and call in the Auditor General?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I've also attended meetings in the growing area north of Toronto, in the Vaughan-York region area, in Peel, where there are many newcomers moving in at a faster rate than they're coming into Toronto. That's why I've been constant in visiting these centres that are providing new services now, that are opening up new offices. For the first time in 20 years,

they're hiring new settlement workers. For the first time in 20 years, they're hiring new workers to go into schools. For the first time, we are partnering with boards of trade to hire new immigrants. For the first time, we've created immigration hubs for newcomers to come to. York region is now an immigration hub that we are investing in to create services under a one-stop centre in York region. We've done that in Niagara region too. We're doing that in Windsor. We're doing that in Sudbury. These are new services—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Clearly the McGuinty Liberals' lack of transparency and accountability has gone from being an illness to a full-fledged epidemic. I would suggest that the minister has failed to serve Ontario's new citizens and his government has failed to properly manage public money. This House has no trust in the minister's government, and this scandal is threatening public confidence in his ability to handle public money.

My question is a simple one: Why is the minister afraid of the Auditor General? What in heaven's name do you think he's going to uncover if he looks at your books?

Hon. Mr. Colle: For two years, we have done exceptionally good work with our partners in helping new immigrants across this province. I'll stack my track record of helping new immigrants against either party's, any time.

1540

PETITIONS

GAS WELLS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition called "Preserve Our Gas Wells." It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas southern Ontario has had a localized gas well industry since the 1840s; and

"Whereas gas wells provide an efficient form of heat and energy for rural landowners and farmers; and

"Whereas inconsistent bureaucratic interpretation of regulations and often antagonistic enforcement measures threaten the financial viability of this natural resource;

"We, the undersigned, request as follows:

"That the McGuinty government investigate the Ministry of Natural Resources petroleum division and direct civil servants to work proactively and positively with landowners and farmers to review the government's approach based on the following principles:

"(a) respect for property owners, and

"(b) consistent and fair treatment of gas well owners."

I have signed my signature.

COURT SUPPORT STAFF

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): "Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas 1,400 members of the Attorney General's court support staff who are working under the flexible, part-time ... model, otherwise referred to as appendix 32 under a collective agreement between Management Board of Cabinet, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union negotiated in the spring of 2005, are working hundreds of hours per week in the service of the Attorney General for which they are not getting paid; and

"Whereas under the FPT agreement many court support staff are working as many as 20 hours or more per week for which payment is being withheld and will not be paid until months later; and

"Whereas when the makeup pay does eventually get paid, up to 50% may be lost to taxes because of the taxation year into which the payment may fall; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff who are ... forced to work under these conditions are single mothers with fixed living expenses who incur employment-related expenses such as child care and travel costs for those hours that they are required to work but for which they are not getting paid; and

"Whereas in many cases these expenses are impossible to pay without the offsetting income which is being withheld by the Attorney General under the FPT agreement; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff have been left no other choice but to resign from these impossible working conditions and, in many cases, are being forced onto the welfare rolls by the very government for which they are providing hundreds of hours of work for which they are not being paid...."

I move on to the address to the assembly:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the Premier, the Attorney General and the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet to take whatever steps are necessary to change the offensive provisions of the FPT agreement as set out in appendix 32 and ensure that the Attorney General's court support staff receive fair treatment as employees of the government and that among other unfair provisions of the agreement, the practice of withholding pay for hours worked cease immediately."

That's signed by Carol Maclean and many others, and I've affixed my signature as well.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "Fairness for Families in the 905 Belt." I want to extend thanks to Lynda deMelo of Brampton for collecting the signatures for us. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the population of the greater Toronto region will increase by an estimated four million more people in

the next generation, with the bulk of that growth coming in the 905 belt of fast-growing cities located north, east and west of Metro Toronto; and

“Whereas these cities are already large and dynamic population units with big-city issues and big-city needs, requiring big-city resources to implement big-city solutions to social issues and human services needs;

“Whereas the 2007-08 Ontario budget proposes aggressive and badly needed increases in operating funding to build and strengthen capacity in developmental and social services agencies and to invest in helping the young, the weak, the needy and the vulnerable; and

“Whereas the social and human services sectors in the 905 belt have historically received per capita funding far below that of other regions despite facing far greater growth in the populations they serve, and this per capita funding gap has increased in the last four years;

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

“That the 2007-08 Ontario budget implementing measures to strengthen Ontario’s families be passed without delay, and that the first priority for the allocation of new funding in meeting the government of Ontario’s commitment to fairness for families flow to the social services agencies serving cities within the 905 belt, and that funding for programs to serve the 905 belt be allocated to established or growing agencies located within the 905 belt.”

It’s an excellent petition. I’m pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Zane to carry it for me.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition regarding lab services at Muskoka Algonquin hospital.

“Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) has indicated its support for moving significant parts of its laboratory operations to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; and

“Whereas MAHC has indicated that it intends to cease doing community-based lab work if it does not receive \$150,000 more in funding from the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the impact of such decisions will negatively affect timely health care delivery to residents of Muskoka, while increasing the overall cost to taxpayers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain hospital and community-based lab services at the existing facilities in Bracebridge and Huntsville, including restoration of lab services that have recently been contracted out to hospitals in Sudbury and Barrie.”

I support this.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): This petition deals with raising the minimum wage.

“Whereas more than 1.2 million Ontarians work at jobs that pay them less than \$10 an hour;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has failed to ensure a living wage for working families;

“Whereas people who work hard and play by the rules should be rewarded with the opportunity to earn a decent living and the chance to get ahead;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals were able to increase their own pay by 31%;

“Whereas an increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would help Ontario’s working families earn a living wage;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to pass Bill 150, the NDP’s living wage bill, which would immediately increase the Ontario minimum wage to \$10 an hour.”

I agree with this petition and sign it myself and will be giving it to page Dillon to deliver.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas we, as members of the Sikh community in the province of Ontario, wish to express our extreme disappointment in the conduct of the leader of the official opposition, John Tory;

“Whereas John Tory’s allegations and slanderous comments towards our cultural and religious institutions, which recently received grants from the government of Ontario, are an utter insult to the hard work, dedication and commitment of the thousands of volunteers that devote so much of their time to serve the people of Ontario;

“Whereas accusations of our non-partisan institutions receiving grants solely due to the political views of individual members of our executives are completely baseless, ill-founded, and speak volumes of Mr. Tory and his Conservative Party’s continued ignorance towards ethnic minorities;

“Whereas Mr. Tory’s claims of his concerns revolving around the process on how these grants were awarded, as opposed to the names of the actual recipients, simply do not add up considering his consistent selective scrutiny on a few organizations, comprising only 25% of the total funds distributed;

“We, the undersigned, who believe that Mr. Tory has the good conscience”—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is obviously an ad hominem attack against a member of the Legislative Assembly and—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The petition is in order.

