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**Official Report
of Debates
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**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 17 September 2009

Jeudi 17 septembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SECTOR EXPENSES
REVIEW ACT, 2009
LOI DE 2009
SUR L'EXAMEN DES DÉPENSES
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. Takhar moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 201, An Act to provide for review of expenses in the public sector / Projet de loi 201, Loi prévoyant l'examen des dépenses dans le secteur public.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm honoured to rise today to lead off the debate for second reading of this very important piece of legislation designed to provide further accountability and transparency with regard to the use of taxpayers' dollars. The Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009, if passed, would empower the Integrity Commissioner to review the expense claims of senior officials—and I want to stress "senior" officials—who are employed by or appointed to our 22 largest public agencies, boards and commissions, and take appropriate actions where required.

The proposed legislation requires employees in government agencies to abide by the same level of accountability and oversight that cabinet ministers, political staff and the opposition leaders' expenses are being held to right now. If the Integrity Commissioner determines that all or part of an expense is not allowable, she may require repayment of the expenses in whole or in part. The Integrity Commissioner may also recommend other remedial action—whatever she feels appropriate.

Under the proposed legislation, the government has the power to require any government agency, board or commission to abide by these rules through regulations.

The proposed legislation would require the Integrity Commissioner to prepare and make public an annual report on the review of expense claims. This act applies to expenses incurred on or after September 1, 2009.

There have been some suggestions that the Integrity Commissioner's office will be swamped and unable to handle these new responsibilities. I want to make this clear: I don't think this is an accurate or factual statement. I also want to remind the House that the government consulted with the Integrity Commissioner as the legislation was drafted, and will continue to do so as the regulations are implemented.

Allow me to quote the Integrity Commissioner from a statement that her office issued yesterday after the bill was introduced: "This office has co-operated with the government in preparing for the oversight of the expenses of senior officials at 22 of the province's largest agencies." This is what was said by the Integrity Commissioner—

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm referring to standing order 71, in particular 71(b). It provides that, "A bill shall not be called for second reading if the Clerk of the House is notified by 12:00 noon of the sessional day following its introduction of intention to give notice of a reasoned amendment...."

Here we are on the second day. We have until 12 noon to give notice. It seems to me that there's a problem. We have a right to defer second reading if we give notice pursuant to standing order 71, but we're being denied that right by virtue of this bill being called before 12 noon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for the point of order. I would like to engage in a consultation with the Clerk and the table. This House will be recessed for 15 minutes.

The House recessed from 0907 to 0929.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the member from Welland for his point of order.

The member from Welland is correct in his reading of standing order 71: There is an opportunity for members to notify the Clerk of an intention to give notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading. The effect of such notification is to delay the calling of the order for second reading until the next sessional day.

This standing order has been part of our rules for some time and predates the most recent standing order changes, which altered the House schedule.

Notwithstanding standing order 71, the government's intention to call Bill 201 this morning was clearly indicated by way of today's order paper. That being the case, members did have an opportunity to provide notification under 71(b) if they intended to avail themselves of its provisions. Since no notification was given before 9 a.m.

today, there was no reason not to allow the debate to proceed. The order has been called, the motion for second reading moved and the debate has commenced.

Having said that, the standing orders do provide that members have until noon to indicate whether they intend to file notice of a reasoned amendment.

My role, in part, is to facilitate the business of the House. With that and the particular conundrum we find ourselves in this morning in mind, I'm going to give members an opportunity now to verbally indicate if it is their intent to file notice of a reasoned amendment as provided for in 71(b). If so, I will seek a motion to adjourn this debate and call for orders of the day. If not, I will allow the debate to proceed.

Does any member wish to file notice of a reasoned amendment?

If not, we can continue with the debate.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member for letting me continue with this very important debate and piece of legislation that we are debating.

I was saying that the Integrity Commissioner has been consulted and has issued a statement. I just want to read a few more lines from what the Integrity Commissioner said: "We welcome this opportunity to continue our work in fostering a culture of integrity in the provincial government." She further said, "The Integrity Commissioner's office has been reviewing the expenses of cabinet ministers, opposition leaders and political staff since 2002." If I may quote the Integrity Commissioner's statement again, "This proposed new mandate builds on the work our office has done for the past seven years." Commissioner Morrison is quoted as saying, "The Office of the Integrity Commissioner is responsible for five key areas." I would suggest they know exactly what their mandate is and what they are doing, and they have done a good job.

In these difficult economic times, every tax dollar counts. It is more important than ever that we all take responsibility for making sure that hard-earned tax dollars are spent wisely. While the vast majority of public servants follow the rules and work hard to protect tax dollars, unfortunately, some have not. That is why we have taken steps to ensure that each of us understands and follows the rules regarding expenses.

The introduction of this act follows on a number of recent actions taken by this government to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are not being misspent. Most recently, the government announced that expenses for Ontario public service senior management, cabinet ministers, political staff and senior executives at Ontario's 22 largest agencies will be posted online. We also announced that we will increase the number of random audits of expenses to ensure that the rules are being followed. During the annual audit of Ontario's agencies, boards and commissions, external auditors will be required to look at expenses and expense practices as well, to ensure that the rules are followed and controls are in place.

In addition, a new two-page summary of guidelines for travel, meals and hospitality expenses has been de-

veloped for easy reference by all OPS employees, political staff and employees at Ontario's agencies, boards and commissions. This summary boils down some 25 pages of guidelines to about two pages.

Also, the government has committed to the development of mandatory online training on expense claims for all OPS and agency employees.

I want to say that my background actually is in finance, and I had the privilege to work with large private and public corporations as chief financial officer and senior executive. In these roles, I had the responsibility to ensure that adequate internal controls were in place and ensured their ongoing effectiveness.

Any time you find there's room to improve internal controls, you follow certain well-developed practices to improve the internal controls and their effectiveness. The first and the foremost step you always take is to ensure that policies and procedures reflect the current realities and are easily understood. Second, you always undertake to educate the people affected by the new policies and procedures. The next step is, in order to ensure that policies and procedures are being followed, you set up the right approval processes. This often is supplemented with random audits by the internal or external auditors in large organizations. This helps both to ensure that policies are being followed as intended and that they are effective.

If you look at what we have done, we have followed a very similar approach. Let me just sum it up for you:

—We have clarified that current expense directives with regard to travel, meals and hospitality expenses will be followed by 22 large agencies;

—If this legislation is passed, it will ensure and it will give the authority to the Integrity Commissioner to review the expenses of senior officials of 22 large agencies. I want to say that again: This applies, and our intention is to apply it, to the senior officials only of 22 large agencies at this point; and

—We are also asking our internal audit department or the external auditors—that may be the case—to do random audits of expenses and expense policies.

These are proven methods employed by large organizations to improve their internal controls and their effectiveness, and I feel these are steps in the right direction.

The Premier announced on September 1 the commitment that triggered the very bill we are discussing here today. The bill provides the same rigorous oversight in agency expenses that currently applies to cabinet ministers and political staff. Also on September 1, the Premier directed agencies, boards and commissions to strictly adhere to the rules in the Ontario public service's travel, meals and hospitality expense directives. In addition to that, we also announced an external government-wide review of accountability at agencies, boards and commissions to ensure the interests of taxpayers are protected.

These actions are designed to shine a light on inappropriate expenses so Ontarians will know who exactly is spending what exactly.

As I said before, the vast majority of public servants and appointees to our agencies, boards and commissions

know the rules and follow the rules. The steps that our government has taken will make it easier for everyone to know the rules and harder for anyone to break the rules. We are putting in place more education, more oversight and more transparency to achieve greater accountability. I am confident that the public servants working for all Ontarians will, because of the steps we have taken, better appreciate our shared responsibility to be respectful of taxpayers' dollars.

Every person working for taxpayers must take responsibility for knowing the rules and following the rules, just as our government will continue to take responsibility for enforcing those same rules. This is a responsible and I think very timely action. I urge my fellow members in this House to support this important piece of legislation and I look forward to their support.

0940

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions or comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I understand the dilemma that the governing party is in with the situation with the scandals that have happened over the summer, and the information that's coming out on a regular basis and will continue to come out for the next several months. Unfortunately, in my humble opinion, they're johnny-come-lately. They've had six years to address these types of situations. As was noted yesterday, once the hand that's in the cookie jar gets caught, then things happen. It's unfortunate that this is the situation and that's the way it's unfolding.

I agree with the minister that accountability is important. I agree with the minister that regular audits should be done. I agree with the minister that there should be a governing body assigned as a watchdog by the government, or any other governing party, to take care of situations that arise that may be questionable at best. That didn't happen; now it is happening. But once again, I'm not quite sure that this bill will cut it. It will probably help to make the people who have abused the system aware of the possible consequences, but I don't think this bill goes far enough. I don't think the penalties are stated. I honestly believe it's criminal to use taxpayers' money in a flagrant manner, which has been going on for many, many years around here. So I'm hoping that the minister will set out some rules which have some meat to them, that are going to show fines, people are going to be fired, people are going to possibly find themselves in court for abuse of taxpayers' money. I didn't see a lot of that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and/or comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do welcome you back. I think it's the first time I've seen you in the chair since the break. Welcome and good luck with your duties, as always.

Minister, thank you very much for providing us with a piece of legislation that many of us would support. I'm hoping that in the dissertations from the opposition we hear their support for this legislation. As the member just recently said, this has been going on for years and years and years, which actually means that it's with all levels

of government and all parties. So I would hope that as we continue to evolve in this place, as we've done—we don't have the same legislation of 100 years ago—we continue to tweak and we continue to improve pieces of legislation that help us and guide us with taxpayers' dollars, to make sure they're spent in a way that is appropriate.

Quite frankly, I will tell the minister flat out that I'm supporting this piece of legislation. Inside, the legislation provides for a large swath that has not been touched in the past. It has never been touched. Now, with this piece of legislation, we're going to see more light and more transparency in agencies that have never been touched before. I want us to listen carefully to the opposition as to whether or not they're going to do one of two things: They're going to talk about the legislation and laud the government for cleaning up some things that have been pointed out, not just for this government but for past transgressions, and also whether or not they're going to simply use it to try to mark us up. That's their job. Let's just be prepared. They're going to sit here and try to say, "Liberals bad, government bad," and then they might say, at the very end of their speeches, "and we think it's a good piece of legislation." That's probably what's going to happen. So I'm asking everybody to prepare yourself for the regular kind of rhetoric. But past the rhetoric, let's pay attention to the bill that's going to make it a better way to spend money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and/or comments?

Seeing none, the honourable Minister of Government Services has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: First of all, I want to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I also want to thank my colleague, the member from Brant. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek actually agreed with some of the key steps we are taking to improve accountability and transparency, and I thank him for that. The member from Brant actually touched on some of the key things here, and I want to thank him for that as well.

The key thing, as I said before, is that I think it's important for us to improve transparency and accountability through this legislation. We have taken, as I indicated before, proven steps to move forward with this. The first is that we have actually taken this whole policy and reduced it to two pages so that everybody can understand. We are moving ahead to train people so they can actually understand this policy. We are also moving ahead to post the expenses of senior officials, cabinet ministers, political staff and opposition leaders, so the public can really see who is spending and what they are spending. These are steps in the right direction.

We are also giving powers to the Integrity Commissioner to actually look at the expenses of senior officials in the 22 largest agencies, so that more accountability can be brought in. She has the power, in fact, if she feels they are not appropriate expenses, to ask for a refund of those expenses.

In addition to that, we will also give powers to external or internal auditors to do random audits, so that they can review expenses and also look at policies and see if they are reflective of the current economic circumstances and how we move forward.

I want to thank both members for their feedback and the support they have provided.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased, on behalf of the PC caucus, to speak to the bill, which was introduced yesterday, entitled the Public Sector Expenses Review Act—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I don't want to interrupt, but did you want to stand down your lead speaker? Would you like to ask for unanimous consent?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'd like to move that we stand down our lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed? Agreed.

Honourable member for Kitchener–Waterloo, you have the floor.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much.

I'm pleased to respond to this legislation; the bill is entitled the Public Sector Expenses Review Act. This legislation would, if passed, give the Integrity Commissioner the legal authority to review expense claims at Ontario's 22 largest agencies.

Let me begin by saying that the Progressive Conservative Party, under the leadership of our leader, strongly supports any initiatives to further accountability and transparency. In fact, it was for that reason that we did have a number of FOIs. We did make requests. I would say to you that this bill is here today because the FOIs uncovered one scandal after the other. In fact, you could say we've had a summer of scandal, and this bill is now an attempt to cover up the information that we obtained in those FOIs and also the numerous spending scandals that came to light.

Although this government purports to support accountability and transparency, in the past six years, with the information that has been obtained, we have not seen accountability, we have not seen transparency. I think what we have seen, however, is a Premier and a cabinet not able to or capable of providing the oversight to the agencies for which they have been responsible. So now, in an attempt to divert attention from the numerous scandals—the spending scandals which have come to light through the FOIs and also through other investigations by the media—the government has introduced this bill.

I also would say it is somewhat ironic that the minister responsible for bringing this forward was one of the first members to actually have been found in violation of the Members' Integrity Act. The Premier took no action, just as the Premier has never taken any action when other scandals have been uncovered, whether it was the scandals at OLG—we've had two there now—or whether it was the scandal at eHealth. So this bill is now just another attempt to cover up the scandals, take away the

accountability that the ministers supposedly should have had in providing oversight to these agencies and dump it on to the plate of the Integrity Commissioner.

0950

Having said that, I know and we know that the commissioner can do the work which they have been asked to do in ensuring accountability. However, I would also say to you that we believe it's important that a committee of this House, because of the depth and scope of the scandals, should have the opportunity to review the eHealth and OLG spending scandals. We don't believe that we should be trying to get rid of the responsibilities of cabinet ministers and of the Premier. As I say, this is just an attempt to shift the responsibility elsewhere.

I guess I would also raise the question, has the Premier now acknowledged that the ministers that he has in place are not capable of overseeing aspects of their ministries for which they have responsibility? Is this saying, "Listen, my ministers just aren't up to the job, so I'm going to have to give it to the Integrity Commissioner"? You know, we're going to see the creation of a new bureaucracy. There are going to be 22 agencies that are going to come under the purview of the Integrity Commissioner, who has a staff of nine. You know what? This is just an attempt to divert attention away.

Let me continue. As I say, we believe that this is an attempt to cover up the summer of scandal. This bill is being brought forward after very inappropriate spending practices in at least two Ontario agencies were revealed by the opposition, and despite what the minister has said today about this government believing in transparency and protecting hard-earned tax dollars, we have now had a government in office for six years demonstrating anything but protecting hard-earned tax dollars or seeing that they're spent wisely, or being transparent.

We wouldn't have had to file these FOIs, dig so deeply and use taxpayer money if the government had been willing to provide the information that was requested by us. But I can tell you, much of this information has been very difficult to obtain, and certainly there were some roadblocks put in our way. We wouldn't be here today and there wouldn't be a bill today if we hadn't filed those FOIs and if some of these spending scandals hadn't come to light. We would have continued to see this culture of waste and this lack of accountability, because the government knew full well for a long time that there were problems at OLG. They were uncovered when the current Minister of Health was then the minister at OLG. We were told that they had been dealt with. Well, obviously they hadn't been, because now we've uncovered a second scandal.

They were told about the spending practices and waste of money at the Smart Systems for Health Agency, and of course now eHealth, but they have chosen to do absolutely nothing in the past six years. They turned a blind eye to what was happening, and they continue. I can remember the Minister of Health standing in this House day after day after day denying any wrongdoing of spending at the Smart Systems for Health Agency or at eHealth. I

know, because I questioned the Minister of Health and the Premier about the Smart Systems for Health Agency and subsequently eHealth. I repeatedly asked the minister and Premier to call in the Auditor General to conduct a value-for-money audit of the SSHA and eHealth Ontario. However, for weeks the government ducked and dodged questions about how the \$647 million of taxpayers' money was being spent on the Smart Systems for Health Agency. In fact, I have a press release here that I issued on April 2, 2009, where the headline is: "More Than Half a Billion Spent ... But Where Are the Results?" "Witmer says the agency responsible for Ontario's eHealth system must be investigated."

And we ask here for the Auditor General to be given the opportunity to conduct a value-for-money audit of the Smart Systems for Health Agency to ensure that taxpayers' money was well spent. We asked because at that time we knew—and it says in the press release—there was a lack of oversight, there was a lack of visible success, and we had become aware of rampant government spending. We also knew that in this province, despite the initiatives undertaken by provinces elsewhere that are going to have a province-wide eHealth system up and running this year and next, ours is not going to be ready until 2015. And yet this government, even despite the fact that Deloitte had some questions about the effectiveness and the value of the money spent, chose to do absolutely nothing.

I conclude that press release by saying, "An audit must be done to identify opportunities for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of eHealth programs and the operations of eHealth Ontario. During difficult economic times, taxpayers want to be assured that their tax dollars are being well spent."

Well, I can tell you that this government, this Premier, this health minister, they did duck and they did dodge; they didn't acknowledge that there were any problems whatsoever.

But you know what they had done? In response to the questioning on the Smart Systems for Health, they attempted to quietly disband that first agency and they set up eHealth. We now know that the track record of eHealth and the spending practices, just total disregard for hard-earned taxpayer dollars, we got the same result; so far we have nothing. And let me add that according to Canada Health Infoway, by 2010, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Alberta, BC and the Northwest Territories will have an eHealth system. Meanwhile, we've spent all this money—two agencies later and we're not going to see any results until 2015. That's not going to allow the taxpayers or the patients to be well served in the province of Ontario.

So let's go on. What did we learn when we did the FOIs? We learned that these agencies, whether it's Smart Systems, eHealth or the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., had spent millions of dollars, a lot of it on consulting fees to Liberal-friendly firms, flights, food, hotels for consultants etc. It was shocking to taxpayers in the province of Ontario to realize, particularly during these

tough economic times when so many people were out of a job or had lost their savings in their RSPs and other accounts, to see how money was being spent and the lack of oversight that was demonstrated by the McGuinty government and by the individual cabinet ministers. This government, until the introduction of this bill, which I say is simply an attempt to divert attention away from this summer of scandals and the information in the FOIs—and I can tell you this is not the end. There's more information about more agencies where spending has been totally inappropriate and there is, again, a total lack of oversight by the ministers responsible for the agencies.

Their refusal to take action stands in stark contrast to what the McGuinty government said in the Ministry of Health's 2008-09 results-based plan briefing book. On page 2 of this book it says: "A solid investment strategy is completely dependent on clear returns on investment. Ontarians are entitled to know what they are getting for their money.... The government will not spend where measurable results are not evident."

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Well, I can tell you, what they say in this Ministry of Health book is totally contrary to what happened at Smart Systems and eHealth. I just want to give you a few specific examples. This is where the minister stood in the House and ducked and dodged and refused to acknowledge there was any wrongdoing, refused to be transparent, refused to be accountable.

What we were able to obtain through freedom of information was that the Smart Systems for Health Agency had spent more than \$45,000 on food expenses for consultants, they had spent more than \$753,000 on travel expenses for consultants and they had spent more than \$231,000 on hotels for consultants.

We also learned through the FOIs that between October 2008, when the new eHealth was set up, and January 2009—just a few months—eHealth Ontario had continued to spend taxpayer money, in total disregard of the fact that this money had been hard earned.

Again, we have a Minister of Health and we have a Premier who are totally unconcerned and refuse to acknowledge there's any wrongdoing, any inappropriate spending.

We again find that food expenses for consultants and employees continued. It was found that in about three to four months, there had been \$39,000 spent on food for employees and consultants, there had been \$108,000 spent on travel expenses of employees and consultants, and there had been \$48,000 spent just on catering.

I think we have to acknowledge that despite the fact that this government and this minister stand here today and tell us that they want to be accountable and they want there to be transparency, we've had six years where they have turned a blind eye to any abusive spending of taxpayer dollars. They didn't make readily available to us this FOI information or any of the other FOIs that we asked for, and we have to pay to get this information. And do you know what? That information should be made readily available to the opposition if the government has nothing to hide.

So we are here today because we have had a summer of scandal: in particular, the eHealth spending scandal, and of course the OLG spending scandal. This bill today is simply an attempt to cover it up and to I think acknowledge that the ministers aren't capable of providing the appropriate oversight, so we're now going to give it to the Integrity Commissioner.

As I say, we value the work that the Integrity Commissioner and her staff do and that they have undertaken in the past. We still believe an all-party committee should review these two spending scandals, at eHealth and OLG. We strongly believe in legislation to ensure that there will be accountability. But we're not quite sure why the Premier is trying to shove it off to somebody else, this whole issue of integrity.