The petition.

Mr. Kular: —“to recognize his gross error in judgment, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand John Tory apologize to the House, and accept this as our formal invitation to him and his caucus to visit each of the Sikh institutions that were grant recipients, so

that they may gain a better understanding of the selfless efforts made by thousands of volunteers to make this province a better place to live.”

I agree with the petitioners so I put my signature on the petition as well.

1550

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):

“To the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights; and

“Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada’s multi-faith and multicultural traditions; and

“Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario’s diverse religious and cultural communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member’s bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day.”

I support this petition. I sign it and hand it in with page Zane.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario and owners of property in Point Clark and members of the Point Clark Beach Association, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the following:

“Whereas there is considerable merit in and public support for the restoration of the Point Clark lakeshore, specifically the improvement of water quality and beach conditions from Amberley Road to Pine River;

“Whereas, due to low lake levels, the presence of man-made ... jetties, the invasion of certain plant species, the population explosion of certain migratory and non-migratory bird species, poorly maintained and managed septic systems, and manure and fertilizer runoff, the foul odour and health conditions have rendered the beach unfit for human activities; and

“Whereas the said deterioration and human health risk are seriously and negatively impacting on the residential and tourist activities in the area;

“Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly to undertake any and all legal and regulatory measures required to clean up the said conditions and to restore the ecosystem to a natural state.”

I affix my signature to the petition.

GAS WELLS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A petition on the “Preserve Our Gas Wells” campaign reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas southern Ontario has had a localized gas well industry since the 1840s; and

“Whereas gas wells provide an efficient form of heat and energy for rural landowners and farmers; and

“Whereas inconsistent bureaucratic interpretation of regulations and often antagonistic enforcement measures threaten the financial viability of this natural resource;

“We, the undersigned, request as follows:

“That the McGuinty government investigate the Ministry of Natural Resources petroleum division and direct civil servants to work proactively and positively with landowners and farmers to review the government’s approach based on the following principles:

“(a) respect for property owners, and

“(b) consistent and fair treatment of gas well owners.”

Underneath the signature of Bob Mackie of Lincoln, I’ll sign my signature as well.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the right to join a union and to fully participate in free collective bargaining is recognized by the United Nations through its International Labour Organization as a fundamental human right; and

“Whereas part-time workers at the province’s universities and secondary schools have the right to free collective bargaining;

“Whereas these part-time ... workers do the same work as their full-time counterparts;

“Whereas this work is often performed without comparable rights and remuneration;

“Whereas these workers are subject to discriminatory treatment by their employer;

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada to deny this basic right to part-time college workers;

“Whereas there is no rationale for denying bargaining rights to these employees; and

“Whereas the abuse of part-time workers is having an impact on the quality of education college students receive;

“We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to extend full collective bargaining rights to part-time college workers.”

There are hundreds and hundreds of names here. I agree with this petition and I’ll be signing it.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, as members of the Sikh community in the province of Ontario, wish to express our extreme disappointment in the conduct of the leader of the official opposition, John Tory;

“Whereas John Tory’s allegations and slanderous comments towards our”—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I want to call your attention to standing order 38(d)(ii) detailing the presentation of petitions. Standing order 38(d)(ii) says that petitions should “contain a clear, proper and respectful request that the House take some action within its authority.” Standing order 38 further says that petitions will conform with the standing orders.

The petition that the member from Mississauga is reading today appears to be outside the standing orders. It’s not calling for the House to take any particular action, and the nature is certainly not in line with the type of language that fits with the standing orders of this assembly. I believe that the petition read by the member from Mississauga is in violation of standing order 38.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I think it’s the tradition of this place that petitions, when presented in the manner the member from Erie–Lincoln is talking about, would have received a stamp from the table indicating that such has been reviewed. I respectfully suggest that if it does have the stamp on it, it would have complied with the member’s concern within the standing orders he’s quoting.

I would bow to the understanding that if the stamp were in place and received from the table, it would have been reviewed and would very clearly have been recommended. If it was not in compliance with the standing orders—I personally have been denied the stamp because my petition was out of order. So if it is being read, it’s being read with the stamp. Therefore, I would respectfully suggest that there are no orders broken here.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the chief government whip and member for Brantford’s comments. I will still look for a Speaker’s ruling on the petition. There’s no doubt that sometimes—the Speaker knows and members know—rhetoric can get quite strong in the Legislature. There can be a heated debate, as we’ve seen in question period these last three weeks. One wonders, though, if these types of petitions being used for ad hominem attacks against a particular member as opposed to calling on the House to take a particular action are a slope we don’t want to slip down. I think the nature and the political discussion of these types of petitions, when they’re maligning an individual member of the assembly, would not be how we’d want to conduct our petitions going forward, and I hope the Speaker will take time to review the exact language of the petition and come back with recommendations to members of the House.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, applying the rules as strictly as my friend from Erie–Lincoln has suggested would mean that many of the petitions I’ve heard from the oppo-

sition—I always cite the biblical quotation from John, 8: “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.” One would then have to review many of the petitions I’ve heard that have denigrated the Premier of Ontario in the context of a petition. So when I hear opposition members get up, as is their wont, I remind members of the House and you, Mr. Speaker, of many of the petitions I’ve listened to that have emanated from the opposition benches recently that might not fit the strict criteria that my friend from Erie–Lincoln has suggested all petitions should meet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): This will be the last one, because it is now 4 o’clock.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly my colleague the veteran member from Niagara and Minister of Tourism would agree: I think there should be one rule for everyone and that we should ensure that petitions read before the assembly conform with the standing orders. I believe the member would agree with me that this one certainly does not.

The Acting Speaker: Obviously a great many points have been made here. I’m going to allow the member to summarize and conclude, very rapidly, what he was attempting to say, and I will take it under advisement and report back to the House. The points on all sides of this issue are well taken, and perhaps we need to take a closer look at how petitions are read.

Please summarize as quickly as you can.

Mr. Fonseca: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To summarize:

“We, the undersigned, who believe that Mr. Tory has the good conscience to recognize his gross error in judgment, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand John Tory apologize to the House and accept this as our formal invitation to him and his caucus to visit each of the Sikh institutions that were grant recipients, so that they may gain a better understanding of the selfless efforts made by thousands of volunteers to make this province a better place to live.”

I affix my signature to this petition and will deliver it by page Omar.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING BUSINESS THROUGH A SIMPLER TAX SYSTEM ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 VISANT À RENFORCER LES ENTREPRISES GRÂCE À UN RÉGIME FISCAL PLUS SIMPLE

Mr. Sorbara moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2007 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 174, Loi édictant la Loi de 2007 sur

les impôts et apportant des modifications complémentaires et autres à diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Sorbara.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr. Speaker, I simply want to advise you and members of the House that I'm going to be sharing my time with the Minister of Revenue and my parliamentary assistant, the member from Pickering-Ajax, and I'm proud that we are beginning second reading debate of this very important bill.

I'm only going to be speaking for a moment or two, as I know that the Minister of Revenue, who will be carrying this matter through the Legislature and be responsible for the implementation of the bill, should it pass, has a great deal more to say and will be speaking to some of the real benefits that this act is going to provide right across the province of Ontario.

Just by way of introduction, I would remind members of this House that it was last October that we signed, on behalf of the government of Ontario, a memorandum of agreement with the man whom I call my predecessor and counterpart—the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty—really, an historic agreement to begin this whole process. The agreement, in summary, provided for a single corporate tax collection system in the province of Ontario, in partnership with the federal government.

The initiative will provide enormous benefits for businesses large and small, right across the province of Ontario. The idea is simplicity itself: Rather than businesses in the province submitting a corporate tax return and corporate tax payments to the provincial government under one set of rules and to the federal government under another set of rules, we are working towards, under this memorandum of agreement and this piece of legislation, a single collection system with a single set of rules, with a single form.

Our own estimates are that millions and millions of dollars in so-called compliance costs will be saved by business. This will affect the largest of corporate entities in Ontario to the very smallest corporate entities. In fact, I believe that it's small business in Ontario that will be one of the true beneficiaries.

I would also like to say that in setting up a single set of rules for businesses, we contemplate at this time that there will be savings in the neighbourhood of \$100 million in direct tax savings. That's above and beyond the savings that will come from the avoidance of compliance costs.

It cuts out red tape. All of us in this Legislature know that businesses, large and small, have a lot to say about the paper burden that governments at the municipal, provincial and federal level provide to business. I think, frankly, that if you look over the course of the past decade, this is the single most important initiative in reducing the regulatory and red tape burden that our businesses are saddled with.

In going forward, the Minister of Revenue, my friend Minister Chan, will be responsible for the transition to

this single corporate tax collection system, including seeing Bill 174 through the legislative process. He will be playing a very important role as we move ahead. I had the opportunity to plant the seed. I know that my colleague and friend the Minister of Revenue and this House are going to give enthusiastic support to this piece of legislation, the real beneficiaries of which are businesses right across the province of Ontario.

Hon. Michael Chan (Minister of Revenue): I want to thank the Minister of Finance for his kind introduction. I appreciate his work so far in shepherding Bill 174 to this point.

Although I have spoken in the Ontario Legislature already this season, it's my distinct honour to be addressing my colleagues today in what I consider my inaugural speech. It is a special moment for me and my family. Before I go any further, I would like to thank my family: my wife, Elaine, and my two sons, Alex and Brian. They have been a constant source of strength and encouragement that I am very grateful for.

One of the main reasons I am here today is my 93-year-old father. He has always loved politics and has always placed a high value on community service. My father survived two wars and then became a teacher, which was one of the ways he felt he could serve his community. He studied politics, but because of the war in China, he fled to Hong Kong and settled there. It is from my father that I learned the importance of public service and giving back to the community.

When I arrived in Ontario almost 40 years ago, I was fortunate to settle in a great community and province. The people who settled in Markham have very similar stories to mine. Through their hard work, they have become engineers, teachers, doctors and business people. The list is endless. They all work hard to make Markham the outstanding community that it is.

I want to thank the people of Markham for recently electing me to represent them in this House. Without them, I would not be here. Fulfilling their faith and trust in me is a responsibility I take very seriously. I not only speak for the people of Markham, I am one of them. I am an immigrant who, like so many, came to Canada with very little and have been given so much. I had many hopes and aspirations when I arrived. I hope that through my position here I will be able to fulfill some of the aspirations and goals of the people of Markham.

The future for Markham is very bright. We have a business community that is growing by leaps and bounds. We have a proud heritage of cultural diversity and harmony that is unique in Ontario. Markham is also a world leader in emerging technologies. We have a rich balance of culture, community and confidence. I appreciate the confidence that the people of Markham have placed in me and look forward to continuing to represent them in this House.

I am very proud to be part of the McGuinty government and all that it has accomplished to date. The McGuinty government echoes my own values, hopes and principles. It is a government that stands for the things I

believe in: opportunity, education and health care. I want to thank Premier Dalton McGuinty for having the confidence in me to appoint me to his cabinet. I plan to live up to my responsibilities and justify that confidence.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to the Honourable John Roberts, who recently passed away. His dedication and passion for public service captured my imagination and continue to inspire me. He gave me my first encounter with political life and what it means to put your support behind a great leader. I want to take this time to acknowledge John Roberts for playing such a big role in putting me on the path that led me here today.

I would also like to thank John McCallum, who has shared with me many valuable lessons. He has been a great friend and mentor. He and I share a love for the values of the Liberal Party and a firm commitment to the people of Markham.

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As Minister of Revenue, there are a lot of things my ministry does beyond tax collection. We are spearheading a number of educational programs, including joint seminars one with our federal counterpart, the Canada Revenue Agency, as well as a groundbreaking high school program on responsible citizenship. We are working with public and private sector organizations to foster better relationships. With partners such as the Ministry of Labour, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and CRA, we participate in tax information forums. We are introducing Internet-based and customer-driven tools to simplify and enhance tax compliance.

We are also introducing an enhanced telephone channel, implementing a toll-free number to access all Ministry of Revenue services and information. We have 63 Service Ontario centres across the province. We are enhancing the training of staff in tax legislation, as well as in new service delivery modes.

All this adds up to a dramatic improvement in providing Ontario businesses with a more simplified tax system, easier access to information and a more fair and transparent system that is efficient and increasingly customer-service-driven.

The Ministry of Revenue is also modernizing the Ontario tax system to make it a world leader. Through enhanced administration capabilities and a more state-of-the-art system, businesses will benefit from the highest levels of customer service.

Revenue is also extensively involved in fighting the underground economy throughout the province. With more auditors involved in more activities, we are helping to decrease tax avoidance and increase tax compliance to level the playing field for all businesses in Ontario.

I have been learning very quickly about the Ministry of Revenue accomplishments, challenges and future direction to better serve Ontarians. I look forward to the challenging months ahead. My team and I are energized and ready to fulfill the mandate of the ministry.