We believe that the Premier needs to demonstrate the fact that he is in charge. We also believe that it's time for him to send a signal to his cabinet that at some point in time a minister has to be held accountable. You can't have accountability without someone being held accountable. As I say, this Premier doesn't hold his ministers accountable.

Certainly when it comes to OLG, where we've now had two scandals, a minister should have been held accountable. When we take a look at Smart Systems for Health and now eHealth, two more agencies, the Minister of Health should have been accountable. And we have asked for the minister's resignation.

So today we do support any accountability measures. We do support transparency measures. But if the Premier is not prepared to be accountable himself, this bill will be of no consequence. We've already seen that when members violate the Members' Integrity Act and it's found to be in violation by the Integrity Commissioner, there's no consequence anyway.

I would suggest that the government do more than just talk about accountability, do more than just talk about transparency, do more than just protect hard-earned taxpayer dollars wisely—which they have not done for six years—and recognize that it's time now to move forward, it's time now for the Premier to hold his cabinet accountable, and it's time for the cabinet to ensure that the agencies and the staff they oversee are held to account, and, if they are found to be in violation, that there are some real consequences to those actions. So far, we haven't found that. People simply continue in their jobs. There are no penalties; there's no consequence whatsoever. I'm not sure this bill speaks to any consequences either; it was just introduced yesterday. But certainly, as I say, this bill is a cover-up—a cover-up trying to move us past the summer of scandal.

We hope that this government, in the future, will be accountable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and/or comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would commend the former minister for her points—very well thought out and researched.

All I can say is I spent my life working as a steelworker in Hamilton. I worked hard, paid taxes and

followed the rules. I didn't have an expense account for car washes; I did it myself. Any work on my house, I did myself. My work was dangerous and tough, and when I see \$3,000-a-day consultants, my reaction is anger. I didn't get free coffee at Tim Hortons. I paid for my children in education. I didn't receive millions of dollars in buyouts and severances. If I lost money on a regular basis, I would have been fired. I paid for my gasoline, heating oil etc. I didn't have an expense account.

I would suggest that now that the government has been caught and now that they've decided to monitor the situation, maybe they should practise what they preach. I don't know about you, but I spent a lot of days in the trenches and I earned and I paid my taxes. So I just want to say that we should be regulating these types of CEOs.

I remember a few years ago that there was even a Hydro One yacht. I remember the Airbus scandal. I remember the golf course in Quebec that Mr. Chrétien was involved in. People in Canada are sick and tired, people in Ontario are sick and tired of the abuses. If this bill is a step in the right direction, that's good, but it sure falls short of any penalties or really bringing these people to task on what they're doing. I for one, as an Ontarian, am sick and tired of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions or comments?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me talk about what the member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about. You know, in our culture there's a saying that before you throw mud at others, maybe you should look at yourself first.

She talked about two issues; one is about being transparent. How can she even talk about transparency? When we took over the government in 2003, there was a \$5-billion-plus deficit which was hidden, and during the election they talked about how the budget was completely balanced. That is transparency from their point of view.

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Then she talked about the freedom-of-information records and that they should be readily available. Let me give her some information that maybe will be of some interest to her. Her leader, when he was Minister of Tourism in 2001: Do you know how many freedom-of-information requests he gave? Ten out of 29: 40%. That's how transparent they were, how much information they gave.

When she talked about ministers being capable and respectful—I used to work at a school board when this member was Minister of Education. I also remember what happened when she attended some of the meetings with the teachers and so on. I firmly remember what happened at that time. This is how much respect she earned in the teaching department and so on.

This is what their record is, and now they are lecturing us on that? They should really look at their records first before they even start talking about this. I have a lot of respect for this member, but sometimes when she makes comments, it's unbelievable what kind of mud they throw

at us without really looking at the record that they had. They should just look at what they did—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I appreciate Mrs. Witmer's references to ministerial accountability and, even more importantly, ministerial responsibility. This bill is a very dangerous trend that we've witnessed here because the design of the bill is such that it's going to isolate ministers from their responsibility to oversee not just their ministry but those agencies that are attached to their ministry.

It is inconceivable that nobody in the ministry knew about these types of expenses. It is more likely that deputy ministers or ADMs were a party to some of these spending binges. This government didn't have an aversion to outrageous expenditures by virtue of wining and dining, expensive hotels and the whole nine yards; it only acquired this concern when the spotlight was shone on it.

For the minister to talk about FOI requests and how many are granted—it's not the ministry that determines what FOI requests are responded to; it's the legislation. So that statistic is a very dubious one, and it certainly doesn't assist the minister or the government. What we do know, though, is that this government actively withheld information that was called upon under the freedom-of-information legislation because of political concerns. Dwight Duncan is referred to as having specifically stated that they delayed the disclosure as long as they can. He said, "We simply can't do it anymore. The gig is up." That political interference is, in and of itself, shameful conduct on the part of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: The member for Kitchener–Waterloo made me a wizard because, as I predicted, Bill 201 was barely mentioned, and it was mentioned at the end of her speech. It was basically to say, "And yes, we're going to support it." Basically, in a nutshell, what we have here are people wagging their fingers, as I predicted, and using the time to do what they do best, and that is to criticize the government of the day.

What we want to do now is to talk about whether or not we want to move forward in an evolution that I said takes place in all legislation, which is to improve it. The member from Welland taught us a lesson this morning in terms of his point of order. We found a flaw in an issue that he himself is saying is just a flaw; we actually will correct it. So quite frankly, we have to continue to move forward. The bill itself is talking about cleaning up the problem that has been pointed out.

One of the things that I like to hear the most from not just the member from Kitchener–Waterloo but particularly from the NDP is this wonderful action of being the roosters who are taking credit for the sun rising. They crow, the sun comes up and it's, "Oh my gosh, I must be responsible for the sun rising. Here we go."

Actually, let's take a look at the historical references over and over in this place. We continue to see the oppor-

tunity for us to improve legislation for the taxpayers and let them see that we're taking action to either protect them in the safety aspect, or taking the money they're giving us to make sure that we make our society better. This bill is addressing a problem. The bill is expanding that capacity.

I disagree with my colleague from Welland. He says that we're not going to have any oversight. We're having oversight of the function. What we're now doing is making sure that the Integrity Commissioner has oversight of the funds that are there for them to spend. That's exactly what the legislation is doing. I laud the minister for bringing it forward and I support the legislation, Bill 201.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Kitchener–Waterloo, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I thank the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member from Welland, the minister and the member from Brant.

I think we can see that the bill that we have in front of us here today is one that obviously is going to generate perhaps a little more heated debate than normal. I think the opposition would agree that this bill before us today regarding the shifting of responsibility for oversight of the agencies to the Integrity Commissioner—obviously we see things differently.

We in opposition have received many communications. I know that I certainly have and my colleagues have—e-mail, phone, people stopping us on the street. I think one issue that has particularly offended taxpayers is the scandalous spending at eHealth. It was certainly an issue that confronted me time and time again this summer. I remember hearing from one elderly female pensioner how upset she was because she was on a fixed income and she was quite disappointed to learn about these consultants who were spending \$1,000 a day and then charging her for their muffin and coffee.

I had another gentleman come in to see me and he was 82 years old. He insisted a phone call wasn't going to do. He came in to my office and he said, "I've never, ever before felt I had to talk to a member of federal or provincial Parliament." He said, "Mrs. Witmer, I am so upset with this spending and this lack of accountability at the government levels and what I've seen with the McGuinty government. I just want you to know how upset I am and I hope that you'll take the message back. So that's why I'm here."

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being past 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On behalf of page Nicole Lachapelle and myself, I'd like to welcome to the House Nicole's parents, Mary and Pat Lachapelle, and Nicole's uncle and aunt, Murray and Bonnie Ringrose.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Guelph and page Kaitlin Wagner, I'd like to welcome her mother, Johanna Wagner, and her father, Glenn Wagner, to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member from Mississauga South and page Jacob van Wassenaeer, we'd like to welcome his father, Philip; his grandmother, Wanda; and his grandfather, Floris, to Queen's Park today as well.

Welcome to all of our guests.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance on his role in the summer of scandal. Kelly McDougald's notice of claim says Minister Duncan referred to the expenses of OLG and the Windsor Energy Centre as "boils that need to be lanced."

Minister, we know about the abuse that went on with expenses, but why does the minister call the Windsor Energy Centre a "boil that needs to be lanced"?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd like to comment on the Windsor Energy Centre, but again, it's a matter that OLG is being sued over, so it makes it very difficult for me to comment on that. There are a number of lawsuits and a number of police investigations going on. What I'm focused on and what my predecessors have been focused on is getting this thing right and making sure that taxpayers have the confidence to know that the proceeds that we derive from OLG, which we invest in hospitals, in schools, in all of the important programs and services we offer—that we are maximizing that asset.

Unfortunately, again, this is a matter that is subject to yet another lawsuit, among other lawsuits and police investigations. There was an interesting report on The National last night. The point is, we are taking action. We are taking action to improve accountability—

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

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Minister of Finance: Minister, in 2005 a \$400-million expansion of the OLG casino in Windsor was announced. Halfway through construction, someone figured out that there wasn't enough power in Windsor to supply the casino expansion. The RFP for the energy centre wasn't issued until 19 months into development of the casino project.

Minister, how do you get halfway through construction of a \$400-million project before realizing you won't be able to turn on the lights?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think those are legitimate questions and they are subject to a lawsuit between the OLG and the contractor. I would submit that it is difficult for me to respond to all of these lawsuits that are going on—no question—other than to improve accountability, to improve access to information on these organizations,

to ensure that we have the operation going as strongly as possible. We have brought forward measures. Will that member and his party support them? It's difficult, I say to my colleague and friend, to comment on all of these legal matters, other than to take the steps we're taking to ensure that these sorts of things never, ever happen again.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Minister of Finance: Earlier this week, the Premier also made a show of what he says is a commitment to transparency. Let's put that commitment to the test today. Members of this House would like Minister Duncan to explain where the capital for the energy centre came from and where it shows up on the books. For now, will the minister at least say how many millions the province has put into the energy centre project?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, I say to my colleague opposite that this is a matter of yet another lawsuit. It's difficult for me to comment on that. It's another among a number of lawsuits that have been widely reported in the media. I can't comment with respect to that other than to say this government has taken the steps, over the course of the last number of years, to correct the challenges in that organization. We will continue to take steps in that regard. We will have more to say about the composition of the board, the senior executive. We have to give Ontarians greater assurance that their assets are being properly managed. We are up to that challenge and we've brought forward legislation that will help us with that. My hope is that the member and his party will vote for it and will help us make this organization work better for all Ontarians.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also for the Minister of Finance. The Windsor Energy Centre is yet another example of the Liberals winging it as they go. A hastily arranged news release announced it, there was little about it in planning or budget documents and, according to a spokesperson for the builder and operator of the energy centre, OLG and the McGuinty Liberals' mismanagement cost the taxpayers of Ontario \$30 million for the Windsor Energy Centre alone. What else are we on the hook for? Will the minister open the books?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would love to be able to talk about this. I think that there are legitimate questions around this. We are in front of the courts, among other lawsuits that have been brought against the OLG. We are moving to ensure that taxpayers have the greatest opportunity to be assured that their assets are being properly managed. Our goal throughout has been to provide transparency and clarity on these issues. We are moving appropriately. We are responding, as OLG has been, to a number of lawsuits and police investigations that are going on there. I'm glad you're asking these questions because it points to the need to do the things that we have

done to give taxpayers greater assurances that their assets are properly managed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: A lot of this goes well beyond any lawsuits. Again for the minister: According to the Windsor Star from August 27, OLG was supposed to have an exclusive operator of the energy centre in place by now. Nothing's been announced and I'm sure the second turnover of the board will mean no new operator will be found any time soon. In the interim, who owns the energy centre? If it's OLG, then why is a gaming corporation running a power plant?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The energy centre continues to operate. The member will know that OLG was successful in blocking an injunction last week. I think those are legitimate questions, I think they're important questions and I think they are encapsulated in the lawsuit that has been brought by the contractor. The energy centre continues to operate.

There is a dispute as to how OLG has managed this. OLG is responding through the legal channels. It's difficult for me to comment other than to say that the kinds of steps we're taking to improve transparency and accountability—I'm surprised that the member and his caucus have not spoken out in favour of them, have not said that this kind of action is appropriate and the right steps to take.

There have been challenges at OLG; they've been going on. Our government has responded on a—

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Again for the minister: Under the request for proposal, the successful bidder was to design, build, own and operate the project. The back end of the deal appears to have fallen through because the developer is suing, as the minister points out. If the first boil was lanced by firing the CEO and making the Integrity Commissioner accountable for expenses, how will Minister Duncan lance this one?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, it's difficult for me to speak on a matter that's before the courts. First of all, the challenges that we are faced with at OLG we are responding to where we can through improved accountability, improved transparency. We are in the process of appointing a new board and we look forward to that new board having a look at these issues.

OLG continues to pursue the proper legal avenues to respond to these very serious issues. I concur with the member, absolutely, that there are serious issues and I want to make sure that taxpayers' interests are protected. That's why the Premier has taken the steps he has. That's why this government has taken the steps it has over the course of the last four years. Now we're taking further steps to give taxpayers greater assurance, greater accountability, not just at OLG but right across—

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

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Can the minister confirm that political staff in his office and the Premier's office vet freedom-of-information requests sent to government agencies like the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, because we don't do that. What the Information and Privacy Commissioner has said about this is, "There is a recognition that Cabinet Office's issues management process is designed to not interfere with the process of FOI requests within the time limits specified in the act, and that the process is designed as a 'heads-up' and not a 'sign off'.... A process designed to allow Cabinet Office and individual ministers' offices to prepare for media or other reaction to the release of documents on a particular date is acceptable."

That's the Information and Privacy Commissioner. It's the appropriate process and one that we have followed very carefully.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Premier would not answer the question about the whereabouts of his assistant chief of staff on a particular day in August, as we were waiting with bated breath for the release of FOI documents. He was either there or he wasn't there. He was either there interfering with the integrity of the FOI process in a desperate attempt to manage their way out of another expense scandal, or he wasn't there. Which is it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We followed the process that's been outlined by the privacy commissioner, as well as the legislation; it's quite appropriate.

I am proud that this government brought freedom of information to Hydro and OPG. I'm proud of the initiatives the Premier has taken with respect to enhanced accountability, enhanced transparency. So we will continue to provide greater transparency, greater accountability, so that taxpayers will know that their assets are being well managed, that in fact where challenges do arise, they are responded to in a timely, responsible and appropriate fashion.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: FOIs, as you know, are the public's information, not the personal property of the Liberal Party of Ontario. Freedom-of-information laws are supposed to prevent politicians from hiding information from the public, not give them a chance to sanitize and scrutinize the facts before they're released.

Can the minister confirm that at this very moment in time the Premier's spin doctors aren't going through our freedom-of-information requests?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We follow the appropriate steps under freedom of information. My own view on these matters is that we should be following the rules. We are. That's what the privacy commissioner has said. I remind the member opposite that that same privacy commissioner has pointed out that we have a 94% compliance rate, and we always strive to do even better than

that, even on these very large ones. The OLG expense thing, I think, involved 10,000 pages. So yes, we do move as quickly as we can to get that information to the public. No government in Ontario has a better track record at transparency and accountability than the McGuinty Liberal government.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This question is again to the Minister of Finance. The government has spent the week desperately defending their HST scheme, but with each passing day cabinet ministers look like the last passengers on a sinking ship. Now we learn that the Minister of Finance and his staff are threatening critics of the HST in an attempt to shut them up. Today's *Globe* says that the minister will release a report critiquing the mutual fund industry—but he'll withhold it, on the other hand, if the industry keeps quiet about the HST. Does the minister think that political blackmail is appropriate behaviour?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's interesting how the leader of the third party will state as fact anonymous sources with false allegations—completely false.

I remind the member opposite what I said on Tuesday, which was widely reported: We continue to meet with the mutual fund industry on the implementation of the HST. I have myself met with them on two occasions. There are a number of transitional issues associated with the mutual fund industry. They've had a number of issues with the GST over a number of years that I think are legitimate. We are attempting to work with the federal government, the government of British Columbia and the industry itself to try to fix some of those rules that have caused them challenges over the years, and I look forward to continuing to work with them and meet with them. They are an important and—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government claims that the HST is going to create jobs, but the Ontario Chamber of Commerce says that it's going to kill as many as 40,000 new jobs a year. The Premier insists that he has the support of his federal leader, but Michael Ignatieff wants nothing to do with the "Harper sales tax." The government says that the scheme is good for business, but his Minister of Finance has been reduced to threatening business so that they won't speak out. Does the minister think it is appropriate to base the release of a government report on whether or not a particular business sector supports his HST scheme?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We continue to work with the industry. It's an important industry. You know, from time to time there are anonymous people who say false things. I can't respond to that. It's very difficult.

I will repeat what I said to the industry in two meetings I've had with them. I will repeat what was widely reported in the *Globe* and *Mail* on Tuesday. There are significant issues for that industry as we move to the harmonized tax. They have had significant challenges

with the GST over a number of years. We would like to be able to resolve those longer-term issues, recognizing we are proceeding with the HST and recognizing that it is a policy that will create jobs. It will help Ontario get through into the next generation of growth.

I look forward to continuing to work not just with that industry, but a variety of industries. We have successfully resolved some issues the housing sector had, and we have more work to do before implementation.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is about the government trying to hold back a report to get support for the HST. It's not about how many times this minister has met with the mutual fund industry.

The government keeps trying to sell the scheme, but people know a bad deal when they see one. People want a government to make life more affordable for them; the HST is going to add at least \$600 a year in new costs for the people of this province. People want the government to take action on jobs, yet the HST will stifle job growth—as many as 40,000 new jobs a year, as quoted by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. People want their government to be upfront with them. When will the government stop ignoring the people of this province, who are telling you to back away from plans and cancel your HST, this unfair scheme that's going to hurt people from one end of the province to the other?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, first of all, I don't think my colleague opposite is speaking entirely credibly on this issue. Let me say what now two chairs and presidents of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters say: "It is the ... most important step that can be taken to boost the provincial economy and create" jobs "in the future."

Speaking of NDP credibility, I've just been handed an e-mail that went from the campaign manager for the St. Paul's by-election, Matias de Dovitiis, to a constituent, which said that the HST would be revenue-neutral. That party's been saying that this is a big revenue grab. We'll be putting this out for all Ontarians to see. This is about credibility—

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

1050

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, the successful bidder for the Wind-sor Energy Centre won the right to own and operate the centre to power the casino. OLG is paying the company to operate the centre for them, but OLG appears to still own it. Power generation is regulated to ensure public safety. OLG has no mandate or expertise in power generation. Why is it being allowed to run a power company?

Hon. George Smitherman: First and foremost is to acknowledge what has been discussed already on the floor of this Legislature, which is that the developer of

the facility has obviously taken some legal action, and we'll have to wait for the courts to resolve those matters. In the meantime, I can tell the honourable member that the facility is operating with appropriate staff on hand to be able to provide those responsibilities and in a fashion which is consistent with the necessity of appropriate protections for the public.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakubuski: Operator by morning, black-jack dealer by evening.

Again for the minister: To solve your problems with accountability for expenses at OLG, the Premier fired the CEO. The incoming CEO inherits a power company when they thought they were dealing with gaming. Owners are the ones who are accountable for meeting regulatory standards. The minister once had the portfolio for OLG. Is he knowingly exposing the public to risk by allowing a casino to run a power station?

Hon. George Smitherman: Last night I had the opportunity to witness a gentleman who's a politician sing the national anthem, and I recognized that it is possible to be multi-talented—and I say that with some compliment to his skill in that regard. I take the point that he has made. He doesn't view an organization in its breadth. This is a big organization that has large and substantial facilities, and of course associated with the operation of big facilities are included the operation of those things which provide power and electricity and the like. We have every confidence that the facility is being operated in a fashion consistent with the necessary protections for the natural environment and for human health.

PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Deputy Premier: This morning, the Toronto Star launched an investigative series into private career colleges. Many unlicensed schools charge students a lot of money, provide them with bogus diplomas and leave students without the knowledge or skills they need. When it comes to the world of health care, like a personal support worker, this means that Ontarians are vulnerable to inadequate and potentially dangerous care. Can the Deputy Premier explain why there is no monitoring, no oversight, no control, and why there are no safeguards and no penalties on those unscrupulous operators?