We all know that time is money. That is why I am pleased to speak to you today about Bill 174, the Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System

Act, 2006. Inefficiencies in Ontario's corporate tax structure are costing our businesses time and money. Not only are these inefficiencies unnecessary, but they can be substantially reduced through Bill 174.

For some time now, Ontario businesses have asked us to reduce administrative overlap and duplication. For some time now, they have told us they need a more competitive economy that reduces costs and simplifies tax rules. We could not agree more. This legislation recognizes these concerns and presents a more streamlined tax administration for Ontario businesses.

In October last year, my colleague the Honourable Minister Sorbara met with federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty to sign a memorandum of agreement that will see businesses file a single, combined federal and Ontario corporate income tax return for taxation years ending after 2008. Combined corporate tax instalments to the Canada Revenue Agency would start as early as February 2008. In short, Ontario businesses would benefit from a single tax form, a single tax collector, and a single set of income tax rules and audits.

Today, I would like to emphasize once again how Bill 174 will help the businesses of this province by expanding opportunities and strengthening our economy.

Following my remarks, the honourable member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, Mr. Wayne Arthurs, will provide further detail about the bill itself.

Bill 174 will combine two existing statutes, the Corporations Tax Act and the Income Tax Act, into a single new piece of legislation: the Taxation Act, 2006.

Under the new legislation, if passed, all Ontario businesses will spend less time on paperwork and save up to \$100 million annually in compliance costs by moving to one set of tax forms, one audit process and one set of rules. Businesses will save a further \$90 million a year from a harmonized corporate income tax base. Red tape will be reduced as the Taxation Act is less than one half the size of the measures it replaces.

Ontario is not the first province to pursue the advantages of a simplified corporate system. The government of Canada currently has a tax collection agreement for corporate income tax with all the provinces and territories except Quebec, Ontario and Alberta. This bill will lead to an amended tax collection agreement for Ontario that will include corporate income tax.

This legislation is the answer to the concerns voiced time and again by our province's business community. This legislation will allow businesses to spend less time on paperwork and more time doing what they should be doing: creating jobs and fostering a strong economy. The bottom line is that this bill will make it easier for business to do business.

Bill 174 takes great strides towards enhancing Ontario's business climate. It is, however, one of the many key initiatives our government has proposed, and implemented, to expand opportunities for businesses and ensure Ontario's continued economic strength.

On March 22, 2007, my colleague the Honourable Greg Sorbara presented our government's fourth budget.

With our 2007 budget, we have left behind the deficits we inherited and entered into a new era of balanced budgets and sustainable surpluses.

We see this new era as an opportunity for us to become an even stronger Ontario. The 2007 Ontario budget proposes more measures to simplify tax compliance and administration and support corporate income tax base harmonization, a move that directly complements the provisions of Bill 174.

In the budget, we've proposed a variety of measures that speak, as does this bill, to our commitment to foster a strong business climate, including:

- accelerating the elimination of capital tax to July 1, 2010, from January 1, 2012;
- reducing high business education tax rates by \$540 million, benefiting more than half a million businesses in 321 municipalities across the province; and
- providing over \$2 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, which helps young Canadians create their own successful businesses.

In addition, to help support a strong, dynamic and globally competitive business environment in Ontario, the 2007 budget also includes:

- a four-year extension of the apprenticeship training tax credit and the addition of six eligible trades;
- significant investment in electricity infrastructure;
- significant initiatives as part of a \$1.7-billion investment over five years to 2009-10 in research and innovation;
- the establishment of a new Ontario Manufacturing Council;
- enhancements to certain entertainment industry tax credits; and
- significant initiatives supporting Ontario's tourism, entertainment and creative industries.

The implementation of Bill 174 will present a period of transition for businesses and staff. We know that this bill means some people who are working for us will be working for the federal government. The provincial and federal governments have appointed lead negotiators to conclude a human resources agreement. The human resources agreement will include details on terms and conditions of employment of staff who choose to accept offers with the CRA. The negotiators have been meeting regularly and will do so until an agreement is concluded. We will continue to work with affected staff and their bargaining agents to help ensure this process is both fair and transparent for all.

Businesses have told us that they do not want to wait until implementation of a single return in 2009 to start realizing compliance cost savings from a single corporate tax administration. They want to realize these benefits as soon as they can, and so do we. Both our ministry and the CRA are looking at ways to achieve cost savings to businesses by integrating some administration processes for taxation years prior to 2009 such as audits, rulings and appeals. We look forward to our businesses realizing these cost savings as soon as possible once the human resources and transition agreements are concluded.

1620

This bill is good news for Ontario's businesses and a fine example of what can be accomplished when governments work together.

We are proud of the progress we have achieved in our bid for fairness from the federal government on behalf of the people of Ontario. But there is more that needs to be done.

This bill helps to build a continued productive working relationship with the federal government, and it is in our mutual best interests to work well together. A strong Ontario is a strong Canada, and a stronger Ontario is a stronger Canada.

The Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System Act, 2006, is a major step forward in creating an enhanced business environment for a stronger Ontario. I now ask the honourable members for their support of Bill 174 so that we can enhance Ontario's business climate and expand opportunity for all.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm particularly pleased to join in the debate this afternoon in respect to Bill 174.

Before going into any detail, though, I simply want to take the opportunity to congratulate Minister Chan on his victory in Markham, on arriving here in this Legislature, and on his appointment to cabinet as the new Minister of Revenue.

I want to make a few other comments, because Minister Chan took the opportunity, and rightfully so, to talk a little bit about his background, about his life here in Canada and the support of his family in his coming here to represent the people of Markham and the people of Ontario, particularly as a member of government within cabinet.

Each of us has our history, I think, in respect to how we arrive in this place. Some of us, as in Michael Chan's case—Minister Chan came from a different continent as a young person, with little except the desire to be successful, with the skills and the intellectual capacities to grow a business and build a family and contribute to his community.

In my case, probably not unlike some others in this Legislature, I was born here in Canada. Language is not a barrier. But like Minister Chan, I came to the province of Ontario as a very young person, probably about two years old. My mother, being a single parent, having left the east coast of this country from the coal mining town of Springhill, Nova Scotia, came to Ontario, where, in the early 1950s, the streets were paved with gold if you were coming from some other parts of the country. In much the same way that Minister Chan came to this country, she came to Ontario with little in her pockets, and in her case with a very young son, without employment prospects, to build a new life in Canada for her family, she and I. So in that sense I share a lot, I think, with Minister Chan, with our similar kinds of backgrounds in the context of growing up in a place that we might not have

been familiar with but also of having family who support you and a growing family and success.

So I want to congratulate him again on his ascension to this Legislature from humble beginnings in this country and the success that he has had.