Hon. George Smitherman: In point of fact, the honourable member is just plain wrong. This Legislature passed an act in 2005 which does provide the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities the capacity to address challenges that are known in private career colleges. That's exactly what has occurred in this circumstance. We do agree with the honourable member that as it relates to personal support workers, who are crucial in the provision of loving care to people across the province, these are important matters. But it's important to acknowledge that the efforts that have been taken by the ministry are possible because of the passage by this Legislature and this government of a bill in 2005.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Deputy Premier is absolutely wrong, and the Ombudsman tells him so, and not just tells him so but tells his whole government that that is the case. I paraphrase the Ombudsman when he says that through the ministry's inattention, indifference and dereliction, the ministry is creating an environment in which people are becoming easy prey to unscrupulous operators.

The slap-on-the-wrist approach is simply ineffective and it's not working. When will Ontarians see decisive action on this matter?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I really wonder if it's appropriate that the honourable member chooses to offer a quote as a paraphrase, but the real thing that he misses the mark on is that he says he offers a quote that says there was no action taken; he says there's no capacity for decisive action. We shut them down.

TAXATION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Small business, construction and farming are large employers and are an important part of the cultural identity of Huron-Bruce. These groups have been coming to me over the summer with questions regarding the harmonized sales tax. They are interested in understanding what the HST's impact will be on their businesses. In particular, they are interested in input tax credits and how they will work. Can you explain how input tax credits will work for the businesses in Huron-Bruce?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question. Businesses that deal with the GST today know that when they charge the GST, they remit that to the federal government, but they retain the GST that they have paid on the goods and services they have acquired to make a good. But when it comes to our antiquated retail sales tax system, they charge the PST and send it to the government with no credit whatsoever for the taxes they've paid.

Under our new system, when we harmonize our sales tax with the federal government, businesses will charge the HST but be able to retain all of the HST that they have paid in creating a product or a service. That will amount to some \$4.3 billion a year on top of half a billion dollars a year in savings to them from only having to administer one tax to one government instead of having to administer two taxes to two governments.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I've been told that the harmonized sales tax is going to restrict investment. People are feeling the effects of a global economic slowdown, and no one wants to be in a situation where they are dependent on the government to provide for their family. I think there's a recognition that something in our economy is not working, but people are asking if now is the time to fix it and wondering if a harmonized sales tax is going to help. At times like this, we all ask what the effects of tax relief for businesses mean, versus other investments.

Minister, what do input tax credit savings for businesses mean for our economy and for people who are worried about work today?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question. We're the only jurisdiction in the world that exports 80% of what we make but still taxes the inputs that are required to make the very things that we sell to the world. It's those sales that lead to the high quality of life that we have right here in Ontario. In the 21st century, our current tax system is a hindrance to that. That's why it's important for us to reform our tax system, drag it out of the 20th century—a system that was created in 1961—and move it into the 21st century so that we can compete in the 21st century. That allows our businesses to hire more people, invest more, sell more. That's what we need in this province: We need more people back to work.

I am convinced, and those of us on this side of the House understand, how important it is that in the 21st century we give our businesses a 21st-century, modern tax system—

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

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to ask another question of the Minister of Finance. I, of course, want to ask him about the 21st-century taxation that they're going to bring in.

A pattern is emerging on how this government deals with problems. We get PR schemes that start with denial, scapegoating, and then ministers who will say absolutely anything to sell a plan that isn't credible.

The public is against the HST. Now members of the mutual fund industry are coming forward and telling us that the Minister of Finance will say anything to push the tax. In fact, they're telling us that they're being threatened by the minister. I don't believe for a second that those are false allegations, because the track record of this minister would suggest otherwise.

We know the HST is a bad deal for Ontario. Is it so bad that the Minister of Finance has to use intimidation to sell it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I will re-emphasize what—I can't respond to false allegations by anonymous sources. I will say what I have done before. I've met with the leaders of the industry on two occasions, and I will likely meet with them again.

There are a number of transitional issues associated; there are a number of GST issues that go back a long way with that particular industry. We are attempting—

Hon. Gerry Phillips: To work with them, like housing.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are attempting to work with them, as we did with the housing industry, my colleague reminds me, to resolve those transitional issues. We have a period of time left before implementation of this particular policy and we will continue to meet with

them and we welcome the opportunity to work with that industry.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again, I don't believe these are baseless allegations, nor do I believe they're false, having spoken with the industry several times myself. Mutual funds are a major source of income for many seniors and retirees. The mutual fund industry is expressing legitimate concern about the impact of the HST on the people that they serve. A recent Mackenzie Financial report estimates that the cost of the HST for a \$100,000 portfolio will be almost \$2,500 over the course of 10 years, and on larger portfolios that will be much more. Your 8% tax takes money away from seniors and people saving for retirement.

It is time to stop the intimidation. Will the minister listen to all those affected, including the mutual fund industry, and scrap the HST?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What's Tim going to do about it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I wonder if Tim Hudak will do that. If I understand the member properly, she has asked if we will scrap the HST. No, we won't. It is the right policy for the times; Mike Harris has even endorsed it, Jim Flaherty, a lot of really prominent Conservatives—and Mini Mike over there. I'll try to keep my tone and tenor down. No, to the member, we won't scrap it. I guess my question to you and Mr. Hudak is, will you?

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. In the last year there have been a number of very close calls and two tragic deaths in Ontario's retirement homes because of sprinkler systems that are not mandatory. If it weren't for the swift actions of firefighters and a dose of good luck, we would have seen even greater tragedy in these retirement homes. But these close calls and tragedy could have been prevented if your government ensured that sprinkler systems were a requirement of every retirement home in this province. Why has this government failed to ensure the basic safety of our most vulnerable citizens?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I hesitate to use that age-old reference of disagreeing with the premise, but I do indeed disagree with the premise of my honourable colleague's question. We're doing a great deal to make sure that our seniors in this province live in safety, live in healthy environments. We're bringing forward legislation that will regulate, in time, the houses in which they dwell. I work closely with ministers who are under the onus of making sure that fire regulations are in place. They are protected by that aspect. Also, on the health provisions regarding food, regarding all of the legislation that deals with where they live, I work with the health minister, who is bringing in tremendous initiatives and aging at home and all of what's available to them on the health side, on the safety side, on the education and on the—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm not sure the minister understands the serious consequences of failing to make sprinkler systems mandatory in retirement homes. In April 2008, by the quick and efficient actions of retirement home staff and a stroke of extremely good luck, all residents of the Rowanwood Retirement Residence in Huntsville escaped injury in a horrific fire that completely destroyed the home. In Mississauga in 1995, eight seniors died because of a fire in their retirement home, and in January of this year, two seniors died in a retirement home fire in Orillia. After each of these tragedies, firefighters recommended mandatory sprinklers in retirement homes. How many more deaths and more calls will it take to get this government to finally legislate mandatory sprinkler and fire systems for each and every retirement home in this province?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Indeed, I don't question whether or not sprinklers save lives and protect against property damage; that is indeed true. Also I'm pleased to advise the House that effective April 1, 2010, all high-rise residential buildings over three stories will require fire sprinkler systems. We are making our buildings safer here in Ontario, and these changes that are being brought forward will harmonize Ontario's building code with the National Building Code.

With respect to expanding sprinkler requirements to other buildings and to other occupancies, my colleague has asked the Ontario fire marshal to present all options available for further improving fire safety, and he is indeed, as is the government, awaiting that advice.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is also for the minister responsible for seniors.

Each of us in this place has a significant number of elderly persons within our ridings. Minister, elder abuse has become a significant public health and human rights issue around the world and particularly here in Ontario. It's estimated that between 65,000 and 115,000 seniors in this province are subject to some form of abuse or neglect, but even one abused elder is one too many.

Over the last few years, the government, through Ontario's strategy to combat elder abuse, has provided funding to help protect Ontario's seniors from abuse. Unfortunately, I understand the funding of this strategy expired this year.

Can the minister explain what the government is doing to protect Ontario's seniors from elder abuse now that the funding has ended?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank my honourable colleague for this question. It is indeed a segue to what I was saying earlier: that the dignity and safety of our seniors is something to which we attach the highest priority.

Protecting our seniors is indeed a priority, and that's why, for the first time in the province's history, our government is investing \$900,000 in new annual permanent funding to Ontario's strategy to combat elder abuse. The

strategy will help our partner, the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, continue this fight. I just recently attended the federal, provincial and territorial meeting in Edmonton last week of all ministers responsible for seniors, and of course Ontario is the only province to come forward with that kind of permanent, stable, core funding, and it was really quite well received and somewhat with awe—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Minister, thank you for that particular information. Seniors in my riding and throughout the province will certainly be pleased to hear that the government is taking particular action to fight elder abuse.

Many experts report that elder abuse is under-reported because seniors are afraid or ashamed to come forward. Seniors are also frightened to report the abuse because they do not want to reveal their identity for fear of punishment by their abuser. Seniors at risk of abuse must be able to receive help confidentially, as well as support at times of need, both day and night.

Would the minister tell us what the government is doing to provide Ontario seniors with around-the-clock support when they are threatened, bullied or being abused?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Indeed, it is a dilemma, just as my colleague has described. It is a situation where people are fearful or ashamed to come forward. The size of this dilemma is one that we are extremely concerned about. By the year 2031, to let the House know, one fifth of the population of this province will be over the age of 65, so getting these programs up and running for those who are at risk now and for those who may be at risk in a few years' time is extremely important.

We have launched a seniors' safety helpline. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and what I think is very important for all of us to note is that it's available in 154 languages, because we cry for help in all of the cultural communities and in all of the languages that make us Ontario today, and we're there for every one of those seniors.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Minister of Government Services, and it's about his ill-considered decision to close private licence-issuing offices in the province.

The minister says this is a consumer-friendly move, but the reality is that he has absolutely no idea. His ministry didn't evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of individual offices. They just came up with a blanket criteria that in many, many instances will result in less efficient, more costly and frustrating service. If that's not the case, I ask the minister to tell my constituents how the ServiceOntario office in Brockville will provide better service than the private issuer.

1110

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me start by saying we are going to modernize, we are going to streamline

ServiceOntario centres so we can provide enhanced service and better customer service to all Ontarians. By doing so, these are some of the objectives that we have in mind. Number one, all Ontarians will have the services available to them within 10 kilometres. Number two, they will have enhanced customer service. Number three, the private issuers network is an integral part of this whole customer service reorganization and streamlining. Some 60% of all ServiceOntario centres will be private issuers networks, and we will be moving ahead to provide expanded customer service through this new, streamlined ServiceOntario centre. I will be more than pleased to expand on that benefit in the member's riding.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We didn't really get an answer in terms of better service, and the private issuer invested \$20,000 of their money—not taxpayers' money—in operating their facility just two years ago.

I'll talk about the private issuer in Brockville. They have free, level parking with easy access for the disabled; you're going to be hearing more about that. They're open on Saturdays. The ServiceOntario office in Brockville is on a steep incline, very difficult for the disabled, in the middle of a farmers' market, with no free parking and closed on Saturdays. Minister, this is not a good deal for anyone except those who believe in bigger government. Apparently, you're that guy.

Minister, will you go back to the drawing board, evaluate these offices on an individual basis and ensure that the public and hard-pressed taxpayers are being well served before you proceed with these closures?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say how it will benefit Brockville. First, the new service centre is only two kilometres away from the existing service centre. Right now, Brockville residents only get health card services two or three times a month; now, they will get regular services. In the southern region of Ontario, there will be significant increases in health card services, from four to 59 locations.

The member has an issue about the parking, and I understand that issue. I said yesterday in the House to another question that we're going to evaluate these situations. We want to make sure that the services are available at the same standard everywhere where they're available right now. In fact, we want to increase the services available in each of these locations, and I will work with the member to make sure that some of these services stay at the same level as they are available right now.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Greyhound is threatening to shut down bus services across northwestern Ontario and Manitoba. It's a very serious issue and one people in northwestern Ontario are extremely concerned about. Tens of thousands of people living in small towns, villages and First Nations' communities in northwestern

Ontario rely on Greyhound bus services for basic transportation to get them back and forth for medical appointments, particularly, to places like Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie and Winnipeg.

Yesterday, the Manitoba government met with Greyhound officials and found interim solutions to sustain bus services in that province. My question is, what has the McGuinty government done to sustain Greyhound bus services in northwestern Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I recognize how important this is to northwestern Ontario, and I know that the former leader of the NDP said the following about it. He said that Greyhound is crying poor in Manitoba even though they have just built a new terminal at the Winnipeg airport, and he's very knowledgeable about this: "I have no doubt that they're probably losing money in some places, but this is more than anything else a bargaining tactic." That's from a member who represents there, and knows it better than probably most of us would because it affects his riding.

We are concerned about this. What has happened in previous instances is that when Greyhound has withdrawn its services, other companies have moved in to provide services. That is one of the solutions that is being looked at very carefully at this time. Greyhound is obligated to seek others to provide this kind of service to the people of northwestern—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Greyhound has been cutting bus services and bus frequency in northwestern Ontario over the past six years and the McGuinty government has been missing in action. People from Wawa to Rainy River, Hearst to Kenora, have seen their bus services to Thunder Bay, Winnipeg and Sault Ste. Marie either discontinued or diminished, with no alternative air or rail services to rely on afterwards. Now, Greyhound is threatening more cuts and all this minister says is that he hopes another carrier will be there to step in and provide services. That is not good enough.

When will the McGuinty government finally do something to sustain quality bus services across northwestern Ontario where the people desperately need them?

Hon. James J. Bradley: In the context of what the former leader of the NDP had to say about the company and what John Baird, the federal minister, said, Greyhound is a Texas-based multinational, and their actions are heavy-handed and clearly an attempt to bully the provinces of Manitoba and Ontario. But I am optimistic that they will provide. The past spring, Greyhound ended its bus service between Hearst and Thunder Bay. Caribou Coach Transportation Co. is now providing the bus service between Hearst and Thunder Bay. Last summer Greyhound ended its bus service between Fort Frances and Thunder Bay. Caribou Coach Transportation Co. is now providing bus service between Fort Frances and Thunder Bay.

I understand there are already two companies—one out of Ontario and one out of Manitoba—that have ex-

pressed interest in these routes, as reported in the Belleville Intelligencer on September 14. So—

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

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. The workplace murders of Lori Dupont and Theresa Vince have taught us all some very tough lessons on the importance of taking serious action to respond to harassment and violence in the workplace. We know that domestic violence follows women into the workplace and when it does, it costs us all in ways too many to count.

We also know that coworkers and employers are in a unique position to identify the signs of abuse and that knowing how to help can be the difference between life and death.

What is the Ontario Women's Directorate doing to give more employers and coworkers access to resources and training on how to recognize and respond to domestic violence in the workplace so that more women can be protected?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for her question and for her personal dedication and commitment to this issue.

No one can afford to be a bystander when it comes to domestic violence. The costs both personal and economic are just too high. That's why I'm very happy to share the news with the Legislature that we are investing an additional \$620,000 in the innovative neighbours, friends and families public education campaign. This funding is going to the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, located in London, to expand neighbours, friends and families into the workplace. This campaign is already empowering Ontarians in more than 170 communities with the skills they need to help at-risk women, their children and the men who abuse.

I'm very proud that the Ontario public service in the southwestern Ontario region has been one of the first workplaces to embrace neighbours, friends and families, with more than 2,500 public servants already educated and trained.

Community-based campaigns like neighbours, friends and families are a vitally important component in our ongoing efforts to make—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Just stop the clock for a second. I will remind the members that we are going to be taking a comprehensive review of questions that have been asked over a number of years. Much of what I was hearing in your response there is much more suited to and sounds more like a ministerial statement.

Supplementary.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: This is an issue that I have advocated on for many years, and over the past few years, violence and harassment have been revealed as

very serious issues in workplaces across Ontario. In fact, a recent Statistics Canada study suggests that one third of nurses working in hospitals or long-term-care facilities were physically abused by patients over the course of a year. Both physical violence and harassment can have tremendous consequences for workers, families and society as a whole.

I would ask the minister to indicate what our government is going to do with respect to new legislation to require employers to put in place policies and programs to address workplace violence and harassment to ensure that women can be better protected in their workplaces and that no more lives need to be tragically lost.

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore for her advocacy on this very important issue. We've listened to the concerns of our stakeholders and those who participated in our consultation last year. If passed, this proposed legislation would clarify the roles of workplace parties in protecting workers from workplace violence and harassment, raise awareness and understanding of workplace violence and harassment as an issue here in Ontario and build on the Ministry of Labour's existing operational approach to workplace violence. It would also reduce workplace injury and illness by making workplace violence an element of the ministry's Safe at Work Ontario strategy. I'm proud to say that this government is moving forward to address workplace violence and harassment here in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, recently you decided that the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce would no longer hold the contract for driver's licence issuing in Sarnia. The chamber has delivered this service efficiently for almost 100 years, and because of your government's actions, they are now forced to lay off staff.

Minister, this is despite the chamber being documented as one of the best offices following your own ServiceOntario audits. Why, in a recession, would you force the private sector to lay off workers and diminish services?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member for asking the question. I have answered this question so many times in the House, but let me repeat this again.

This is not about a reduction in service; this is about increasing service, it's about streamlining, it's been modernizing. By doing so, we will provide health card services where now only the drivers' licences and the vehicle licences are being provided. We want to make sure that the people have more options available to them. We will provide those services on the Internet.

This will be about improving public service, and the hours will be available to suit the people. They can even make appointments to come to the offices now. So it's all

about improving services. I'm sure the residents of Sarnia will have better service available to them once we move ahead with the reorganization that we have planned.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: My supplementary is to the same minister. Minister, I've heard all those buzzwords before, we've heard them repeated in the House, and we're just not buying it.

The Sarnia licensing office currently handles over 500 transactions per day; that's over 100,000 per year. I believe that the reality of this may have been underestimated by ServiceOntario. I don't believe that they can handle the additional transactions that will be expected, let alone deal with the parking nightmare. The current office has all kinds of parking on the level. Going to a mall with underground parking just won't be easy. The parking nightmare will be added at the Bayside mall.

Minister, again, on behalf of the chamber of commerce and the residents that will be affected, I ask you, will you please commit to reviewing your plan to kill private sector jobs in Sarnia-Lambton?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The member said that his supplementary is the same as the original question. I guess my answer is going to be the same as the original answer.

So the answer is that this is about improving service, it's about streamlining, it's about modernizing. But I hear what some of your concerns are, and I will work with you. I have directed my officials to look at each and every situation, and if there are concerns, we will find a way to address some of those concerns.

LABOUR RELATIONS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre par intérim. On Saturday at 11 o'clock, Sudbury will be host to labour leaders from every corner of the globe. There will be people from Mexico, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Brazil, the United States and way more. They will meet in Sudbury to raise safety standards, to talk about enhancing living conditions for workers internationally. It will be a demonstration that will be supporting our workers, our businesses, our economy and our community. I'm really proud to say that my leader, Andrea Horwath, will be there. Everyone is invited and everyone is welcome.

My question is simple: Which cabinet minister will be representing the provincial government at this international historic event taking place in Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm very pleased to offer strong encouragement and congratulations to the community of Sudbury. It's yet another example of what will be occurring all across the breadth of the province of Ontario this weekend and every weekend, which is the extraordinary opportunity to engage people from around the world in dialogue about a variety of items.

I am not aware whether my schedule, or that of my colleagues, is accommodating this event, but if the honourable member would like to send a note over, I'd be

happy to do so. I just want to let her know that I'm looking forward to my Monday visit to your community and my visit to Cambrian College.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: All of the labour leaders who are coming to Sudbury are facing similar issues around the world. We see multinational giants buying up more and more natural resources, mining etc., worldwide, and it's becoming more and more concentrated in fewer hands.

Workers in Sudbury—United Steelworkers unit 6500 is on strike. Sudbury and Nickel Belt have been on strike before. People in Sudbury know the sacrifices made as a result of labour disputes, but people in the Sudbury region band together and support each other. We support the strikers because their fight is a good fight and it will support our community as a whole.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question again is, how come we don't know who will be representing the province of Ontario's present government at a historic event—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that in her talk and promotion of this very fine event, she has made the point exceptionally well that Sudbury and the people of Sudbury already, through the program that has been discussed, have a great opportunity to put their perspective on the record.

All of us have a variety of opportunities, and sometimes those opportunities don't allow us to take advantage of other scheduling opportunities. Nevertheless, we do want to encourage the honourable member on behalf of the government on the successful completion of this conference. We know that those who come from other places will enjoy many things, the dialogue and certainly the community of Sudbury, which I'm very privileged to say I married into two years ago.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Climate change is on the minds of many Ontarians and a concern for many constituents. There has been a wide range of scientific reports that have stated that sea ice in the Arctic is vanishing at a record pace and permafrost is thawing.

Climate change will affect many species, but in particular the polar bear. Polar bears are part of the Canadian heritage and are an iconic species. It's clear that climate change is having a direct impact on our polar bear populations.

I understand that the polar bear has now been designated a threatened species in Ontario under the Endangered Species Act. Minister, can you tell us what this designation means for the polar bear?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to thank the member for the question. The member is correct. I did make an announcement that in fact the polar bear has

been redetermined from “at risk” to “threatened.” The reason is because—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Polar bears watch the legislative channel.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Yes, they do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Welland.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Mr. Speaker, this may not be of particular interest to some individuals, but the fact of the matter is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I'd like to hear the answer. She's sitting right beside me and I can't hear her.

Interjections.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Mr. Speaker, would you like me to sit down until there is order? I can keep going.

In fact, an independent group of scientists determined that the polar bear has had its level changed from “at risk” to “threatened.” The reason is because of the impact of climate change, primarily on sea ice. What's happened is, the polar bear no longer has the opportunity to do the feeding and reproduction that it has done, and their numbers are threatened.

What difference does this make? It's because in Ontario we have a very unique—

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: Minister, you mentioned a recovery strategy. The World Wildlife Fund estimates that two thirds of the global population of polar bears is found in Canada. Many of those are found in Ontario's far north, indicating that the Ontario government must step forward to reverse the decline in polar bear populations or risk the extinction of the species.

Minister, can you please be specific in explaining what steps your ministry is taking to protect the polar bear?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I realize that members of the NDP government and the opposition are not particularly interested in looking at the issues of the Endangered Species Act. In fact, they voted against it. However, we take this very seriously. The polar bear is part of our ecosystem. They are very unique to Ontario. They are threatened.

We spent a great deal of money and had about 30 years of experience, through Dr. Marty Obbard, to look at this particular species and how we can ensure their recovery. Why is this important? Because the footprint we have here in southern Ontario is changing the life and the habitat of a species in northern Ontario, and it does make a difference.

What can we do when the recovery plan goes through for the species? It's as simple sometimes as turning out our lights.

Interjections.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I don't know about others who can laugh and joke that we are losing species on a regular basis. To us, it's important here. It's part of our ecosystem.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Deputy Premier, and you can direct it to whoever you have to direct it to.

As you know, on August 20 we had the terrible tornado that did a great deal of property damage across the province, from Vaughan and Durham, but it also affected the Town of the Blue Mountains. I know your government is aware of the damage to the apple orchards there because two of your ministers, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Natural Resources, have toured the area. Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs declared the area a disaster area.

The local community is setting up its disaster committee. We estimate at this time there is about \$15 million of damage. Much of it won't be covered under crop insurance or Agricorp programs or existing government programs. So my question is: Some of these apple farms, about 15 farms—many of them were completely wiped out. It takes nine years for an apple tree to come back, to be profitable, after it's planted. There's going to be a need for extraordinary assistance, and I'm just wondering if your government is planning on providing that.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for the question. By coincidence, as the honourable member would know, my mother resides at Rural Route 2, Ravenna, which is very, very close to the affected farm properties. Just a few days after this tornado went through, I did witness personally the efforts that were being made to clear the land.

We recognize especially that it is important for the province to reach out and lend assistance to municipalities and those in municipalities who are impacted. I did hear yesterday that the Minister of Municipal Affairs had made such declarations and was involved in making calls to communities.

I will, by way of supplementary, ask the Minister of Agriculture to comment on what efforts her ministry might—

Interjection: There is no supplementary at this point.

Hon. George Smitherman: Oh. Well, we'll be working with her ministry to ensure that there's recognition that when it comes to things like apple orchards, which take quite a long time to mature and to produce revenue, our policies are appropriate in terms of recognizing these particular concerns. And we'll work with the honourable member on that as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1133 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce people from all over Ontario who are presently sitting in the west members' gallery to raise awareness about

Lyme disease. Some of them are there and some have not quite made it.

We have a Court Steggles, as well as Mary Steggles, Eleanor Johnston, Dwight Lyons, Kari Krogh, Nancy Diklic, Avril Rutherford and Brian Rutherford and Heather Ott. We have Sawyer Anderson—my handwriting is giving me trouble—Julie Demeester, Patti Anderson, Carolyn Charbonneau and Joelle Charbonneau who are here in the members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

On behalf of the member from Pickering—Scarborough East and page Megan Fernandez, we'd welcome her father, Manfredo Fernandez, to the gallery and to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Peter Shurman: Sundown on September 18 marks the beginning of Rosh Hashanah—translation: the head of the year, known also as the Jewish New Year. It is the first day of the High Holy Days, which conclude with Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashanah is a day as rich in tradition as it is in meaning. Traditional meals and blessings are a part of every home as we reflect on the year that has gone by and the year that is to come.

Our Jewish tradition calls Rosh Hashanah the “day of creation,” a day on which we celebrate the Garden of Eden, the creation of Adam and Eve and, most significantly, the greatness of human potential. It is the day on which the blowing of the shofar, a trumpet made from a ram's horn, heralds the new year and calls on us to atone for our sins in preparation for the coming judgment.

On Rosh Hashanah, families and friends will share apples dipped in honey to symbolize wishes for a sweet new year. Today, I want to take this opportunity to extend the traditional greeting of Shana Tova, a good New Year, to everyone of every faith in the hope that with the coming of this Rosh Hashanah we are all inspired to reach for the greatest heights of human potential and live with forgiveness, respect, generosity and compassion.

Have a sweet and good New Year. Shana Tova Umetukah.

TAXATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to talk briefly about the meeting I had with the York Quay Neighbourhood Association this past Tuesday because they wanted me to talk about two issues that are important to them. One is the harmonized sales tax and the other one is the amendments that I have made to the Condominium Act, Bill 186.

On the harmonized tax, condominium owners are very concerned. We've been saying this for quite some time, that rates will go up. Condominium fees will go up, and I want to explain how they will go up.

Eighty per cent of condominium fees are connected to services that will be taxed, such as window cleaning, maintenance fees, and the contracting out of any kind of work that needs to be done around these buildings. All of these fees, including legal fees, are going to go up. We estimate, based on numbers given to us by property managers, that \$25 to \$31 or \$32 a month will be added to their condo fees.

This is the same problem that will happen to rental buildings. Rents will go up. Why? Because a lot of what these people have to pay on—maintenance, cleaning of windows and so on—is going to be charged at 8% tax and, therefore, fees will go up.

I'm hoping as well, with respect to the changes that I made to Bill 186, that the justice committee will deal with that shortly.

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Tomorrow night at sundown on the first and second day of Tishrei, in the year 5770 of the Jewish calendar, the 10 days of repentance begin with Rosh Hashanah and end with Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, ends at nightfall on Sunday, September 20, 2009. The origin of Rosh Hashanah is Biblical. It appears in Leviticus 23:23 to 25. It is “a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts of the shofar, the ram's horn.”

In Talmudic times, Rosh Hashanah, which means the “head of the year,” became a celebration of the world's creation and a day of self-examination, repentance and judgment.

On Rosh Hashanah, Jews listen to the blowing of the shofar, or ram's horn, during lengthy prayer services and are reminded that the Lord is King. They eat a festive meal with symbolic food, such as apples and honey, and do no work. After repenting for bad deeds through prayers, they symbolically cast off sins through a solemn ceremony.

Rosh Hashanah is both a solemn and a happy day. Rosh Hashanah is a day of judgment, and is a time for Jews to review the mistakes they made in the past year and to resolve to make improvements in the coming year. It is a time for introspection, asking for forgiveness and praying for a healthy and happy year to come.

Those observing the Jewish New Year are solemn in their repentance but happy in their confidence that God is merciful and good.

The traditional greeting on Rosh Hashanah is to wish everyone a good year, and to all, I say Shana Tova.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise to bring to the attention of this House a very serious issue concerning the government's

proposed changes to underserved-area and return-of-service programs. These are programs that help our communities attract doctors, and now the McGuinty government wants to take them away through proposals that will cause communities in my riding and across Ontario to lose the only source of government funding that directly supports physician recruitment. The government's proposals will pit north against south and rural against urban, and they will severely hamper doctor recruitment in most of the province.

What the government is proposing is a plan that would use what they call a rurality index to determine whether a community can access physician recruitment funding. The McGuinty government wants us to believe that this new formula will somehow improve the situation while completely ignoring a community's need for doctors.

In my riding, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care acknowledges that New Tecumseth, Essa and Adjala-Tosorontio have a shortage of 11 doctors, and yet the government wants to take away every single tool that these communities have to attract new doctors to the area. The situation is no different in Clearview, Wasaga Beach, Springwater, Collingwood and throughout much of Ontario.

To quote Gary Ryan, the president of Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston, in a letter he sent to the minister, he said that doctors "may well go to other provinces or the USA. This would create a further loss of physicians in Ontario."

The proposed changes to the underserved-area and return-of-service programs do nothing to help the one million Ontarians without a family doctor, and the government should stop meddling with these programs.

ORLÉANS FAMILY HEALTH HUB

Mr. Phil McNeely: Last month, I had the privilege of hosting Premier McGuinty in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans to mark a very important occasion. The Premier announced that \$1 million will be made available to the Montfort Hospital to develop a business plan for the Orléans Family Health Hub. This funding is key to moving the project forward, a project that will improve the lives of each and every member of our community. It is also a signal of the province's clear commitment to seeing the project through to completion.

The Orléans Family Health Hub will be the first of its kind in Ontario and a model for other communities across the province and Canada. The hub will offer day surgery, dialysis, cancer treatment and many other services usually only available at a full-fledged hospital. It will provide exceptional service in both English and French. This world-class facility will house the Orléans urgent care centre and our new family health team, which will be up and running this fall.

This new model of delivery recognizes that people need health services close to home, and the health hub will save the government and the taxpayers money

because these services can be delivered most cost-effectively in the community.

My sincere thanks to everyone involved in the project for their hard work, and to Premier McGuinty and the health ministry for their vision and support.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Norm Miller: My riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka has been very fortunate to have the benefit of several nursing stations, including Rosseau, Whitestone and Moose Deer Point. I've long heard from residents about the wonderful care they have received through nursing stations, which have up till now been very successfully managed by the West Parry Sound Health Centre.

There's tremendous community support for our nursing stations. In fact, just recently, Madison Lacey and 16 other participants took part in a walk that raised a total of \$11,100 for the Britt Nursing Station.

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So you can imagine my surprise to hear that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care plans on shifting responsibility for Rosseau, Whitestone and Britt nursing stations away from West Parry Sound Health Centre back to the Ministry of Health in Kingston. This government claims to be advocating for integrated health care; however, increasingly we see the reverse happening. Local decision-making is being thwarted and replaced with regional administration that does not have the community's best interests at heart. West Parry Sound Health Centre at one time was considered to be the model of integrated health care in rural Ontario, with responsibility for primary health care, community care access centres, nursing stations, the antivenin depot, long-term-care facilities and ambulance services.

I'm concerned that with this move, Parry Sound district health care will suffer as we lose local decision-making.

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Mr. David Zimmer: The Toronto International Film Festival, TIFF, ranks among the most prestigious international film festivals in the world. For 10 days, the best in film from around the world is shown right here in Toronto.

The festival has become an international destination for the movie industry. New and established filmmakers present their masterpieces. Every year, the festival sees new and exciting advancements in film arts and is a showcase of technological improvements in filmmaking.

The festival also is a chance for Canada's filmmakers to show their work. The Ministry of Culture is funding the TIFF Bell Lightbox. The government's \$10-million investment in the TIFF Bell Lightbox is an important recognition of the value of Ontario's film industry and the cultural sector as a major economic driver in this

province. As a result of our government's investment, about 1,300 full-time jobs have been created during construction, and it is expected there will be 156 new full-time jobs when the facility opens. Within five years of its opening, it is anticipated that the TIFF Bell Lightbox complex will hold over 4,000 events, attract two million visitors annually and generate about \$200 million in economic activity. This centre will serve as the new home of the Toronto International Film Festival.

The efficiency and dedication of the festival's staff and volunteers is largely what makes this happen. The international film festival has earned its longstanding reputation as a leader in the international film community. I'm proud to congratulate it.

EVENTS IN MISSISSAUGA SOUTH

Mr. Charles Sousa: It was another great summer in south Mississauga. We enjoy a number of renowned annual celebrations on our waterfront.

In May, I had the pleasure of welcoming runners of the Mississauga Marathon to our beautiful Lakefront Promenade Park. In June, the Mississauga Waterfront Festival delighted families with entertainment. Young and old alike enjoyed music, rides and lots of home-grown food. Speaking of Ontario foods, I was honoured to cut the ribbon at Port Credit's first ever farmers' market where fresh Ontario produce is being sold. It attracted a lot of visitors and helped support our local economy, as well as our Ontario farmers.

We had a phenomenal Canada Day celebration on the waterfront as well. The annual Paint the Town Red festivities offered the capacity crowd a tremendous combination of great bands and a stunning display of fireworks. In August, the Port Credit BIA hosted its very own Busker Fest, which filled the streets with performers of all kinds, including dancers and magicians.

Finally, this past weekend, we gathered on the waterfront once more to celebrate the Southside Shuffle Blues and Jazz Festival. I had the honour of opening the festival with Mayor McCallion and our colleague the Honourable Peter Fonseca. These great events are just one of the many reasons why Mississauga is becoming known as a great destination spot, attracting tourists from throughout Ontario and across our borders.

I'd like to thank all those organizers, sponsors and volunteers who make these celebrations possible. We had a great summer in south Mississauga, and the dedication of outstanding volunteers is the reason why.

RAMADAN

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is my distinct honour to rise in the House this afternoon to commemorate the end of the holy month of Ramadan with Eid-ul-Fitr, the festival of the fast-breaking.

As Muslims everywhere look for the crescent moon this weekend that marks the end of the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, the sighting will launch the celebration

following a month of fasting, reflection and peace-making. The holy month of Ramadan is one of the most cherished and important traditions in the Islamic faith.

As a time to purify the soul, refocus attention on God and practise self-sacrifice, Muslims around the world and here in Ontario abstain from food, drink and other physical needs from sunrise to sunset. Muslims are called upon to use this period to re-evaluate their lives in light of Islamic values, where we are to make peace with those who have wronged us, strengthen ties with family, friends and community, and do away with the bad habits and temptations of our daily lives. At the end of this period, Eid-ul-Fitr is a festival of joy and thanksgiving to God for the will and strength to have endured the challenge of the past month and for the gifts and revelations that self-sacrifice has bestowed on the individual and the community. On this day, Muslims will dress in festive or brand new clothing, attend special ceremonies and prayers and visit with friends and family.

On behalf of my colleagues in this House, the government of Ontario and all Ontarians, I wish to convey our warmest regards to the Muslim community on this day of celebration, and it is my hope that those who have observed Ramadan have found peace and refreshed their faith on the day of Eid.

Eid Mubarak.

PETITIONS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Whereas the McGuinty government is conducting a review of the province's underserved area program (UAP) that will result in numerous communities across rural and small-town Ontario losing financial incentives to recruit and retain much-needed physicians; and

"Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep doctors are essential to providing quality front-line health care services, particularly in communities in rural ridings, such as Simcoe-Grey; and

"Whereas people across Ontario have been forced to pay Dalton McGuinty's now-forgotten health tax since 2004, expecting health care services to be improved rather than cut; and

"Whereas taxpayers deserve good value for their hard-earned money that goes into health care, unlike the wasteful and abusive spending under the McGuinty Liberals' watch at eHealth Ontario;

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

"That the McGuinty government immediately stop its ill-advised attack on rural health care and on rural communities who need financial incentives to successfully recruit and retain doctors."

I agree with that petition and I'm going to sign it.

LYME DISEASE

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a pleasure and a privilege to present this big petition signed by 1,489 people from all across Ontario, and I am especially pleased to present it in front of my guests in the gallery.

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diseases, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but the scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these either in the US or in Europe; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives” 45% to 95% of the time; and

“Whereas physicians practising in Ontario do not receive current and updated information on the incidence of Lyme disease, being unaware that annually some 25,000 new cases are reported in North America, nor do physicians receive training in the diagnosis and treatment of acute or chronic Lyme disease and, therefore, remain unfamiliar with the highly effective protocol developed by the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society; and

“Whereas the Regulated Health Professions Act of Ontario states, ‘It is the duty of the Minister [of Health] to ensure that the health professions are regulated and coordinated in the public interest.’

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis; to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario; and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and send it to the clerks’ table with page Helen.

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CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of Ontarians from the Ottawa-Nepean area, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the re-location of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table with Nicole.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I’ve had some petitions mailed to me regarding the Burk’s Falls health centre. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Burk’s Falls and District Health Centre provides vital health services for residents of Burk’s Falls and the Almaguin Highlands of all ages, as well as seasonal residents and tourists; and

“Whereas the health centre helps to reduce demand on the Huntsville hospital emergency room; and

“Whereas the operating budget for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is insufficient to meet the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka–East Parry Sound; and

“Whereas budget pressures could jeopardize continued operation of the Burk’s Falls health centre;

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

“That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services, including those provided by the Burk’s Falls health centre.”

I support this petition.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them from HOOPP and OPTrust to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of continuous service; and

“Whereas when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

“Whereas the government’s own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that the government move swiftly to address this issue; and

“Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

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

"That the Minister of Finance support Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson's resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions to OMERS from HOOPP or OPTrust."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to bring to the Legislative Assembly this petition signed by a number of people in northwest Mississauga—my own home community—and particularly from the neighbourhood of Lisgar. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and to send it down with page Carlos.

SALE OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have received petitions from the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association with 2,383 signatures. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of beer and wine to the LCBO, the Beer Store and a few winery retail stores" and the three large beer companies are owned by multinationals;

"Whereas other provinces (notably Quebec) have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores for many years without any harm to the well-being of the public;

"Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of beer and wine in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society;

"Whereas it is essential to support local convenience stores for the survival of small businesses;

"Whereas it is obvious from the current market trends that the sales of wine and beer in convenience stores is not a question of 'if' but 'when';

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of beer and wine in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province and to do it now."

I support this petition.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add another 200 names to the petition to bring a PET scanner to Sudbury, which brings the number to 600. This one comes from the riding of Timmins–James Bay, and it goes:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making positron emission tomography, PET scanning, a publicly insured health service...;

"Whereas by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks' table with Nicole.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I thank Mr. David Turner from Alliston for sending this petition to me.

"Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe–Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax ... that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass

cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers.”

I will sign that petition and I agree with it.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I've got many petitions to do with harmonizing the PST and GST, with more coming in daily. This one reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is planning to merge the 8% provincial sales tax and the 5% federal sales tax; and

“Whereas the new 13% harmonized sales tax will be applied to products not previously subject to provincial sales tax such as gasoline, home heating fuels, home renovations, haircuts, hamburgers, television service, Internet service, telephone and cell services, taxi fees, bus, train and airplane tickets, and dry cleaning services; and

“Whereas rural and northern Ontarians will be particularly hard hit by the harmonized sales tax, as will seniors and families;

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

“That the McGuinty government should remove this harmonized sales tax from its 2009-10 budget.”

I support this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Dave Levac: This is a petition on behalf of the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre.

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to

‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I do so on behalf of Bob Delaney, MPP, Mississauga–Streetsville, and I hand it over to Jacob to bring to you, sir.

1330

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

BREAST CANCER SCREENING ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE DÉPISTAGE DU CANCER DU SEIN

Mr. Oraziotti moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 200, An Act to increase access to breast cancer screening / Projet de loi 200, Loi visant à accroître l'accès aux services de dépistage du cancer du sein.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to be here today for the opportunity to speak to what is a very important issue to all Ontarians. I want to first of all thank my colleagues the members from Hamilton Mountain, Etobicoke–Lakeshore and Huron–Bruce, who will be speaking to the bill this afternoon. I certainly appreciate them agreeing to do that.

I also want to encourage opposition members to support this bill, and I'm certainly looking forward to hearing their comments in the next few minutes.