I'm pleased to join in the debate in respect to Bill 174, the Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System Act, 2006. It's a clear indicator that when governments work together, when those in leadership roles—in our particular case, Minister Sorbara and our federal counterpart, Minister Flaherty—find a means in which they can work hand in hand, co-operatively, we all benefit.

In this particular case, the benefactors are the businesses in the province of Ontario that strengthen the Ontario economy, and, might I suggest, in doing that strengthen the Canadian economy. In doing all of those things, they provide opportunities in this great province not only for the profit of those who manage and grow those businesses, but for the employees who participate in those businesses—and the opportunity for those businesses to create new job opportunities.

This issue of corporate tax harmonization certainly is not a new one. When I first arrived here in the fall of 2003, it was only a few months later that a constituent of mine who at an earlier time, in the late 1980s, had been an assistant deputy minister within government, within the finance area—he left that post in the early part of the 1990s to pursue a private sector agenda, using his skills set in economics and finance to build a consulting capacity in which he's worked with both public and private sector initiatives.

During my first few months here, that former ADM approached me with some thoughts around corporate tax harmonization. I have to say it was something that was certainly new to me, and even to this extent I don't have the depth of knowledge that I might like. But I took the opportunity to speak at that time with Minister Phillips, in his capacity on Management Board, with whom I was working then as his parliamentary assistant, to talk to him briefly about some thoughts on corporate tax harmonization at the same time other conversations were going on. So it's not something that kind of popped up last month, but it is something that the leadership of Minister Sorbara and Minister Flaherty, with due credit for those with the direct responsibility, has been able to start, this process, and get us to where we are.

Working together, they established, as the ministers were saying, an MOU in October of last year that provides for that kind of co-operative agreement on a go-forward basis, and thus provides for the Minister of Revenue and his ministry the opportunity, as we work our way through this legislation, to move it through this process in a supportive fashion but then have the onerous responsibility of seeing it implemented, seeing it come to fruition in a relatively short period of time for government actions, so that business can begin to take advantage of the economic opportunity that exists from that harmonization immediately, as well as the full imple-

mentation by the time those corporate tax filings occur within a year or so.

I want to speak a little bit more, Mr. Speaker. I'll probably, as we often do, reinforce some things that have been said by Minister Chan, because he's covered it so well and thoroughly, and maybe add a few other elements to the whole process that will help strengthen and broaden our understanding of what we're doing.

This particular piece of legislation will mean that the Ministry of Revenue, the Ministry of Finance, the CRA—Canadian Revenue Agency—and businesses across Ontario are all going to benefit from this process. Clearly it's not just a business opportunity, it's also a government opportunity. If we can streamline processes to demand less of us as governments doing the work that needs to be done not once but twice, that's good for us. It's also obviously good for business. The legislation, Bill 174, responds not only to businesses' needs but their demands, their call upon to us to simplify tax administration in all ways possible. This is one of those ways, and it's a significant one to business. It's something they've been asking to see done for some considerable time, and we've had the good opportunity, the good judgment, to work with our federal counterparts, in their co-operation, to get to us where we are. This will reduce compliance costs for business and enable the Canada Revenue Agency to streamline its services and reduce its administrative costs as well.

If this legislation moves through this place and ultimately is enacted—and I'm confident that at the end of the day the members here will see the wisdom in supporting this legislation—the Canada Revenue Agency will administer a variety of Ontario tax structures. They'll administer Ontario's corporate income tax. They'll have responsibility for Ontario's corporate minimum tax. They'll have additional responsibilities for its capital tax structures and special additional tax levies that are engaged on life insurers. Each of those has its own intricacies that I don't understand well—that's why we have the experts within the ministries, those who are career professionals in these areas—but each of them is an important part of the tax structure that we have for business here in the province of Ontario.

The province itself, though, will continue to administer a number of matters more directly related to our activity and that aren't as easily harmonized in a federal jurisdiction. Those will include the Ontario mining tax. It will include insurance premiums tax that the province is engaged in. It will include Electricity Act payments in lieu of federal and Ontario corporate taxes and the transfer tax. So there are electricity matters and insurance matters and mining taxes there that are more directly attributable to the provincial frame of reference and aren't as easily harmonized into some federal-provincial amalgam.

The CRA will also continue to provide the same services to Ontario businesses that it currently provides to them and that it provides to other provinces under the tax collection agreements that currently exist. So we're

going to be in some commonality with things that are happening in other jurisdictions; we're going to bring ourselves more in line with what's happenings in other jurisdictions. Those will include things like the payment processing that occurs. The processing of those tax returns will be done under a single jurisdiction. The verification and auditing of those that are often necessary and part of the process will be done by one government body, not by two different government bodies. This cuts down on the capacity for confusion, if you have one body concentrating on it.

1630

Any appeals processes will be handled through the CRA. Various rulings under those appeals and the collection of accounts receivable will come under one jurisdiction. The accounts receivable are obviously a matter of concern to all governments, and if you have only one government agency collecting accounts receivable on all corporate taxes, it means that when you go to that corporate entity that has outstanding tax obligations or outstanding obligations to government, you can work on collecting all of that in a structured and reasonable fashion. It means that the CRA doesn't have to go out and collect its accounts receivable, and somewhere over here, Ontario—not in line with what the federal government, the CRA, is doing—is trying to go out and collect them on its own, but not necessarily doing it at the same time and in the same way.

Now you have businesses saying, "We know we have the accounts receivable. We have the CRA on our case to come current," if it's a backlog situation. Then a month or two later, you have the Ontario system coming after you to do much the same thing. If we have one coordinated effort in doing that, business understands it better if there are negotiations that are necessary, if there are payment schedules that are necessary. At least then, it's something that businesses can reasonably deal with: one set of tax collectors rather than two sets of tax collectors. I can't think of anything worse than two sets of tax collectors on my case. One is more than enough when April 30 comes each year, to think that I have to have my taxes in and ready to go, let alone concern that I'm going to have two tax men at my door. It's bad enough that I have the municipal tax collector after me on occasion.

Minister Chan mentioned as well that this means that Ontario businesses will benefit from one tax form, a single tax form, not two; one tax collector—one more than we'd all like to have, I suppose; and one set of income tax rules. Playing by one set of rules is a lot easier than trying to play by two sets of rules. It's certainly easier for the business. It's certainly easier for those in the accounting capacity, in payroll, in receivables and in whatever else they have to have within their business structure to be able to do that in one fashion, rather than having that individual or those individuals duplicating the effort in many ways.

Minister Sorbara spoke to some compliance cost savings. The estimates that we have at this point in time,

if this bill is enacted, are that it will cut those tax compliance costs for Ontario businesses by up to \$100 million a year. That's not just a few million; that's tens of millions—\$100 million in compliance cost savings to businesses in Ontario. That's money that can be reinvested into this economy. That's money that can create new business opportunities and create new jobs here in the province. It will allow Ontario businesses to spend less time on paperwork and more time creating jobs and fostering that strong economy that we're all so anxious to see continue. Right now, the country is having a very good economic climate. I was reading the paper this morning and looking at the business analysis. We're on a roll. Others, internationally, are looking to us for leadership. They're looking at our sustained balanced budgets. I'm pleased that Ontario has entered into that realm, along with our federal counterparts, who led the charge 10 years ago. I'm pleased that it's our government that has allowed us to catch up with what's happening, because it's proving to be valuable in providing dividends internationally. The international community looks to us now as the kind of place that they want to invest in, the kind of place that has that kind of stability. This will only help to enhance that particular environment.

If this legislation is enacted, corporate taxpayers will begin making combined Ontario-federal instalment payments to the Canada Revenue Agency as early as February 2008. That, for some, may seem a little ways away yet; I guess we're still 10 months away from that. But in government parlance, that's not very long, and thus there is a certain urgency with respect to this particular piece of legislation. Within the limited time we now have before this Legislature will come to closure, before this session will come to closure and we move into election mode, and following the election, with the time it takes to ramp up after that, regardless of whether the current government remains in power—which I very much hope they do, but in the event that that weren't the case for some reason or there was some other configuration, as governments ramp up, there's always a bit of a lag time. We can't afford that lag time within this context if we are going to do for business what we are committed to do, what they want to do and what I believe we all agree should be happening.

There is an urgency during this time we have before us to ensure that this piece of legislation has the necessary debate here in second reading and gets due consideration following that, whether it be at committee and/or here in third reading, whatever may come from this process at the end of second reading.

Corporations in Ontario will begin filing a single tax return for their taxation years ending after December 31, 2008. So there's a little more lead time for the tax filing, but there are some other initiatives that can come into play much earlier, and I'll speak about those in a moment or so.

The Ministry of Revenue, under the able leadership of Minister Chan, is working very closely with the Canada Revenue Agency at this point in time to make the

transition arrangements that will ensure a smooth transition. It's one of the key elements. We clearly don't want to see the business environment disrupted because the transition process doesn't work. I think that's one of the reasons that, at this particular time, it's so critically important that we have a Ministry of Revenue and a Minister of Revenue who understands the business community, who understands what it means to work and build business success. We have to ensure that we have that type of leadership so this transition will be seamless, so the transition will cause no hiccups, so the transition will be solely to the benefit of the businesses that we so dearly want to support.

At the same time as all those transitions are occurring, there will be other matters with respect to human resources which I'll comment on briefly in a moment or so.

Both Minister Chan and Minister Sorbara referenced, as I did, the memorandum of agreement that was structured in October 2006. That's intended to provide an opportunity for the delivery of early compliance gains for businesses. We don't have to wait until everything is finished. There are some earlier opportunities for some relatively immediate savings to the business community as we work through this.

These early compliance gains arise from activities that integrate provincial and federal tax administration prior to the single corporate tax administration. These activities would include integrated audits. We can begin bringing those audit structures together under one auspice. That helps the smoothing of the transitional phase. It involves matters around objections and appeals as part of that audit process, various rulings and interpretations that will be done by one body, not being duplicated, the two bodies not necessarily having to consult in the same way they might otherwise have to if there were appeal processes. It will begin moving the jurisdictional activity into one area, with the consultation still necessary but to a much lesser degree as we smooth it and get the right rules in place.

We'll also begin to focus taxpayer inquiries. They'll know whom to go talk to. They'll know that they need to talk to the CRA, not to the CRA and the Ministry of Revenue and the Ministry of Finance. They'll be able to focus their attention somewhat, as taxpayers, as businesses, on getting the approach to government that they need as effectively as possible. It's one-window shopping for government. We talk a lot about one-window opportunities, one-window shopping. For corporate tax collection, I think it's really critically important if we have the opportunity to have a one-window shop.

In the consultations that led up to this memorandum of agreement last October, the business community broadly made it clear that they wanted to start realizing those savings as quickly as possible. They don't want to wait for those an indeterminate amount of time. Our government, Minister Chan, would like nothing more, I think, than to see Ontario businesses take advantage of these savings as quickly as possible. That's part of the urgency

about this legislation. It can't be why it's left to slide. It can't be seen to be less important because it's more administrative than some other matters that might be of a little broader public interest, because they grab public attention. Sometimes corporate tax doesn't grab the public's attention. It's not something they stay up at night for unless they have insomnia, and that usually cures it.

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If enacted, the bill will provide for a much more simplified process and harmonized rules following the start of the actual corporate tax administration process. For those taxation years ending before the start of the federal administration, we intend to provide for integrated activities as soon as possible after the human resources agreement and business transition agreement are finalized. Legislation to enable early compliance-saving measures was already passed in 2006. That was the earlier legislation. So it's allowing us to do some of those things early on.

I want to talk a little bit about human resource and transition matters. It does get down to some concerns that are obviously expressed in the process about those who work in the environment, those who work in government. They need to know that we have their interests first in mind as well. The minister mentioned early on that Bill 174 provides for a transition period for business. The memorandum of agreement acknowledges that we have skills and expertise here in the OPS—the Ontario public service—that we want to bring to the CRA. We want to ensure that those skills that we have readily available within the province of Ontario, within the Ontario public service, are valued skills that will be valued within the CRA.

The lead negotiators—and these things always take a degree of negotiation. It's not a straight up: "Make a phone call, Minister Sorbara, talk to Minister Flaherty, 'Oh, yeah, this is a good thing. Let's just get her done,' and sign on the dotted line." There's a whole lot of work that has to go on as part of it. That means those who negotiate between the two levels of government both having significant roles in negotiating on behalf of the business community to get it right. Those negotiators from both CRA and the province have been meeting regularly since last November. Once the MOU was in place, the hard slugging really began. Both of the organizations—the CRA and our own ministries—are very optimistic that the human resources agreement can be concluded this spring. So that window is closing to complete that work. I know the minister has that well in hand from our end and I'm expecting that he will nod accordingly that this spring is still a deliverable time frame for the human resources agreement so that staff are protected in this process and their skills will continue to be well used, with opportunities for professional growth continuing.

Once concluded, this particular agreement will include details on the terms and conditions of employment for Ministry of Revenue staff who will transition over to the Canada Revenue Agency. So there is a real activity going

on as well. It's not just a paper exercise that we're into; this is a real activity regarding professionals who have chosen careers with the Ontario public service, with the Ministry of Revenue or the Ministry of Finance, and some of those will be transitioning over to a new enterprise, to a new government structure. We want to ensure that when that occurs, the terms and conditions of employment for that transition are in the interests of the employees who are making that transition, and ensure that they remain whole in that process. We know that they will be. We know that as part of that negotiation, we're getting constant input from them so there is no loss on their part whatsoever. That couldn't occur; we wouldn't allow it to occur.