Unfortunately, as most of us know, far too many of our family members and friends have been affected by breast cancer. It comes as no surprise that this is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the province and this is the second-leading cause of cancer mortality in women in Ontario. This year alone, over 22,000 cases will be identified in Ontario and over 5,000 women will die as a result of breast cancer in this province in this year. In fact, one in nine women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime.

I want to talk a little bit about the impact as well as the rationale for the bill and provide some of the evidence as to why I believe we need to make a fairly significant policy change in the province of Ontario to include women in the 40 to 49 age group for organized breast screening in Ontario.

Breast cancer occurs primarily in women between the ages of 50 and 69, which is why women in that age group do not presently need a referral to enter the Ontario breast screening program. However, 20% of all new cases in the province occur in women under the age of 50. The numbers are smaller, but the type of cancer and its aggressiveness is much more rapid and more challenging to combat. That's why it's very, very important that we ensure that there's early detection.

The bill proposes, if passed, to admit women 40 to 49 to the OBSP with a referral from either their the nurse practitioner or their physician. Currently in the province of Ontario, women in this age group have really what is referred to, I suppose, by the sector as ad hoc OHIP services for mammography. They can get a referral from their doctor or their nurse practitioner, but it is not as comprehensive as the quality of service that is delivered through the Ontario breast screening program through Cancer Care Ontario.

So the main purpose of the bill, to be clear, is to ensure that women in this province aged 40 to 49, with a referral from their physician or their nurse practitioner, are eligible to participate in the Ontario breast screening program, which offers high-quality services, follow-up and the knowledge of the person receiving the service that they are in a program that is there with them as they go through what might be a very, very difficult experience.

It's somewhat disjointed at present in the province, where you have women that get ad hoc services or referrals to sites for mammography—and at 50 they can get into a program that is really much more wraparound services for them. So, really what we're saying is, at an age in which there is a significant number of breast cancers being identified, those women need to be included in the Ontario breast screening program delivered through Cancer Care Ontario, which is an absolutely fantastic program.

On a personal note, I've been asked on a number of occasions, "Why are you interested in doing this and where is this coming from?" Certainly individuals in my community have mentioned this to me around the nature of the breast screening program in Ontario. I should recognize an individual in my community, Tiffany Caicco, who worked for the Canadian Cancer Society and who raised this issue with me probably a year ago. What she said to me was, "I work for the cancer society and I continue to see women in their 40s presenting with breast cancer, and the Ontario breast screening program starts at 50." She said, "You know, I really think we're missing the mark here in Ontario. We're missing the opportunity to have better services for women in this province" around, as I said, what is the most identifiable cancer in Ontario right now. So I really want to extend my thanks to her for bringing this to my attention. She's a tremendous advocate in our community through the Canadian Cancer Society and does a fantastic job in our community, so I want to thank her.

On a personal note as well, we had a family experience that I know many members in this House and others outside, obviously, have been impacted by. My aunt was diagnosed with breast cancer when she was 28 and she died when she was 40 of the spreading of that breast cancer to other parts of her body, so our family has certainly experienced that as well. It's very challenging for the family members, but obviously we want to make a change that will benefit all Ontario women who have the difficulty of facing this challenge.

I want to talk a little bit about the evidence in terms of why we need to do this. We know that the program—50 to 69 is probably the highest-risk group in the province of Ontario, and anywhere, but the reality is that as evidence becomes more available and as technology improves—we're talking about digital mammography, which has a greater benefit to identify and reduce false positives, as well as false negatives—those services need to be extended to all women 40 to 49.

A 2007 review published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* showed that of eight published studies analyzing the effect of mammography screening in women 40 to 49 years of age on breast cancer mortality rates, seven of the studies demonstrated a reduction in mortality due to breast cancer. The estimated average mortality reduction of the eight studies was 15%, so it's smaller than the 22% reduction seen in women above age 50, but it's still something that's certainly significant.

In the province of British Columbia, the BC Cancer Agency found, through a report in 2006, that women aged 40 to 49 who participated in the screening program had a 25% reduction in mortality rate related to breast cancer, which is also very significant.

In the United States, the US Preventive Services Task Force has also done studies on breast cancer and recommendations around mammography for women aged 40 and up. The evidence was strongest, obviously, for women aged 50 to 69, but the task force concluded that there were significant benefits to extending those services to women 40 to 49. This is really the new benchmark in the United States, and has been in some states for many years, because their studies indicated that it reduced mortality from 20% to 25% over a 10-year period—also very significant.

The Journal of the National Cancer Institute in the US referenced a Swedish study that showed that increased screening reduced mortality by 23% for women 40 to 49—also another significant study, and one that I think speaks volumes to the importance of including this group in the OBSP.

The Cancer Journal of 2004 indicated that organized programs have a greater potential ability to reduce the incidence of cancer mortality because of a centralized commitment to quality and monitoring. I want to be clear: We're talking about an organized breast screening program, as opposed to these individual services that are provided through OHIP. That speaks to some extent to the cost. I was asked the other day about the cost of this program and I guess what I would say is, I don't think we can afford not to do this. There are costs associated with mammography services through referrals by physicians or nurse practitioners, and those costs are estimated to be in the \$60-or-so range; the OBSP and the wraparound services are estimated to be in the \$100 range. I think the cost is relatively modest considering the benefit, the significance and the importance of the program.

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The other issue that we need to be aware of is the cost of human life that we're talking about, as well as the cost

to the health care system later on down the road. There's greater success if the cancer is identified earlier, and obviously the treatments would be less invasive and less costly. I think that's a really important aspect of why we need to include the 40-to-49 age group in the OBSP.

Just a reference from the Cancer Journal: "Organized programs are also more likely to offer greater protection against the harmful effects associated with poor-quality or over-frequent screening."

The OBSP, as I said, is a tremendously important program in Ontario. Cancer Care Ontario—Terry Sullivan and the organization do an absolutely fantastic job at Cancer Care Ontario. I think, and I hope, that they would be receptive to including women aged 40 to 49 in this program.

As we did some of the research on this bill, we found that other provinces in this country use the age of 40 for organized breast screening programs. Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, the Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia and PEI all permit women aged 40 to 49 to enter into organized breast screening programs—very, very important. As I said, the US benchmark is 40. In many European jurisdictions, it's 40 as well. I think it's important that this program that we've identified in Bill 200 be included for women who are 40 to 49.

There are a number of organizations that are supportive of this. Wendy Fucile from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario has made some very positive comments around the role of nurse practitioners. As you know, we're expanding nurse practitioner clinics across the province to create increased access. The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society—and Dr. Martin Yaffe, whom I want to reference, was here the other day—over 30 years of experience at Sunnybrook as a senior scientist for breast cancer research—a very, very strong advocate for this bill.

I want to encourage all members of the Legislature to support this bill moving forward. Members of the opposition who are here today who are going to be speaking to this, I encourage you to support this bill. I think this is a step in the right direction. I'm very pleased to be speaking today about an issue that is so important to so many women in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's a pleasure for me to stand here in support of the private member's bill that has been introduced by the member for Sault Ste. Marie and would increase access to breast cancer screening.

I just want to indicate that the bill would require the minister to ensure that breast screening services are provided free of charge to women aged 40 to 49 who are referred by a physician or a specified nurse. So there would have to be referral. The breast screening services may be provided through the Ontario breast screening program of Cancer Care Ontario or that program's successor.

As I say, we certainly support this. Indeed, when our government was in office between 1995 and 2003, as you

would well know, Mr. Speaker, since you were Minister of Health and were involved in making sure that it did happen, we invested \$24.3 million to set up 88 additional screening sites across the province of Ontario, because it's all well and dandy to indicate that women should have access to this breast screening program; however; you've got to make sure that the sites are accessible, that the sites are close to home and that women, no matter where they live in the province of Ontario, are able to access those sites.

We've seen a lot of action undertaken in the past, and the suggestion is now being made that we would expand the opportunity for women aged 40 to 49 to also access this program. Of course, basically it includes the mammography and the physical examination as well.

We know that breast screening does save lives. Many of us are going to be participating in the CIBC run in the near future. Certainly it is important that women be aware of the screening opportunities that are available to them and that they be encouraged to participate.

Indeed, between 1989 and 2004 the breast cancer mortality rates in Ontario women aged 50 to 69 decreased by 33% due to the fact that in this province we do have improved cancer treatments and increased participation in breast screening.

Breast screening is important, because obviously if you can find the cancer when it is small, it means that there's a better chance of treating it successfully, it is less likely to spread and there are possibly more treatment options. So everything we can do in order to find it early, provide the treatment and help to reduce the number of deaths is very, very significant.

Currently you can access the Ontario breast cancer screening program if you're looking for screening. However, I think we also need to recognize that there are stand-alone OHIP-funded clinics available as well, so all women in the province do have access to the screening.

This program, the OBSP, offers very important advantages to women, and also to the physicians and nurse practitioners who may be treating them, because what it does is include the recruitment, recall, follow-up and on-going quality assurance, and that's really quite important.

Of course, all of the OBSP sites are currently accredited with the Canadian Association of Radiologists' mammography accreditation program. So you have a coordinated program that is certainly the gold standard when it comes to breast screening.

I know that the target in the province of Ontario for women aged 50 to 69 has been to have 70% of women participating by the year 2010, and 90% of the women in this age group by the year 2020. Currently, only 60% of women aged 50 to 69 participate in regular screening through the OBSP or other screening clinics.

I think you can see that we still have a long way to go to raise the awareness of women to the fact that they should take advantage of this opportunity to detect whether or not there is a cancer and, if so, that that cancer can be treated promptly.

We not only have to take a look at expanding the program, as this bill is suggesting, to women aged 40 to

49, but we need to do a much better job in the province of aggressively promoting screening, using information technology and any other method that we can, in order to assist any primary-care practitioner with screening. We have to increase our efforts to reach out to some of those people who currently are under-screened.

Some of the people who currently are not taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in the screening program are new Canadians; people who probably are living in poverty; and also people without a family physician—we know that there are somewhere in the neighbourhood of 800,000 people without a family physician; and the aboriginal groups. We need to do a better job of reaching out to those people, raising their awareness about the program and making sure they too have an opportunity in our province to avail themselves of screening, because it does result in earlier detection of cancer and, as a result, better health outcomes.

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I know that Cancer Care Ontario tries to do a good job, and I know that they do want to reach out to these vulnerable, unscreened populations. We're going to have to look at innovative ways to raise the awareness of the program if we're going to achieve our targets by 2010: 70% of Ontario women between the ages of 50 to 69 undergoing mammography screening every two years. Of course, that's a huge target if today we're only at about 60%, but I think that we can do it.

I have no doubt that everyone in this Legislature can support this bill. As I say, it is important that breast cancer be detected early, just as it is important that any cancer be detected early, and we should be making sure that people have access to screening and know it's available to them.

In this case, the advantages of the OBSP program are that the sites are accredited. It is a high-quality mammogram. I personally like the fact that I'm reminded every two years that it's time again. I think that's important, with our busy lives, that we be reminded of the need to undergo the screening on a regular basis. I appreciate the reminder letter, when it comes, to return the next time for a screening mammogram.

Certainly, there are still too many people in the province of Ontario and throughout this world who are impacted by cancer. I'm sure we all know friends, mothers, sisters, relatives and neighbours who have been impacted. So I applaud the member and appreciate his efforts to bring forward an initiative which would allow, on the referral of a nurse practitioner or a doctor, the opportunity for women under the age of 50, specifically 40 to 49, to also receive the mammography services and increase the access to the Ontario breast screening program.

I would say to you that—you know what? We did a lot to improve access to cancer care, and we need to continue to make sure that the accessibility remains available to everyone, no matter where you live in this great province. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to rise today to lend my support to Bill 200, An Act to increase access to breast cancer screening, and I want to congratulate the member from Sault Ste. Marie for this bill. It is a good bill and it is one that is important; there's no question about that in my mind or in the minds of New Democrats.

This bill will ensure that a woman, as has been mentioned, between the ages of 40 to 49 can be referred to the breast screening program, the one currently run by Cancer Care Ontario. In my area, where I come from, we call it the Sudbury breast cancer program, and it is a very successful program. The Ontario breast screening program is good because it makes sense. It is well set up, it is welcoming, it is effective and it allows the follow-up that the member from Kitchener was just talking about. These women, the ones from 40 to 49, will need a referral from their physicians and nurse practitioners in order to access the program, and the program should and will be free.

Bill 200 is important because we know that with higher screening rates, breast cancer mortality decreases. As has been mentioned, breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis in Ontario women. It makes up 27% of cancer diagnoses. It has the second-highest mortality rate—and I kind of have to open a parenthesis here, to remind everybody that the number one cancer killer of women is still lung cancer, and we have a long way to go in Ontario to be tobacco-free. So it is important that women, on the advice of their primary care provider, can gain access to the program.

We also know that increased screening practices lead to earlier detection, which makes treatment easier and makes the variety of treatments often more acceptable to the woman, but at the end it decreases mortality.

Between 1989 and 2004, breast cancer mortality rates in Ontario women aged 50 to 69 decreased by 33% due to improved cancer treatments but also due to increased participation in breast screening. There is clearly an important role for high-quality, well-organized breast cancer screening programs, and therefore this bill is a step in the right direction. However, it is but one piece of the puzzle of what keeps women healthy and cancer-free. It is not the only issue that needs our attention when it comes to this issue of breast cancer.

The first issue I want to talk about is access to primary care. The fact of the matter is, for this program to work, these women need to be referred by a physician or a nurse practitioner. But what happens to women who don't have access to primary care? And the fact of the matter is that way too many women don't have. It is estimated that in Ontario as high as one million people don't have a primary care provider. It's a good guess that 50% of them are women; that's a lot of women. They don't have access to regular checkups, they don't have access to routine breast exams and they do not have the opportunity to talk about lifestyle issues. They do not have a first contact point to our health care system. This is a serious matter and one which grossly impacts the health of Ontarians.

Although women over the age of 50 have access to the Ontario breast screening program, it is not the case for these younger women, 40 to 49, who need a primary care provider. So my question is this: Without ensuring that every woman has access to primary care, how many women will be missed? This is a good program, but if you don't have access to it, it is all for nothing. We also know that there is a huge variation in the group of women that go for routine screenings. It is also true for people who have access to primary care.

When we talk about health equity, Health Canada tells us that women are currently receiving screening at inadequate and inequitable rates. We know that women who go for mammography are usually more highly educated, they have higher incomes and they are more likely to be white than women from a racial minority. They usually live in an urban area, not in a rural or northern area. This is a very similar to picture to women in our province who don't have access to primary care. There are some important initiatives out there where the Ontario breast screening program is trying to increase the screening rates for women in marginalized groups, but here again, for this new group that we're adding on, I have a feeling that these inequities will continue for them, not only for breast cancer but also for cervical cancer and other common cancers among women.

A recent study at St. Michael's Hospital found a 14% difference in screening rates in cervical cancer between women who live in high- versus low-income neighbourhoods: in high-income neighbourhoods, 75% screening; in low income, 61%. And this is in an area right here in Toronto where accessibility is not an issue, not like it could be in northern Ontario or in rural Ontario.

We have to ask those tough questions: Why is it that low-income women, who are at greater risk of getting sick, don't have access to screening? Why is it that they cannot get enrolled into this excellent breast screening program that we have? We also know that women who experience language barriers or women who cannot access culturally appropriate services—and I will add to this gay, lesbian, bisexual women and transgendered people—are disproportionately represented in those who never receive adequate screening, and unfortunately, the cancer rates are reflected in those groups also. They have cancer more often, they have complications more often and they die more often. We have a lot of work ahead of us before achieving health equity, but those issues are important and need to be addressed.

1400

I also want to talk about lifestyle. There are other initiatives that are just as important in decreasing breast cancer rates in this province, and I have good news: Most of them are cheap and relatively easy to achieve. We know that leading healthy lifestyles lowers the chances of people developing all sorts of cancers, including breast cancer—lifestyle issues such as a healthy diet, regular exercise, stopping smoking and maintaining a healthy weight. Last session I introduced Bill 156, the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act, which passed second

reading. It had the support of this House but it has not been called in front of committee yet, an opportunity to prevent more cancer amongst Ontarians wasted.

Ontarians would also benefit from other kinds of legislation that would encourage them to engage in healthy lifestyles, such as banning junk food in our schools, which my colleague Rosario has brought forward. But here again, those bills are being stalled.

A note about the environment: We know that environmental health matters. This year, the government had an opportunity to make a real impact with Bill 167, the Toxics Reduction Act, because across Canada, over 23,000 chemicals and substances are used in manufacturing products that we use every day. We also know those chemicals have a direct and negative impact on the health of Ontarians, including Ontario women.

I wanted to talk about the precautionary principle. Basically, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. But in order to bring forward prevention, those bills have to move through the House. It is an opportunity for the government, by passing the environmental bill, to have an impact on the rate of breast cancer, just as the bill from the member from Sault Ste. Marie will have an impact.

New Democrats will be supporting this bill. It is an important step. But let's not fool ourselves. This is one small step, and there are many more that are needed. We must address the crisis in primary care, we must understand the underlying reason behind the inequity of access women face to the health care system and we must commit ourselves to ensuring a climate of real prevention, one that succeeds in making a connection between our health and the social determinants of health. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but this new screening initiative is a step in the right direction.

Du côté des néo-démocrates, cela nous fera plaisir d'appuyer le projet de loi 200, Loi visant à accroître l'accès aux services de dépistage du cancer du sein. Accroître les services de dépistage pour les femmes entre 40 et 49 ans est quelque chose d'important qui va porter fruit, mais il ne faut pas oublier que ces femmes doivent avoir un renvoi en service soit d'un médecin, soit d'un infirmier praticien ou d'une infirmière praticienne.

Pour les gens—il y a près d'un million de personnes en Ontario, et on peut dire que la moitié d'elles sont des femmes—qui n'ont pas d'accès aux soins primaires et qui n'ont pas de médecin de famille ou d'infirmière praticienne, ce service ne leur sera pas disponible parce qu'elles n'ont pas de porte d'entrée au système de la santé.

On sait également que bien que les services de dépistage soient présentement disponibles, il y a très peu de femmes de minorités visibles qui sont capables d'en faire partie. Donc, le projet de loi a de bonnes intentions, mais dans la réalité il y a beaucoup d'améliorations qu'on doit apporter au système de soins primaires pour que ce système-là soit équitable pour toutes les femmes de l'Ontario.

Je souhaite bonne chance au député de Sault Ste. Marie avec son projet de loi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Merci. Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to enter the debate and I want to congratulate my counterpart, the member from Sault Ste. Marie, on bringing a bill forward that I believe is quite timely. One of the things I wanted to talk about today—I wanted to actually read some articles about young women who have developed breast cancer and how their lives have changed and how their children's lives have changed—all their family.

I want to begin by reading a couple of stories and then I want to talk about what this represents in a rural riding like Huron–Bruce and how this bill represents change. The first article is from the Kincardine News and it says:

“You mature quickly when you're five years old and your mommy is diagnosed with breast cancer.

“Now, four years and one clean bill of health later, 10-year-old Jordan Jarvis is hoping to put an end to cancer by participating in Kincardine's Relay for Life....

“I want to help raise funds so I don't have to go through what my mom did,” said Jordan, the daughter of Brad and Joanne....

“In April 2002, Joanne was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 36, when Jordan was five and son Mitchell was three. Although there were no symptoms and no lump because the tumour and precancerous areas were buried too deep to discover by touch, she immediately underwent a mastectomy. That was followed by chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Joanne has been cancer-free since her last treatment in the fall of 2002.

“Jordan remembers it was a difficult time for her family and, even as a five-year-old, she could comprehend the gravity of the situation.

“It was the first I ever saw my dad cry ... but I didn't know what cancer meant,” the petite blond said.

“But it wasn't long before she realized how serious her mother's battle was. It scared her.

“I got to see her (in the hospital) and when we walked into the room I felt sick to my stomach because she had all these things hooked up to her. She looked bad.

“I felt sad because I didn't like to see her go through everything, but I met the doctors and they were really nice, so I knew they'd do a good job.”

“Jordan was right. Joanne came through the treatments and went back to her job as a dental hygienist early in 2003. She said she felt fully recovered and ready to start the next chapter of her life in 2004....

“Joanne's one of the lucky ones. She had the opportunity to learn from her experience and carry it through to her post-cancer life.

“I'd never choose to go through it again but my life is fuller and I'm happier than I ever was,” Joanne said.”

She says that she appreciates—but one of the things I wanted to tell from the story was that her daughter has now formed the BJ Beauties, who participate in the Relay for Life. Jordan's goal is for \$1,000 that she'll raise to go toward the fight for cancer.