The full impact on Ontario's corporate tax staff won't be known until the agreement is negotiated fully. That's ongoing, optimistically to be concluded this spring. However, the ministry's priority is to continue to meet, as I say, all of its obligations. Our employees are our first consideration in this process.

The ministry is committed to negotiating the very best—let me repeat that: the very best—human resources agreement possible. We're going to continue to work with the federal government and the bargaining agents, which are an important part of this, to ensure a smooth transition. There are a lot of players. The federal government is a player, we're a player, the staff are paramount in this, and the bargaining agents on behalf of those staff are an important part of this to make sure that as this occurs we're doing what's right for the OPS staff who will transition to CRA.

The ministry and the CRA are also working in a partnership to finalize the overall transition-of-function agreement. The agreement will outline the details of the transfer of the corporate tax administration to the federal government. That's a big part of what Minister Chan has on his plate right now with a high degree of urgency. He's going to be very busy the next number of months, if we work through this in this Legislature. I'm optimistic that the Legislature is ultimately going to see the wisdom of supporting this bill, but it's going to mean that he's going to be very busy here in the Legislature as we debate the bill, as we've seen him on so many occasions, hearing from the opposition and our own members about both support and concerns they may have to ensure that we get it right. As we work through the committee process, I look forward to being here to support him as Minister Sorbara's parliamentary assistant. But I look forward to supporting Minister Chan to the best of my ability on his bill as we work through this and certainly as it comes to conclusion in the Legislature.

Once that's done, the hard work is still ahead. The minister still has that important oversight to make sure that we get the transition right, to make sure it's an effective strategy, to make sure that the human resource that I was talking about in the context of the agreement—to make sure that we protect those staff so when they transition over they transition into an effective organization, hopefully a more effective organization as a single

tax collection structure agency, and it becomes to their benefit that at the end of the day they see not only a lateral move but a move that is ultimately something they want to be a part of as it will enhance business activity.

The Strengthening Business through a Simpler Tax System Act, 2006, takes great strides in creating an enhanced business environment here in the province of Ontario. Bill 174 will help to streamline the tax system. It's going to save businesses time and it's going to save businesses money, and that means they have more to invest in time and energy and, ideally, financially in their businesses to build the economy here in Ontario. It's great news for Ontario's businesses.

It's also a great example of what happens when governments work together. I started talking about that right at the very beginning, and I want to conclude almost with that. Governments working together can do such great things. It doesn't matter whether it's in this instance, where the federal and provincial governments have found an area where through co-operation business wins, the economy wins. But it sets the stage for other opportunities for the senior levels, the upper-tier levels, the upper-order levels of government to work together.

Coming from a municipal background like you, Mr. Speaker, occasionally we talk about "upper" and "lower." You and I know from our past experience that we like to think of orders of government on level playing fields that negotiate opportunities on behalf of their citizens. I think we have great opportunities, some of which we've been pursuing, in all orders of government to work together. In this instance, it's appropriate that the federal and provincial governments work together. It's their jurisdictional responsibility.

But we're doing a lot of things in the province currently with the broader public sector. There's a lot of work going on with buy Ontario. Opportunities exist there for municipal and provincial governments to realize a scale of buying, in some instances a regionalization of buying, that's to the benefit of taxpayers in the end. It shows the great things that governments can do when they work together, whether it's federal, provincial or municipal governments that choose to find a means of a co-operative effort and a co-operative agenda.

Among those kinds of things, we tend to forget about the successes that have occurred over the years. I recall the early agreements with former federal governments and provincial governments on infrastructure programs. The FCM—the Federation of Canadian Municipalities—has pushed for so long to get infrastructure money. It was the federal government, I recall, at the time that really championed that cause. Then, with the support of the provincial government as well drawn into it, we were able to do some great things. We continue to do a lot of that in tri-party relationships. This is yet another opportunity for governments to work together to the benefit of Ontarians as a whole.

We want to ensure that our government can provide an enhanced business climate—not just a good business climate but an enhanced business climate. This is one

great opportunity for us, a great opportunity on behalf of Ontarians to see governments work together to enhance business opportunities and to show them that as governments we can get things done, we can get it right, we can get it done efficiently and we can get it done in their interest.

I'd certainly urge the honourable members of the Legislature, as we work through this debate, to consider their comments seriously, how they can assist in enhancing this bill through the comments they make as we review and ensure that we have it exactly right. I hope at the end of the day that they'll see the wisdom in supporting this legislation so that we can move on with the harmonization of the corporate tax structure between the federal government and the province of Ontario.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I was going to comment on the new Minister of Revenue and—

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): You should.

Mr. Chudleigh: Well, it was his maiden speech, so I wouldn't want to say anything untoward. I was going to comment on the fact that he got elected and had to wait three weeks to get into cabinet. I know members in the back benches have been waiting three and a half years, seven years, 12 years, 15 years in some cases. I know that you're very happy for Mr. Chan, the Minister of Revenue, and his good fortune—

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): How long have you been waiting?

Mr. Chudleigh: It's my experience, member from Leamington, that you can wait a long time. Of course, you all behave yourselves—

Interjection.

Mr. Chudleigh: Yes, I do—and you play the party line. You be good little boys and you wait and you wait and you wait. However, this minister didn't have to wait. That's nice. I'm pleased for his good fortune.

I'm going to be speaking to the bill shortly. I have a huge document that talks about each and every element, every paragraph within this bill. I'm sure that the members of the Legislature and those at home will have rapt attention as I go through the minute detail of this bill—

Interjection: Riveting.

Mr. Chudleigh: It will be riveting, the minute detail of this bill—and explain to the people of Ontario how this bill is actually a pretty good piece of legislation that is sort of out of character for this government. We can kind of support this piece of legislation, even though it creates bureaucracy, creating a Minister of Revenue when that hasn't been in effect in Ontario for over 14 years. None other than Bob Rae did away with that position as being redundant. However, this government has brought it back.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I look forward to speaking on this bill as well. I was a small business owner, a successful one. I enjoyed that privilege for many years. Certainly, as the critic for small business

for the New Democratic Party, I'm interested in talking about some of the aspects of this bill.