We have another young lady from Huron country, and this is Luann Taylor of Luann's Country Flowers. She

feels women under the age of 50 should also be tested regularly. She was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 39 and after being diagnosed and treated for breast cancer, she devised the Take Care campaign. Each year, florists, including Blooms and Rooms and Flower Magic and a number of other florists, donate \$5 from each bouquet of carnations. She has raised \$2,300 this year and this will go toward more cancer research and helping in cancer care.

I just share those two stories with you.

I also wanted to speak about the statistics coming from a rural riding like Huron–Bruce. Huron: 54.67% is the percentage of women who are participating right now in the 50 to 69, and in Bruce county 42% of the women are participating in the breast screening program today—much work to do.

I do want to add my congratulations once again to this very important bill, and my support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: First, I want to congratulate my colleague David Oraziotti, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, for the important bill that he has brought forward for debate in the House today. David has a history of bringing critically important issues to the floor of the Legislature, and certainly that is true today as we debate Bill 200, An Act to increase access to breast cancer screening.

The reality is that each of us in our lives has been touched by some form of breast cancer. We know someone who has suffered from, been diagnosed with and, hopefully, beaten breast cancer. I think at its heart, that is exactly what Bill 200 is all about—giving women the best chance possible to diagnose, treat and survive breast cancer, to help more women be survivors of a terribly rampant disease in our society. The evidence bears out that early diagnosis, especially among younger women, really reduces breast cancer mortality. The medical literature suggests—and there's a study in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* which really well summarizes the evidence. Of eight published studies analyzing the effect of mammography screening in women 40 to 49 years of age on breast cancer mortality rates, seven—seven—of the eight studies demonstrated a reduction in mortality due to breast cancer. The estimated average mortality reduction from the eight studies is 15%, which is a significant number. When you think about the lives and the many women that all of us know in our lives, 15% makes an incredible difference to women, to their families, to children, to our mothers, and each of us would say that a stat of 15% is well worth striving for.

1410

But in fact some places have said the statistics are even better. A recent British Columbia study found a breast cancer mortality reduction of 25% as a result of screening between 40 and 49. Certainly mammography screening is not 100% perfect, but it is the best tool that we currently have for detecting breast cancer. Most, but not all, breast cancers can be detected by mammograms.

For those women, access to this type of important new screening tools is incredibly important. We just heard some stories about children—a little girl named Jordan that my colleague just told us about. Jordan's mom is alive and Jordan has a mom because that breast cancer was diagnosed. That's what this is about. That's what the member for Sault Ste. Marie is bringing forward: an opportunity to give women and their families every fighting chance that they can have.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed and the second leading cause of cancer mortality in Canadian women, with 22,700 new cases every single year—22,700 women are diagnosed—and 5,400 deaths are expected in 2009. One in nine women will be diagnosed with and one in 27 will die of breast cancer in their lifetime. If we can do something on the floor of this Legislature to make those statistics a little bit better by giving women aged 40 to 49 better access to better diagnosis, that is something worth fighting for and that is something that is worthy of the support of our friends around the Legislature today. My colleague has my support and I congratulate him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I too would like to congratulate the member from Sault Ste. Marie for bringing this very important bill forward. I wholeheartedly support this bill, and like the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore mentioned, I think everyone in this House has at one time been touched by a woman who has had breast cancer. I too have had that experience. Unfortunately, the two women I know who had breast cancer didn't make it. I know that they would be very supportive of this bill, so I'm very happy to be here and stand in support of the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

As a 41-year-old woman myself, I am someone who would benefit from the Ontario breast screening program. I do believe that early detection is the key to fighting cancers. A program that helps identify breast cancer at an earlier age would be the right thing to do, and that is what this bill is all about.

We know that breast cancer is the most common cancer among women and we know that the best time to treat breast cancer is when it is detected at its earliest stages. There's a lot of good evidence that we can look at, but one thing I'd like to mention is that internationally there are countries in the world that already have breast screening for women at the age of 40. Some of those countries include Australia, Austria, Greece, Japan, Slovakia and most countries in Sweden.

I'd like to leave you with just one of the supportive quotes that we have received for this bill, from Sandra Palmaro, CEO of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, Ontario region. She writes:

“Since 2007, the foundation's position has clearly been that women aged 40-49 should be allowed access to screening mammography in the Ontario breast screening program.

“Screening mammography for the 40-49 age cohort would align Ontario's policy with most other provinces

and territories in Canada. As there is scientific evidence that women aged 40-49 can benefit from screening, the foundation applauds this important step in providing access to organized breast cancer screening for women in their forties.”

I truly believe this is the right thing to do. Regular breast screening can find cancer when it is small, which means there is a better chance of treating the cancer successfully and it is less likely to spread.

Congratulations to the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, the honourable member, Mr. Oraziotti, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to wrap up the debate.

First of all, I want to say thank you to the former Minister of Health, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who spoke on behalf of the Conservative caucus today in support of this bill. I appreciate that support. I think she recognizes how important this change in policy is, however that potentially could occur, so I want to thank her for that.

I also want to thank the member from Nickel Belt, who is here today speaking on behalf of the NDP caucus, and who has considerable experience and background in the health care sector. I respect her comments and I appreciate her thoughts on the bill today. I think they were very heartfelt and quite accurate. So I appreciate that support.

To my colleagues the member from Huron–Bruce, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the member from Hamilton Mountain, who were here today to speak in support of Bill 200, I want to say thank you very much for your comments and for sharing some stories from your riding and personal stories as well.

I think that's the challenge. There are too many personal stories in this province around women—our mothers, our sisters, our daughters—who have been affected in a negative way and continue to be affected by this dreadful disease, and we need to take whatever steps we can to ensure that we reduce the incidence and save as many lives as possible.

We've all heard the statistics here today. We know there is overwhelming evidence out there around early screening and organized screening programs, and the benchmarks that have been established in many other jurisdictions, not only in this country but around the world. Ontario needs to be on the same playing field as these other jurisdictions because we need to give Ontario women the same advantages when it comes to health care services.

I want to encourage all members of the Legislature to support this bill, and thank you to those who spoke in favour of it today. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That concludes the time for this ballot item. For those watching at home and those in the galleries, we'll vote on this item in about 100 minutes.

FIRE SAFETY

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the recent changes to the Ontario building code (OBC) to require sprinklers in new multi-unit residential buildings over three storeys in height should be further extended to require that all new residential homes be equipped with a properly installed residential fire sprinkler system to reduce deaths and serious injuries from fires in the home, limit exposure to danger from fire of children, the elderly and the disabled and to mitigate the exposure of firefighters to toxic chemicals and the dangers of interior fire attack.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Jeffrey moves private member's notice of motion number 105. Pursuant to standing order 98, Mrs. Jeffrey, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: In June 2006, the Ontario building code was amended to enhance fire safety for Ontarians and to harmonize Ontario's building code with that of the model national building code. The building code change requires fire sprinklers in multiple-unit residential buildings higher than three storeys and comes into effect on April 1, 2010. This amendment was a great first step. Unfortunately, most people die in fires that occur in residences three storeys and lower. In fact, since January there have been an alarming 71 fire deaths in Ontario. The resolution we have before us today recommends that we extend the protection to all new residential homes in Ontario.

1420

Since being elected in 2003, I've spearheaded three separate attempts to change Ontario's laws to mandate sprinkler systems in all new residential construction using private members' legislation. I introduced my first private member's bill, entitled the Home Fire Sprinkler Act, on November 2, 2004. Bill 141 would have amended the building code to prevent any person from constructing a new detached home, semi-detached home or row house that wasn't equipped with a sprinkler system.

The following October, I introduced Bill 2. This new and improved bill would have amended the building code to prevent anyone from constructing any dwelling not equipped with a sprinkler system. Simply put, wherever you slept, you would have been protected.

My current bill, which was introduced in May 2008, would, if passed, ultimately amend the Building Code Act to allow municipalities to enact a bylaw that would prevail over provincial laws, requiring residential fire sprinklers to be installed in all new residential occupancies.

While my bill awaits hearings, I've had an opportunity to raise awareness on this issue. At the same time, I've publicly supported both government and opposition legislation which promotes fire safety, because I believe this issue goes far beyond partisan politics. Over the previous decade, more than 900 Ontarians have lost their lives, thousands have been injured and billions lost in property damage in residential fires. Smoke alarms do

what their name implies: They provide early detection and warning of smoke from a fire, but they take no action on the fire itself. The fire doubles in size each minute or so; the first two or three minutes are critical. People typically only have about three to five minutes to get out of a burning house.

Sprinklers are a proven automatic technology, like an airbag, that do not rely on changed human behaviour to prevent the accident or loss of life. If you are one of a high-risk group—elderly, impaired, disabled or a child—you need extra time to escape a fire. Without sprinklers, the heat and smoke from the fire travel quickly, damaging furniture and possessions throughout the house. Fires typically burn 10 to 15 minutes before firefighters arrive.

These days, home builders are trying to reduce their costs by using cheaper construction materials. Builders are routinely installing wooden beams that are little more than lengths of pressed board sandwiched between two-by-fours or four-by-sixes. The National Research Council of Canada has recently revealed that these new composite wood floor assemblies in homes fell 67% sooner than older homes. Worse yet, this type of lightweight construction endangers firefighters, who fall through the floors and are then trapped by the collapse.

Some experts advocate the use of construction materials that are fire-resistant and they claim that using these materials makes more sense than mandating fire sprinklers. These comments reveal a complete misunderstanding of fires and fire deaths. The minute a homeowner carries a piece of furniture into that building, the home is no longer fire-resistant.

The contents found in an average home today have drastically changed the impact and consequences of a fire as compared to as few as 20 years ago. Interior finishes such as upholstery, carpets, laminate and the contents made of synthetic foams and plastics result in fires that burn hotter and quicker and produce higher concentrations of toxic smoke, posing a higher risk to occupants and responding firefighters alike. The reality is that fatal fires occur in all types of buildings, regardless of what kinds of construction materials are used.

The vast majority of fire fatalities are not related to the structural integrity of buildings. We know for a fact that more often than not, it is human behaviour that causes fires and it is the burning contents of the homes, the toxic gases, that kill people well before the fire reaches the structural components of the building.

I recently received an e-mail from a firefighter who sent me a story about a resident who reportedly disabled his home smoke detectors because they were making noise. A stovetop fire broke out in the apartment just after midnight. The two occupants of the apartment had gone to bed; apparently, they hadn't realized one of the stove's burners was still on. The food on the stove caught fire and the flames spread to the cabinets. The fire sprinkler doused the blaze and the occupants were awakened by the sprinkler system's water flow alarm, which sounds when a sprinkler discharges. When firefighters arrived, they found the apartment's two occu-

pants waiting safely outside, along with three neighbours who evacuated from an upstairs unit of the fourplex when they heard the alarm.

In the event of a fire, only the sprinkler closest to the fire will activate, spraying water directly on the fire. Ninety per cent of the time, fires are contained by the operation of just one sprinkler. Sprinklers are like home plumbing systems. Each individual sprinkler head is designed and calibrated to activate only when it senses a significant heat change, directing water to the area of the fire. If it doesn't extinguish the fire, it will contain it until the fire department arrives. In fact, sprinklers, combined with working smoke alarms, increase your chances of surviving a fire in your home by 82%.

In 1990, Vancouver, British Columbia, became the first large Canadian city to enact a residential sprinkler bylaw. In the 19 years since its enactment, while there have been a number of fire deaths in unsprinklered homes, there hasn't been a single fatality in a home that has been sprinklered.

Unfortunately, every day new homes are being constructed throughout Ontario and across Canada under the current building code, which does not require sprinklers. Over the years, the fire services have been vocal about their support for automatic sprinkler systems because they know this technology will reduce firefighter fatalities.

In fact, back in 2007 the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs wrote a position paper urging the province to mandate automatic sprinkler systems in all new homes. They're not alone in this view. For more than 25 years, nearly a dozen coroners' juries and inquests have recommended changes to the Ontario building code to include residential fire sprinklers.

I want to leave with you a story that proves that the advocacy that I and my friends in the fire service are doing regarding residential sprinkler systems is not in vain.

In July 2008, a fire broke out in a three-storey, century-old home in downtown Brampton that was being used as a supportive lodging home. Nineteen tenants lived in Genesis Lodge, many of whom suffered from mental illnesses and physical limitations. Ten years earlier, the owner of the lodging home had been given some advice by our fire officials. Largely due to the age and physical configuration of the home, he was told he should install residential fire sprinklers. The owner wisely took the advice given to him by that fire prevention officer.

The fire originated in a mattress in a front bedroom on the second storey and was set by a disgruntled and disturbed tenant who was asked to vacate the residence earlier in the day. The sprinkler system was activated in the bedroom. Firefighters arrived on scene and they only needed to remove the smouldering mattress from the room, resulting in minimal fire damage.

Imagine if he had not taken that advice. Had sprinklers not been installed, the outcome that July day could have been significantly different. Not only were all 19 resi-

dents, three staff and a cat evacuated safely, but the property itself was saved and returned to service two days after the fire. An investment 10 years ago to protect the residents and staff was paid in full that day and is a very clear example of how effective an automatic fire sprinkler system can be.

In conclusion, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the members of the fire service for their ongoing dedication. My friends in the gallery, I'm very grateful for you being here today. Specifically, I would like to thank my own fire chief official, Brian Maltby. Brian and I want to see Ontario be the first province in Canada to mandate residential sprinkler systems.

If we really want to be leaders in fire safety, we must take the next step and legislate sprinklers in all classes of occupancies wherever people reside. We owe it to the elderly, the young, our students and our physically and developmentally challenged. We need to protect what we value most.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to speak to this resolution today put forward by the member from Brampton-Springdale "that, in the opinion of this House, the recent changes to the Ontario building code (OBC) to require sprinklers in new multi-unit residential buildings over three storeys in height should be further extended to require that all new residential homes be equipped with a properly installed residential fire sprinkler system to reduce deaths and serious injuries from fires in the home, limit exposure to danger from fire of children, the elderly and the disabled and to mitigate the exposure of firefighters to toxic chemicals and the dangers of interior fire attack."

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I have no doubt that this is an issue that the member is very concerned about. I have to say I'm a little surprised that there's a resolution today on this issue, because the member has had a private member's bill debated in the past, and most recently brought forward a private member's bill—not just a resolution, as we're debating today—on this issue. In fact, it had first reading on May 7, 2008, second reading debate on May 29, 2008, and was carried on second reading on May 29, 2008, and ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. That is where that bill, Bill 72, the Municipal Residential Sprinkler Act, now resides. It's in the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

I would have thought there is not really a need for a resolution to be debated today, and that it makes more sense for the member to lobby members of her own party—of the government—to get that bill moving through the committee process and get it voted on. As I say, I'm just a little bit surprised that we're debating this resolution today when there is a bill in committee.

Having said that, I know that the last time the bill was debated, the member from Oxford, Mr. Hardeman, spoke

at length to it—his comments are all in Hansard. I am sure that firefighters would be very supportive of this move. I suspect that home builders are likely concerned with the affordability of new homes.

I would say that I'm a huge believer in smoke alarms, for sure. Smoke alarms very much save lives. We need to do everything we can to encourage people to keep the batteries in their smoke alarms and to make sure they have smoke alarms, because they are critical to people being aware that a fire is starting, and to getting out of their place of residence.

We also need to encourage people to have carbon monoxide detectors in their homes. There was a tragic accident last year. I think a gas fireplace was not properly venting, and a family perished in their home. Shortly after that incident—there was a connection to some people in my riding—the Christmas gift I bought our daughter, Abigale, was a carbon monoxide detector for her little basement apartment in the Beaches of Toronto. Her apartment is pretty small, and I think the furnace is right next to her bed, so as a father, I was quite concerned.

I think we should be doing all we can to encourage all people to be aware that not only a smoke alarm—with a battery or wired in, and checked on a frequent basis and dusted etc. so it's working—but carbon monoxide detectors should be in place and operating on each level of the home.

I certainly think there's an argument for sprinklers as well. In a perfect world, it would be great to have sprinklers everywhere. I think it's something that definitely provides protection for the structure more than for the individuals in the home. For them, the most important thing is a smoke detector. Sprinklers are certainly more significant in a larger building, especially if it's a multi-floor or multi-storey building. I note that the building code to do with multi-storey buildings has been changed recently.

I would certainly encourage the member to talk to her colleagues to get the bill she has through the Legislature. It has already passed second reading.

There are some other issues to do with firefighting that I would like to raise. I note that just this week the members from Wellington–Halton Hills and Simcoe North brought up the issue of presumptive legislation that is in place for the protection for full-time firefighters, but the government has been dragging their heels in terms of providing that same protection for volunteer firefighters.

This is important to me, because in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, virtually all the various small communities' firefighters are volunteers. They're doing a great job. They're facing the same risk as full-time firefighters. There's nothing different, but they don't have the same protection that is now given to full-time firefighters. I would ask the government to stop dragging their heels, stop discriminating against volunteer firefighters and provide the same protection for those volunteer firefighters.

We have unique places in Parry Sound–Muskoka where there are unorganized territories. We actually have

little communities up on the coast of Georgian Bay, like Britt, that are unorganized, with no municipal structure, and they still have volunteer fire departments. I've had the pleasure of being there when new trucks have been unveiled.

We have waterfront communities where it's pretty difficult to get access out to the places on the water, and where, without even a volunteer fire department, in The Archipelago and in the village of Pointe au Baril, they've fundraised and purchased fire boats so they can provide some protection out on the waterfront—without a lot of support from the municipality, at this point; the municipality is worried about taking on liability. So as a result, in Pointe au Baril, there's not really much protection for the people on the mainland, if you can believe it.

I think back to my first election in 2001, the first time I was in the small village of Kearney, northeast of Huntsville, and the first place they took me was the fire department and I saw the 1968 rusty fire truck that didn't look like it would start if a fire started. I was pleased to, in the first couple of years after being elected, go back and see their new fire truck. I was just recently there and they have another new fire truck.

But in terms of this resolution today, I would just once again encourage the member to talk to the government and try to get action from the government on moving it through the committee process and bringing it back for a third reading vote, because that's the most likely way that you might have some progress on it. I know she's very determined because I think there have been at least two times you've brought forward this private member's bill and now a resolution. Maybe you can tell us why—maybe it's just to make sure people don't forget about it—you've decided to bring it back as a private member's resolution, as it is before committee at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm really pleased to rise in the House today to have an opportunity to talk about this important issue. New Democrats have a long history of supporting this initiative, including our support for earlier bills regarding the same issue that the member from Brampton previously brought forward. New Democrats recognize the significant contribution made by the valiant firefighters who serve in our communities and protect us from harm.

I want to take this opportunity to say hello to the firefighters at Long Lake station in Sudbury. My husband actually makes them watch the parliamentary channel, so the ones who are not snoozing—not that they ever do this at the fire hall—are actually watching TV. So hello to all you guys. I guess that's why you watch, eh?

My husband, being a career firefighter, has seen his fair share of tragedy—tragedy that strikes people most times in the middle of the night. They are men and women, but often they are children. It doesn't matter how many times it happens to a career firefighter, it always has a lasting effect. It is hard on the people who go through this tragedy. It is also very hard on the fire-

fighters who witness those tragedies and wonder, "What if?" What if the smoke detector had been activated? What if this premises had had sprinkler systems available? What if? But all they can do is fight the fire, do the best they can, pick up the pieces and let the people deal with their broken lives. Firefighters are always willing to put their lives on the line every day, and by installing residential fire sprinkler systems, we would be able to assist them greatly.

New Democrats also recognize the importance of this motion as it affects our communities. Between 2000 and 2005, approximately 200 Canadians died each and every year from exposure to smoke and because of fires; most times, it's from smoke inhalation. Of those, approximately 160 die in buildings such as offices, apartments, condos and their own homes. Should we even risk one life when a minor adjustment to new houses and multi-unit residential buildings could prevent a death? We can prevent it, we can make a difference.

1440

During these hard economic times, Canadians are worried about unnecessary and expensive expenditures, yet we as New Democrats believe that you are making an investment. It is the cost that is being incurred for our future well-being. Consider it an investment in our well-being.

The Canadian Automatic Sprinkler Association reports that the price to the builder was, on average, \$1.50 per square foot. For those of us who are not from a construction background, it is not unusual for a home to cost between \$150 and \$200 per square foot. To add \$1.50, to put it in perspective, doesn't seem that much, does it? Overall, it would represent about 1% to 1.5% more of the construction cost.