Now, of course, the New Democratic Party is in favour of simplifying the taxation process for small business, but we do have serious concerns. We don't only have serious concerns but our constituents in the small business community have, and I hope to speak about those. The Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas has some real concerns about their taxation in this province. I just bring the Speaker's attention and theirs to a motion that I tabled some time back in December on their behalf: "That, in the opinion of this House, the property tax rate levied by the province on small business should be applied more equitably across the province, and the tax rate for small business should be set at the same rate for the entire GTA, and that level of taxation should be frozen. To mitigate municipal costs, an uploading of the downloaded cost for social programs (excluding education) should be assumed by the province on a phased-in basis over 10 years."

What we got in the major budget that this government delivered was talk about this but no action—no action for years and years. That received its appropriate reaction from the small business community, who said that this provincial government taxes Toronto's commercial property to the hilt and that this budget has let them down. So I certainly look forward to saying something about this bill but also what should have been in this bill, what could have been in this bill, because that is equally important. There should have been a lot in this bill addressing the needs of small business and there could have been a lot in this bill addressing the needs of small business—and there is not. If this is directed to the needs of small business, it hasn't done the job it needs to do. I look forward to talking about that and also concerns of some other stakeholders.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): We have a great tradition in this House. I'm a relatively new member, just in this term. I want to thank the member for Halton because he understands that tradition, that when someone gives their inaugural address—what we refer to as a maiden speech—they welcome them because they talk about their family, about their riding, about why they're proud. I want to say to the new member from Markham, I know that your father is very, very proud of you for all that you've accomplished since you've come to this country. I know that the good people of Markham are proud of you as well. I remember going door to door for you. You were a grand candidate—in a very cold part of the year, I might add. I didn't realize Markham could be that chilly, but it was.

So I say to the other members, particularly those who perhaps just spoke who are also new members, that we should remember that wonderful tradition that we do welcome those members who get up for the first time to talk about their riding and their families. That would be the right thing to do, I think.

Now, on this bill, I want to commend my colleague. I think we're correct by having Minister Chan—he and I

come from the same business background, I might add. What I was saying is that as someone who is, as a certified financial planner, for many years dealing on a daily basis with my clients and their taxes—the duplicity, the bureaucracy that you have to fill those two sets of papers and those little, little differences between the federal regulations and the provincial regulations would bedevil anyone.

The important thing to remember is that those inconsistencies cost people money. The money that goes for this needless bureaucracy is not earned as profit upon which people pay taxes and it's not reinvested in our economy. So I think this is a wonderful bill for all.

Again, welcome to the new member for Markham. I hope all parties would join in welcoming him to this House.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I join in the compliments being paid to the Minister of Revenue on the occasion of his, I shall call it, inaugural speech, to avoid any sexist undertones—not overtones; undertones—to the reference to it traditionally as a maiden speech. We'll call it the inaugural speech. I say he acquitted himself well. I mentioned to him, no matter what you did before you came here, when you stand up for the first time, it's a new experience. It's a novel place. You're not necessarily among friends when you do speak, and it's challenging.

So I've enjoyed listening to the Minister of Revenue. He is Michael Chan, of course, from Markham—also among the most newly elected members of this assembly. That was a remarkable by-election, wasn't it? We had Ms. Savoline from Burlington elected, we had Paul Ferreira from York South–Weston elected and we had Michael Chan from Markham elected. There we are; in four months' time, five months' time—how many months' time?—we're going to have a provincial election. Who knows how the seating plan is going to be readjusted? Who knows? All we know is that the voters are never wrong. However regretful we may feel after an election, we have to know that the voters are never wrong.

I'm looking forward to hearing the first speaker from the official opposition, because I anticipate that his comments will bring with them a ringing denunciation of this government. When the speaker for the Tories stands in his place, we will perhaps reflect on the chimes of freedom that Ontarians truly look forward to.

The Acting Speaker: Either the Minister of Revenue or the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge may respond.

Hon. Mr. Chan: I would like to thank my colleagues from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, from Halton, Parkdale–High Park, Perth–Middlesex and Niagara Centre for the comments. Thank you actually for crossing the floor and shaking my hand and giving me a couple of comments, or lessons, which I really appreciate.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Chan: I said I appreciate it, but I haven't said that I'm going to follow it.

The bottom line of the bill is actually, I think, to save anxiety. My colleague mentioned about how one collector is already one more than enough. We don't have any collectors other than two, so it would release a lot of pressure for the business world.

It's common sense: When you make one filing, a single corporate tax, it's got to be better than filing two times or reporting to two people. So this is really common sense. It reduces duplication, saves money—these are all good things. These are all good for Ontarians. It's good for the small and medium-sized businesses. When it's good for them and they save money, they're able to spend more time being more competitive and fostering a stronger economy. So I think that when this bill passes, it will eventually do a lot of good for the small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario. I look forward to the bill passing.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Chudleigh: I promised to give a detailed account of this bill, but it's obvious that—the opposition's job in this House is to hold the government to account. Perhaps the most important holding to account that can happen is when it surrounds Ontario taxpayers' dollars.

The opposition is being verbose about this—

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: You're the opposition.

Mr. Chudleigh: The government. I got a little ahead of myself; I was thinking of after October.

There are millions of tax dollars that have gone missing in the province of Ontario. There is no accounting for the process; there is no accounting for the follow-up; there is no accounting for anything. In fact, the money could be going anywhere. It could be going into people's pockets; it could be going into the financing of Liberal campaigns, such as happened in Adscam. I mean, the Gomery report was supposed to be a report on that event, not a learning process for this party. It's absolutely terrible, the way this government is conducting itself. We have tried through numerous means to bring this government to account. We've asked them in question period; we've never received good answers. We've asked them in committee to bring the auditor in. We've tried to force the auditor to take this process in, and we were voted down by the majority. So I'm very pleased to try to bring this government to account by moving adjournment of this debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Halton has moved adjournment of the debate.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There being more than five members, please call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1703 to 1733.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

Please be seated.

All those opposed will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 40.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion defeated. Further debate.

Mr. Chudleigh: In the interim, the government has not brought any satisfaction to the members of the opposition, so I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1735 to 1805.

The Acting Speaker: Would members please take their seats. Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour will please rise to be recorded.

Please be seated.

All those opposed will please rise.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 7; the nays are 38.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It now being well after 6 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1806.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerk-at-the-Table / Greffier parlementaire: Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma–Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Boutrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest–Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron–Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Chatham–Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement	Lanark–Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Leeds–Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Dufferin–Peel– Wellington–Grey	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Eglinton–Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration	London–Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin–Middlesex–London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Markham	Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Erie–Lincoln Essex	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (Ind.)
Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nepean–Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
		Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay–Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Toronto–Danforth	Tabuns, Peter (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Parkdale–High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Waterloo–Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Whitby–Ajax	Elliott, Christine (PC)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L) Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Ferreira, Paul (ND)
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse		
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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