We are not denying that an investment needs to be done. What we are saying is that the result is worth the upfront investment. The installation of additional units in one residential building or throughout a subdivision could even further reduce the cost per unit per habitation. This does not amount to a substantial increase in the cost of new homes, yet its long-term benefits are great and are there for the life of the building.

In Vancouver, where the law regarding residential fire sprinklers has long been enacted, it was determined that damages where the sprinklers were installed cost an average of \$1,065. In contrast, a house that did not have a sprinkler system incurred damages in the range of, on average, \$13,937. That's a difference of \$12,872, almost \$13,000, for every fire. That's money that could have been used elsewhere, that could have been more productive, not counting the human factor.

For those critics who worry about insurance costs and the likelihood of the homeowner actually purchasing and installing the systems, research has shown that interest in residential fire sprinklers has increased. It is estimated that savings on property insurance for units with sprinklers range from 10% to 15% savings on your insurance costs. Over the life of your residence, it adds up to significant savings, many times the price of installing the sprinkler system in the first place.

Additionally, a survey by the National Fire Protection Association released in June 2009 found that "municipalities actually saw a larger relative increase in construction the year after the regulations became effective, compared to the adjacent counties without sprinkler ordinances." So it's not going to slow down growth. It's not going to impede people who want to have new construction.

New homeowners are willing to step up and protect their families from risk, and this is one form of protection that the consumer is willing to pay for, because the costs of not having them are so drastic when they happen.

Ontario fire chiefs report that residential fires most often occur between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m. In talking to my husband and colleagues, I can assure you that this is when fire happens. I could even tell you that it happens more often, in Sudbury anyway, on the weekends, and that to this day the old "comes home late at night, feels like French fries, puts on a pot of hot oil and goes for a snooze" still happens in Sudbury, with drastic consequences.

We all know what an oil fire can be like. It engulfs the kitchen in no time at all, and it usually happens late at night when people are sleeping. This means that we are at our most vulnerable when the risk of danger is at its peak. Through a simple installation, this danger could be reduced.

Due to the increase in combustible building materials, the time it takes for a free-burning fire to consume a residence is between two and four minutes. It often takes people that long simply to wake up, get their bearings and realize, "What do I do now?" What about young children and those with limited mobility? How can they be expected to wake up and get out of the door in under four minutes, not taking into account that the fire may be close to an exit point?

There is a common belief out there that smoke detectors are enough to give warnings to individuals. I certainly don't want to discourage anybody from having their smoke detectors, from changing their battery every fall and every spring when we change the clock and keeping them in good working order. But a review of fatal fire data over a three-year period right here in Ontario found that of the 52,990 fires that occurred, 43% of smoke alarms did not work. The reason: missing or dead batteries. Of 197 fatalities, 67% of the alarms were not connected to power, and 5% were remote or separated from the place of fire.

If homeowners are not maintaining their smoke detectors, how can they protect themselves from harm? With the installation of residential fire sprinklers, this risk is reduced as the sprinklers work alongside the smoke detector. As has been said, the heat-sensitive element of the sprinkler detects the heat and releases water in a fine mist. Does it make a mess? Oh, absolutely. And the water coming out is not always the nice, clear water that you want it to be. But does it work? Absolutely. And does it save property? Absolutely. Does it save lives? Absolutely. The sprinkler will suppress or extinguish a

fire, preventing its spread and preventing the production of lethal smoke. As I mentioned before, most of the fatalities come from smoke inhalation. The firefighter will find those people neatly tucked in their beds, with their pyjamas on, covered with dust, and dead. They didn't burn; they died from smoke inhalation. It's a very hard sight and it brings a lot of heartache.

We have an opportunity here this afternoon to make a step in the right direction. We can pass this motion and make sure that new residences have a working sprinkler system in place, for the safety of all of Ontario.

The sprinkler also acts as a first response and allows the time needed by firefighters to arrive and start combatting uncontrollable fires.

I am running out of time here, Mr. Speaker, so all I wanted to say is that New Democrats believe that it's time to step up and protect our homes and our families. We cannot afford to endanger our families and our homes. Even one death to me and to New Democrats is too many. By installing automatic fire sprinklers in our home we can ensure the continuing safety of our loved ones in our homes and in our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you of New Democrats' full support for this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to join the debate and speak in support of the resolution by the member from Brampton–Springdale. She has been a very avid, adamant and persistent pusher, for lack of a better word—she has been very, very strong in pursuing this matter. I'm glad that it's here today and I hope that we'll move it along. I'm pleased to hear the support from the other side of the House as well.

It's quite coincidental that we are dealing with this motion today. Just prior to this one we dealt with another one from our good member from Sault Ste. Marie with respect to breast cancer screening, which was at a younger age for early detection. I guess it is boiling down to the same thing: to save lives. I can see why we have amended the building code, going from three floors and up for new units. I think it makes sense that we deal with all new units, where we offer protection to our people.

1450

At a time, I have to say, especially to my fellow members here, that we have been pushing to provide more home care to our people, especially to seniors and those who'd like to spend more time at the end their lives in their own homes, to provide more care in their home, which means that we have to provide a safer environment and a safer home as well, we can say in one way that, yes, we'd like to see more of our seniors and people with disabilities spend more of their time in their own home instead of in another facility, and then we don't provide a safe environment. I have to say this: Soon, I hope, I will provide my own private member's bill which indeed will cover all existing retirement homes and all the homes which at the moment are not covered within our own legislation. And it is because of one particular thing: the

cost. Of course there is a cost. But how do we measure saving a life versus the cost? I think this is where the member from Brampton–Springdale comes in. I think she deserves our support. If we compare the cost associated with saving a life, there is absolutely no comparison.

It has been demonstrated and proven. The record and stats are available that a property which is provided with and protected by sprinklers is much safer than one with smoke alarms.

In Toronto alone, statistics tell us that out of all injuries in 1994, 384 were due to fires in residential homes, and 17 deaths, with a loss of \$21.8 million. In 2005: 130 injuries, resulting in 13 deaths and a loss of \$315 million. In 2006, in 13 out of 14 fatalities in residential units, 93% were caused by fire. It doesn't call, it doesn't knock, it doesn't give us a previous warning, it doesn't tell us when, it doesn't tell us where, the time of day, the time of night, whether somebody's there or not; it comes at any time. I think it is time to look seriously at making this change to our building code and provide all our people, especially those who need extra care in our homes, with the necessary and safe environments.

If I may add, there are already 400 jurisdictions in North America where sprinklers are required. So I would love to see, joining our members and the member from Brampton–Springdale, us in Ontario become another jurisdiction where all new housing units will be protected by automatic sprinklers. They are safer when you consider that non-working smoke alarms outnumber no smoke alarm at all, and smoke alarms fail most often when they are disconnected, have dead batteries or are malfunctioning.

I want to leave enough time for my colleague from Ottawa Centre, who also will be speaking in support of this bill. But I hope that at the end, the House will be in support of the efforts that the member from Brampton–Springdale has put into bringing forth this motion for debate here today. I thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important motion. I want to start my remarks by praising the MPP from Brampton–Springdale for her tenacity on this issue. This is an issue which is very close to her heart, and I think it should be close to all of our hearts because Bill 72 and this motion are about saving lives. I want to congratulate the member for her work. I know she's done a lot of research and a lot of work on this with the firefighters, and I commend her for the work she's doing on behalf of her constituents and Ontarians.

Applause.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Yes, thank you.

This is an important issue. It is about saving lives. It's about saving lives of Ontarians in their homes, making sure that families—children—are going to bed in a safe home, where they do not get caught and lose their lives because of fire, which is something very common. It happens in all our communities.

This is also about protecting the lives of firefighters, people who work very hard in our communities. They go into harm's way to protect our lives, so we owe it to them to ensure that we put in place all necessary measures, that their lives are also protected. Their job is never easy, but we can reduce the challenges in terms of the kind of work and effort they put into making sure that we, as Ontarians, are safe.

I think in this province we've taken a lot of good measures in terms of fire sprinklers. As recently as last year, the building code was amended to require fire sprinklers, water sprinklers, for multi-residential units three storeys and up, which will come into effect as of April 2010—an important step to make sure that residential units are also protected. But what is lacking now is residential homes less than three storeys and whether or not in those new residential homes we should have fire sprinklers.

I wanted to take some time and say that this issue has been very much endorsed by my city, the city of Ottawa, which has been a strong proponent of requiring fire sprinklers in new homes. On April 8, 2009, the Ottawa city council passed a resolution which reads as follows:

“That council:

“(1) Approve that Ottawa Fire Services continue its commitment to maximizing the number of households equipped with working smoke alarms through the Wake Up! Get a working smoke alarm campaign.” As you know, it's also very important to have working smoke alarms.

“(2) Petition the province to adopt a progressive, incremental approach to building code amendments to expand mandatory fire sprinkler regulations to high-risk occupancies and residential buildings three storeys or less.

“(3) Communicate to the province that the city supports Bill 72, which would authorize municipalities to pass bylaws requiring the installation of fire sprinkler systems in all new construction including low-rise and single-family dwellings.

“(4) Encourage homebuilders to offer sprinkler systems as options in new home construction.

“(5) Petition the federal and provincial governments to establish an incentive (e.g. rebate) program to encourage homebuilders and homeowners to install fire sprinklers.”

As I mentioned, this particular resolution was passed by Ottawa city council on April 8, 2009, encouraging the province and supporting Bill 72—which is tabled by the member from Brampton–Springdale—to become law in Ontario.

The community and protective services committee of the Ottawa city council has done extensive research and work on this particular issue, and on February 24, 2009, issued quite a lengthy report looking at the benefits and the advantages of having fire sprinklers in residential units. Of course, one of the stakeholders—they consulted quite extensively—was the Ottawa Fire Services, which very much supports this particular measure. If I could quote from a summary of the committee report, it says:

“In keeping with a progressive, incremental approach to fire safety, the Ottawa Fire Services recommends that the province be encouraged to expand the mandatory regulations to include residential properties three storeys or less, using a phased approach, until all residential occupancies are protected. Targeting new construction is the most economical means of gradually implementing changes intended to further protect homes and lives from fire.

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“At the same time, the Ottawa Fire Services recommends that the city of Ottawa endorse Bill 72, the Municipal Residential Sprinkler Act, 2008, which has received second reading. It would authorize municipalities to pass bylaws requiring the installation of fire sprinkler systems in new residential buildings, including low-rise and single-family dwellings.”

The report goes into looking into the cost impact. Obviously it does reference the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association and their concerns that it will increase the cost by \$3,000 to \$4,000 but still comes to the conclusion that that cost is worth having, to ensure that we do protect lives of Ontarians—our families and especially our children—and the firefighters who are put in harm's way.

I'm very much in support of this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Ms. Jeffrey, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Nickel Belt, the member from York West and the member from Ottawa Centre for their thoughtful comments today.

I would like to use my remaining time to tell you about something that happened in my riding. Last week, Brampton Fire and Emergency Services hosted the sixth annual Canadian Fallen Firefighters Memorial ceremony in Ottawa. My chief, Andy MacDonald, talked about safety and the supreme sacrifice that close to a thousand firefighters have made while protecting our communities over the years. I just wanted to quote something he said when he was in Ottawa:

“All firefighters bravely protect lives and property in communities where they live and/or work. They take on a role protecting their communities, knowing full well it's a role rife with many hazards. Still they sign on ... they sign on to help others.

“Today, improvements in technology, equipment and training have helped mitigate many of the dangers first responders face. Changes in the quality of personal protective equipment protect our firefighters from almost all fire hazards.

“Improvements in the design and manufacturing of self-contained breathing apparatus make hazardous atmospheres safer. Advances in dispatching and mobile data equipment help get our firefighters on the scene quicker and better, armed with critical information that can make the job at hand easier and less hazardous.”

He closes with this comment:

“However, so much more can be done. The mandatory use of residential sprinkler systems would control and

extinguish most fires long before our fire crews arrive on the scene. It will be a move that we know will save countless lives. We will therefore persist in our efforts to impress upon our provincial and national lawmakers how important sprinklers are to the safety of all Canadians.”

I couldn't say anything better. I appreciate the support I received today. I appreciate the advocacy of the fire industry and the sprinkler industry. And to all my other friends who helped on this issue, I appreciate your support. There's more work to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Orders of the day.

KINDNESS WEEK

SEMAINE DE BONTÉ

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, in the opinion of this House, simple acts of kindness can have a profound impact on individuals and communities, and therefore the spirit of Family Day should be augmented by declaring the third week of every February as Kindness Week in the province of Ontario to help strengthen a culture of compassion, thoughtfulness and kindness, and to counter a prevailing tendency towards cynicism.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Mr. Naqvi moves private member's notice of motion number 87. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on what is, in my humble opinion, a very important motion, a motion to designate the third week of February as Kindness Week in Ontario.

At the outset I want to do some thank yous. This is very much a co-sponsored motion. I am very delighted to have the support of MPP France Gélinas, from Nickel Belt, for this resolution. She will be speaking to this motion further. I thank her for her full support.

I also want to thank MPP Sylvia Jones, who is not here today and who also very much supports this particular motion. Unfortunately, she cannot be here due to some other personal commitments, but I do want to extend thanks to her.

This is definitely and obviously not a partisan issue; this is an issue about building our communities. This is about ensuring that as Ontarians, as human beings, we extend humanity to each other by doing random acts of kindness.

I have been often asked, “Where did this idea come from?” I really want to take this opportunity to introduce and acknowledge Rabbi Reuven Bulka and his wife, Leah Bulka, who are here with us today from Ottawa. Thank you very much, Rabbi, for coming. He is truly a champion in our community and the champion behind this incredible idea.

Rabbi Bulka is a spiritual leader in Ottawa. He's a community builder and just an all around a good guy, as I like to call him. He is my rabbi, and I am very proud to have his counsel from time to time as he works very hard

in building a great community in Ottawa. In the many years of his work—he's a very knowledgeable man; I was looking at his CV, and it runs to three pages—he has written 30 or so books and he has a PhD from the University of Ottawa.

One of the striking things about Rabbi Bulka is the amount of work he has done in not just in Ottawa but all around in making sure we continue to live in a healthy and safe community where we go beyond the boundaries of religion or ethnicity or gender. He reaches out to everyone to make sure that at the end of the day we are one people and interact with each other with the utmost kindness and humanity.

As a result of the kind of work he has been doing all his life as a spiritual leader, two years ago he started Kindness Week in Ottawa. He partnered with the United Way, our school boards and media outlets—I will mention some of them a little later—and came up with the idea that we need to have a week where we commit, engage or act in random acts of kindness; where we are not just kind to our family members, which is a given—I think we should be kind to our family members, to our neighbours and to our friends—but that we should be kind to everyone, to strangers.

If we see an elderly senior walking down the street who needs help carrying his or her grocery bags, we should not think twice; we should just do it. If we want to help somebody who is perhaps disabled, even if we don't know them, we should take the time from our busy lives and do that act of kindness. So he came up with this idea—something that conceptually, if one thinks about it, we shouldn't have to think about. We don't need a designated week to do random acts of kindness, but sometimes, in our busy, hectic lives, we need to remind ourselves that it is important to think of others.

The first time this idea was undertaken was in 2008, and it was quite a success in Ottawa. Once again earlier this year, Ottawa celebrated Kindness Week with even more success, fanfare and participation. Now the rabbi has a dream to make sure that we have Kindness Week across Ontario, and here we are today making that effort, which I believe is very much worthwhile.

I did mention that I have talked to a lot of my colleagues here today, and some people, you know, sort of snickered—supportive, but saying, “So what is this about?” In Ottawa, of course, this has received a lot of media attention, and I want to read to that point from an article that appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* on February 16, 2008. Talking about Kindness Week, it says, “If all this sounds a bit silly and sentimental, a tad touchy-feely, well, it's not. The idea reflects long-recognized psychological theories that behaviour can be changed through habituation. In this case, we become more kindly by repeated acts of kindness.

“That, in a nutshell, is the purpose of Kindness Week, says Rabbi Reuven Bulka, who came up with the idea two years ago and has been working toward this week ever since.”

The article quotes Rabbi Bulka: “This is a chance to make kindness a habit. It's not that we are bad people.

It's just that we get caught up in the hurly-burly of life and we don't think to be kind."

That's exactly what we are trying to achieve here through declaring the third week of February Kindness Week in Ontario.

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The third week of February is a great time to observe Kindness Week: first, because the third Monday of every February now is Family Day in Ontario—it's two years in running since 2008. It's a time when—we're in the middle of winter, so it's kind of cold—we get together with our families and really focus on celebrating our families. What better time to observe Kindness Week in Ontario? What better time to instill in our children that it should be a habit that we be kind to everyone, not only those who are familial to us but also to strangers. Hence, the third week of February should be kindness week in Ontario, as is being observed in Ottawa.

I mentioned earlier that there have been many partners in this. Of course, this is a voluntary endeavour. In Ottawa, we've been doing this in co-operation with the United Way, the Ottawa Police Service, the city of Ottawa, Volunteer Ottawa, Interfaith Ottawa, and many social service agencies like the Good Companions Seniors' Centre, Glebe Centre and SCO Health Service. All our four school boards—both English and French, public and Catholic—are involved so that we can get kids involved, and there are activities around kids during Kindness Week. And media outlets such as the Ottawa Sun, the Ottawa Citizen, CTV, A Channel, Rogers and CHIN Radio are also very much engaged in promoting and encouraging Ottawans to be kind during Kindness Week. So we have had tremendous support and activities around that, and the committee has done great work.

I just wanted to give you some example of the kinds of things—small things—that are being done to encourage people to be kind. One of the ideas that has been going on for a couple of years is the kindness card, which carries a pay-it-forward message. More than 200,000 cards are distributed throughout the community at events, in schools, workplaces and restaurants by the Kindness Crew.

We have the Ottawa Police Service giving kindness citations to individuals who are caught being kind during Kindness Week. But these ticket recipients have nothing to worry about because these citations are actually coupons to be redeemed at a local bakery or bagel shop—but again a small incentive to encourage people to be kind.

There is the Drive for Drivers project, where volunteers are recruited so that seniors can be taken for shopping and for their medical appointments. There's also a Kindness Crew bus tour, which basically takes groups and individuals to the Ottawa Food Bank, for example, or Bruyère Continuing Care, Good Companions, the Ottawa Mission—all these great organizations in my riding of Ottawa Centre—so that we can help others who need our help.

The other thing, I think, and probably one of the best parts about this week, is the engagement of our young

people. The organizers of Kindness Week have put together a teacher's guide. In fact, if you go on their website, kindottawa.ca, you can download this—it's about a six- or seven-page document. It outlines different activities for teachers during Kindness Week as to the kinds of things you can do—again, instilling a habit, a habit we should just have regardless, but instilling a habit in our young people: that they should be kind, that they should be caring, that they should be compassionate towards other people.

There are a lot of interesting ideas here for reading and writing and math and science. I'll just highlight a few of them.

For example, one of the ideas is to “ask students to perform an act of kindness for a stranger and then write an essay describing the experience—how it made them feel and the reaction of the person who received their kindness.” Make our young people, make our students think about what it means to be kind.

“Learn about how pollution and trash affect the environment, including animals and plants. Discuss how kindness towards our environment can help humans, animals and plants”—taking the concept to a level where we should all be involved, that we are responsible for the earth and the environment we live in, and that we have a responsibility to be kind toward our community, not only in terms of the people we relate with but also with Mother Earth, another notion of kindness that is being encouraged through this program.

My favourite one: “Adopt a nearby park and learn about the ecosystems within that park. Work together to keep it clean and beautiful.” This is just to give you some examples.

Actually, I want to read one more for young people that I also like a lot: “Meet with senior citizens and record their memories of the community when they were growing up. Compare their likes and dislikes with those of young people today. Compare prices from then to now”—a simple exercise, but an exercise that I think really puts us in touch with our past, with our elders, to learn from their experiences, especially from those who fought in the war and have ensured our freedom.

I encourage all members to support this motion to declare the third week of February Kindness Week in Ontario. It's a great idea that has come out of Ottawa and that I think we can export to the rest of the province to ensure that we continue to live in a kind, caring and compassionate Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Certainly I would support the private member's motion that has been put forward. It is important, obviously. I believe that people in the province of Ontario have a history of being very kind, very compassionate and very thoughtful toward one another.

We only have to reach back to the pioneer days and remember the early pioneers who settled here—people from many different countries and many different cultures—and how these individuals and families worked

together to build their homes, clear the land and build towns and communities.

In my own community I am surrounded by the Mennonites, and their culture is all about helping one another, continuing to demonstrate compassion and kindness and thoughtfulness.

If we take a look at the many service clubs in our community—whether it's Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Kinsmen, Kinettes, and the list goes on and on—throughout the time they have been established in the province of Ontario, many of them originating elsewhere, certainly the reason for their being is to show their support for their fellow citizens and to raise funds for their fellow citizens in order that the quality of life not only for people in our own province but throughout the world can be improved. I think the people in Ontario and Canada have a tradition of demonstrating kindness, compassion and thoughtfulness toward their fellow citizens.

I'm pleased to learn what is going on in the city of Ottawa, and I appreciate the role the rabbi has played and appreciate his being here. However, I would say to you that our community, Kitchener-Waterloo, also has a day. In November this year we will be celebrating the second Random Act of Kindness Day.

What I like about what has happened in Ottawa and in Kitchener-Waterloo is that these have been spontaneous. I don't think you can dictate to a community or to people that they undertake activities. I have been so impressed with the enthusiasm of the Kitchener-Waterloo community. This day originated last year, under the auspices of the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation and their CEO, Rosemary Smith. Basically, it was a huge success because it was a grassroots initiative and people were encouraged to participate and to do for others and demonstrate, in some small way, an act of kindness to another individual.

1520

What happens in our community—people are given the opportunity on that day to slow down from their busy lives and to express appreciation and say thanks. We live, in my community, and I believe other communities, where there's so much kindness happening every day. What we do, in that Random Act of Kindness Day, is we take that opportunity to recognize when somebody does something nice for us, but our citizens are also encouraged to do something in return.

We circulate cards throughout the community. The cards are going to encourage the cardholder to perform a simple act of kindness for someone. It could be a neighbour, it could be a friend, a co-worker or, often, somebody you don't even know. You do something, then you hand the card to the person and you encourage that person to do something kind for someone else. So you pass it on.

I can tell you, for last year's inaugural Random Act of Kindness Day, there were businesses, there were organizations, there were schools, there were individuals and there were members of our media who took up the call to do something nice for their fellow citizens.

"It was exciting to see ... people—young and old—making an effort to be friendlier and nicer to others on that ... day," said Debb Ritchie, who is chair of the Friends of the Foundation Committee, a group of volunteers who have been spearheading this initiative along with the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

As the member has said, there are so many different ways in which you can demonstrate and do a kind act. You can buy someone a simple thing like a coffee. You can congratulate somebody on a job well done. You can act as a sounding board for another person, perhaps somebody who's not having a really great day, or someone that you know has some issues that need to be dealt with. You can do something as simple as holding open a door for someone who has their hands full. But no matter what it is, a small or large act of kindness, you have that opportunity to connect with another human being in your community, to give them the card and to encourage them to do something else for someone that day.

This year again we're going to make available to people in Kitchener-Waterloo those cards, give them the chance to touch the life of another person and do what they can to make our world a better place in which to live. This type of activity, which the member is encouraging and has happened in Ottawa, gives everybody a chance to put a human face on our community.

This week, on Monday the 14th, we launched the Random Act of Kindness Day for this year. Ms. Smith was there, the media was there, the Bank of Montreal was there, the Kitchener-Waterloo Record was there, law firms were there and RIM was there. Basically, it was to raise the public awareness campaign in advance of Random Act of Kindness Day, which this year is scheduled for November 13, and to also encourage the media to do what they could to encourage everybody in our community to participate.

It's impressive how in one year the enthusiasm from the public and business and the media has grown. I guess that's what it's all about. Hopefully, someone in communities throughout the province of Ontario, and perhaps with the urging of this bill, which wants to proclaim a week in February as Kindness Week, will take the initiative and make sure that whatever happens in that community responds to and reflects what that community would like to be doing.

I think it is certainly worthy that we would continue to do what our ancestors before us did, and that is to demonstrate our love, our concern, our caring and our compassion to our fellow human beings.

For many individuals on that day, just having someone smile, buy them a coffee, open the door, tell them they've done a good job—it's simple things like that that I can tell you certainly make a difference to the way somebody feels about themselves.

So I would support this initiative. I'm just wondering now what this is going to do to our tradition, for the second year, of celebrating our Random Act of Kindness Day in November. Are we going to move to February? I don't know.

Mr. Dave Levac: Every day.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Every day. My colleague from Brantford has just said—and I have a lot of respect for my colleague from Brantford—we should be celebrating doing unto others as we would have them do unto us.

So I applaud the member for bringing it forward, I applaud the rabbi who played a role, and all the others who have been involved in Ottawa, and certainly the people in my community of Kitchener–Waterloo.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate? La députée pour Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je crois que c'est la première fois qu'on me reconnaît en français. Je l'apprécie beaucoup; merci.

I am very pleased to co-sponsor the Kindness Week motion with the member from Ottawa Centre. When the member first approached me about that idea I thought instantly, "This is a no-fail. This is a good idea. This is something that I support, and I'm sure this is something that everybody in this House can support."

The motion reads: "That, in the opinion of this House, simple acts of kindness can have a profound impact on individuals and communities, and therefore the spirit of Family Day should be augmented by declaring the third week of every February as Kindness Week in the province of Ontario to help strengthen a culture of compassion, thoughtfulness and kindness, and to counter a prevailing tendency towards cynicism."

I put my signature on this. How can we go wrong? This is something good, and this is something that each and every one of us should actively promote.

It is also very fitting that in the darkest and coldest days of the winter, we should recognize acts of kindness to remind all of us that we are part of a caring community right across this province. I live in northern Ontario, and let me tell you that February in Nickel Belt tends to be really, really cold. It is also a time of the year when people are very much aware that you need your neighbours, you need the people around you to keep you safe. Most of the roads in Nickel Belt don't have lights; it is pitch-dark at 4:30 or 5 o'clock. But I can tell you that if your car or truck breaks down, the next car or truck that comes around is going to stop and help you out, because you never know if next time it's going to be your car that breaks down when it's 40 below, it's pitch-dark and you don't know what's wrong. Those are little acts of kindness, and I think it is very appropriate that we're going to be putting a special emphasis on kindness during the harshest winter months.

At that time of the year, you realize how vulnerable you can be, especially if you're outside in the elements. You also recognize how we depend on one another, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo said. In days past, people realized how much they were interdependent. They were maybe more forward with acts of kindness. Well, it is time to bring this back, because acts of kindness are a good thing throughout the year, but to make a point of celebrating them, we make them more important.

We put a realization that kindness is something important and it is something that is worth celebrating and mentioning, and this is what we'll be doing in Ontario in the third week of February.

1530

I think of the countless acts of kindness that people show to each other every day in my community and every day in the large riding of Nickel Belt. Nickel Belt goes to the north to Foleyet and Metagami; it goes to the south to the French River, by Alban and Estaire; it goes to the west to Walden and Whitefish and Beaver Lake; it goes to the east to Coniston and Wahnapiatae and Skead and Garson and all of that area, for those of you who know northern Ontario. But there is something that binds us all together. We are all residents of Ontario, we're all proud to be, and we're all kind to one another, some of the time. This motion is to make it most of the time.

I want to recognize Wayne Earl, a resident who helps his neighbour clear the snow. His neighbour—across the street, actually—is elderly. He has been doing this for years and I'm guessing he'll be doing it for a long time to come. He doesn't get paid for it; he doesn't ask for it. He just does it. He has a snow blower and the other guy is a little bit elderly and certainly would not be able to shovel. So Wayne just goes out and does it.

I also know Léo, who drives my neighbour on the right side of my house, who has to go for dialysis. She has kidney problems. And one of my other neighbours drives her to the hospital, which is a good 25 minutes' ride from where I live. I can name you many other people who do this.

It doesn't have to be a big act of kindness. We've talked about keeping the door open. We've talked about buying a cup of coffee, giving somebody a chance to talk to you if they don't feel quite up to snuff that day. We could talk about community members who band together and provide very generous support to fundraising activities to assist other community members who need help due to illness, a fire or a personal tragedy.

We had a corporal—Corporal Kerr, actually—who was deployed in Afghanistan and suffered a horrible injury. He lost both his legs and one arm. He's now in rehab but will be coming back to Sudbury this fall. The community has organized a fundraiser to help build an adapted house that he can live in with his family that will accommodate the disability that he sustained in Afghanistan. There are hundreds and I hope by now thousands of people who are gathering pledges to help Corporal Kerr so that he can come back to Sudbury as a hero.

As I mentioned, Nickel Belt is made up of many communities that exhibit the true northern Ontario hospitality and a genuine sense of caring for one another. There are numerous examples of kindness each and every day throughout Ontario and throughout the province, but what this motion would do is—not that we only need to be kind that week, but that we would recognize it; we would make it important.

I can still remember many years ago—I was a new driver at the time, so that's more than 20 years ago—they

had this program called “pay it forward.” I had never heard about it, but it was at the time where you had those toll booths. You would drive your car on a new highway and all of a sudden you had to stop, throw 25 cents in that little basket, and there was a person sitting there watching you throw your little 25 cents in the little basket, and then you would be free to go again. Well, when I came to the little basket, the light was already green, as if I could go. So I was rather surprised—happy and surprised. Then the person standing there told me about pay it forward. I didn’t know what that was. It was basically that whoever had been in front of me had paid it forward. He—or she, because I never knew who that person was—had put 25 cents in the basket for me so that I could just zoom through.

It was my first encounter with pay it forward and I thought it was a darn good idea—good enough that I put my 25 cents in the basket and said, “Well, here you go. For the next person who comes up, they can pay it forward also.”

I had two friends with me in the car at the time, and we talked about it for a good half hour. Just because whoever that was had done this random act of kindness—he or she had put 25 cents in the basket for me—we were all a little bit happier. We all felt special that somebody had done that for us, not knowing that it would be us who would be the next car going through. Here, again, was an opportunity to talk about being kind and how once you start to talk about it, it kind of motivates people to continue being kind and doing other acts of kindness.

Now, I see that the time is running away. I also want to recognize Rabbi Reuven Bulka and his wife, who started Kindness Week in Ottawa two years ago as a way to re-engage the community in random acts of kindness and compassion. It was a good idea, and I think your leadership will pay off throughout the province of Ontario, from the nods that I’m getting from the people around here. It is, I guess, an idea whose time has come, because everybody seems to be on board.

He meant to strengthen a culture of compassion, kindness and thoughtfulness and to prevent cynicism, which we see so often. Kindness Week is about getting people to think about how they can be more kind in their own lives and therefore encouraging all citizens to engage in acts of kindness throughout their lives.

We sometimes have problems in some of our schools in Sudbury with kids being bullied, and one of the programs to change this is called the Roots of Empathy. I think that this program can also have an impact because if you teach young children how to be kind, it becomes a habit that they will carry for all their lives. If they are kind, they will have more friends. They will have a better social network that will help them stay healthy longer and grow up to be happy, productive, healthy adults. We all know that social inclusion and social networks are such important determinants of health. Those are the kinds of seeds that keep people healthy if we plant them into our young people.

This has an opportunity to do great things. Will it change the world? No, I don’t think so, but I’m hopeful

that it makes us reflect on how we, as individuals, are part of our community and we can perform acts of good for others in our community. We can be kind, we can be caring and we can be compassionate, and we should take time to realize that.

Ça me fait plaisir d’appuyer la proposition, que j’ai traduite par la Semaine de bonté. Vraiment, c’est une semaine pour nous permettre de reconnaître la bonté, l’empathie et la compassion chez nos collègues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim Brownell: It’s certainly a pleasure this afternoon to have a few minutes to speak on the motion by my good colleague from Ottawa Centre. I’m very thrilled that this is an idea that’s being built on the good work coming from eastern Ontario. With my riding being in eastern Ontario and Rabbi Bulka and his wife being here, I’m quite excited about that and excited that the member from Ottawa Centre has taken that idea and the expressions of kindness that we see every day, and is building on them to recognize a very special week in the province. I congratulate you on that.

I would be remiss this afternoon if I didn’t mention, and especially through the technology of the cameras over there picking up this debate and sending it through the waves back to Long Sault, my mother, who would say that this is an important bill. My mother spent two and a half months this summer in the hospital, and when I think of the daily acts of kindness that were given to my mom and the daily acts of kindness that continue to be extended through the caregivers and family and friends as she convalesces at home—you know, this is important. Some may say this is a fluffy little motion, but it is an important motion.

1540

As a retired schoolteacher, I instilled the idea of kindness in my students. I’d think, too, of every year having, during our carnival, a Kindness Day, when we recognized and thought about those random acts of kindness that we expected our students to do.

It also builds on, when I think of businesses around the communities—Durant’s Flowers. They’re members of FTD, the Florists’ Transworld Delivery service, and once again, on September 9, they took part in Good Neighbour Day. This is another example of where in our communities we want to instill that idea of kindness. With that initiative, they give away a dozen roses. You keep one and give the other 11 to people who should be recognized, and most of it’s for the kindness they do—to those who receive the flowers. So I think it’s wonderful to see.

Just a few moments ago I saw a random act of kindness here in the Legislature, when my good friend from Brant gave up a little bit of his time this afternoon so that somebody else would be able to speak on this motion. So it’s being demonstrated right here in the House.

I want to congratulate the member and wish him well, and I’m sure this will receive all-party support here in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to join in the debate in support of Kindness Week. I'm especially pleased to support this motion by my Ottawa colleague MPP Yasir Naqvi. It's an idea that was started in Ottawa by our own Rabbi Bulka, and I'm pleased to see that he has taken the time, with his wife, to be here today for this important motion.

The opposite of being kind, I suppose, is bullying. We know that anti-bullying is being taught in our schools. It is an issue that is very important. What we're doing here today, I suppose, would show some leadership there, because we don't often show in our lives that many good examples of kindness to our youth. There's not enough evidence of that kindness in our daily lives. If you follow the media, meanness seems to reign many times.

In our own community, I think people from Ottawa would know that Max Keeping is always rewarding and praising individuals who show kindness, especially those showing kindness to children in our community. So, Max, you're leading the way and we certainly will try to follow.

Establishing this Kindness Week, the third week in February, near Family Day, sounds like a very positive action. Let's help the work of kindness, promoting that it goes on in our schools, and show the good example to our youth. In today's tough economic times, it is especially important to look around and show that extra kindness to our families, friends, neighbours and to the larger community.

I challenge all of the members here to organize a Kindness Rewards Day in their community, tied closely to Family Day, where acts of kindness are acknowledged and rewarded, possibly with kindness medals. That would be a different type of medal than I've been used to.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this today. I know that the motion being presented here and the success it has had already in Ottawa will change Ontario to a certain degree.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member for Davenport.

Applause.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you for the applause.

I wish to thank the hard-working member from Ottawa Centre and Rabbi Bulka for bringing this very thoughtful resolution forward.

Even while thinking about my small presentation today, I felt that some positive feelings came about, and I asked myself, "Why? Even thinking about kindness, you feel better." That's because kindness cannot be separated from other emotions. It belongs and lives with a family of positive emotions. If you had a choice, what kind of family would you rather live with, one that stresses kindness, forgiveness, gratitude and compassion or one that lives with fear, egotism, hate and cynicism? Those are the choices that we have. We can't choose which family we want to belong to, but certainly we have a choice in what way we want to structure our own

families and what we want to teach our own children. Let's therefore resolve to build these positive emotions, because we can have this choice.

In short, just the thought of kindness affects the body. As the member from Nickel Belt indicated, it has a direct effect on the health of the individual. Just think of a simple thought; the body will follow up with substantial changes. For instance, a scary thought will give you, or most of us, goosebumps, and the consequences follow up. An erotic thought will cause blood to rush into certain parts of your body. An embarrassing thought will turn you hot and red due to sort of a chemical shower in your face. Even the perception of danger, just the perception of danger or the perception of kindness—just the perception alone will cause a chain reaction of neural and hormonal changes, putting your body in a state of readiness. If it is a question of fear, of course, the body will get ready to act, to run away or to fight. It's the fight-or-flight response. Your heart will beat faster. More fat and cholesterol and sugar are pumped through the bloodstream. Your stomach secretes acid; hormones are released which can jam your immune system. All kinds of changes take place by a simple thought.

Imagine: We have a choice of what to think and how to think—a thought of kindness or a thought of fear, dislike or hate—but the changes in the body, as the member from Nickel Belt indicated, will take place no matter what thought you choose to think. Imagine how powerfully a thought affects the body. Consequently, it is easy to see what kinds of thoughts and what kinds of feelings and what kinds of issues we should have with our own minds. It is easy to see.

If I had time, we would hook ourselves up to a lie detector test and there we could really see what's going on, because the monitor in the lie detector test shows you that the very small thought of a lie shows up on the monitor—wow. So here we have a direct relationship of how a minor thought—not even an emotive or a big emotional thought; just a minor thought—affects every cell in your body, because it shows up on the monitor. Think about that. That's powerful.

So we have a choice to make: a choice for the positive emotions or a choice towards the negative emotions.

Let's talk very briefly about the kinds of kindnesses in the office or the acts of kindness here, or the acts that we can adjust to anxiety as well, in stressful experience—I'm looking at the members at the table, because they have to be in an office environment right now. Even they, if they're anxious, because the body reacts to anxiety and feelings of that kind, are under stress. The stresses, therefore, are directly affecting their bodies.

How does that affect society as large? Let's have a quick look at that. We can see, for instance—I've got some statistics here—that in 2006 a survey was done that shows that more and more of the working population suffer from stress, anxiety and depression. In fact, 62% of full- and part-time employees—that's massive—experience a physical health problem resulting from stress, anxiety and depression, and they maintain their daily

work routine. In fact, it says here that they essentially come to work ill. So acts of random kindness will help all of us to get better and make all of us feel better.

Today, in an era of wireless communication devices such as hand-held devices and laptops, according to the survey, 83% of Canadian workers who rely on these electronic tools for the job said that these tools increased their stress levels, causing them to live their lives on call. So my friends, in short, it is easy to see what kinds of thoughts we should be thinking.

It is also easy to see, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo indicated earlier, that it is really in the tradition of Christianity—and for that matter, Judaism—that acts of kindness are encouraged. It was the great master of Christianity, the son of God, who actually said to love your God with all your heart, with all your might, and then something much more important for us right here in terms of this bill, and that is to love your neighbour as yourself. To that end, we are reminded to do that on a daily basis, and this bill might do it. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate? Mr. Naqvi, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you to all the members for their kindness. I really do sincerely appreciate it.

I want to especially thank the member from Nickel Belt for her enthusiasm and support for this resolution, my first endeavour in having a co-sponsored motion, and I think it was a success, so thank you very much to MPP Gélinas and also to MPP Sylvia Jones for her support. It is unfortunate that she can't be here.

But I think from what we heard in the discussion, we can see that, in our communities, we are already doing a lot of great things. We are already taking steps to make sure that we live in a kinder and gentler community. I was heartened to see the new initiative starting in Kitchener–Waterloo, through the member there. Hopefully we can work with the rabbi and see if we can consolidate all these different events that are taking place in our various communities to foster and promote kindness and observe the third week of February, along with Family Day, as Kindness Week in Ontario.

But at the end of the day, I think the idea is that we continue to live in a kind society where hope and humanity is the motto, is the manifesto by which we operate towards each other; that we don't use any artificial barriers—that I don't know this person, or this person is of a different background—as a means of keeping away from each other, but actually rely on our humanity, our common bond, to be kind to each other.

So I very much appreciate all the members' support for this motion. I encourage you all to please, if this motion is passed in a few minutes from now, go back to your communities perhaps speak with various religious institutions in your communities, perhaps with the United Way, and consider having a Kindness Week in your community in the third week of February so that we can all share the same message across the province. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Thank you very much. The time provided for private members' public business has expired. We will deal with the ballot items after a brief recess until 4 o'clock.

The House suspended proceedings from 1553 to 1601.

BREAST CANCER SCREENING ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE DÉPISTAGE DU CANCER DU SEIN

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Members, please take your seats. We will deal first with ballot item number 25, standing in the name of Mr. Orazietti.

Mr. Orazietti has moved second reading of Bill 200, An Act to increase access to breast cancer screening. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Mr. Orazietti.

Mr. David Orazietti: I'd ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): So ordered.

FIRE SAFETY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): We will deal next with private member's notice of motion number 105.

Mrs. Jeffrey has moved private member's notice of motion number 105. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Wouldn't it be nice if the federal House was like this?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Peace is in the air.

KINDNESS WEEK

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Finally, we'll deal with private member's notice of motion number 87.

Mr. Naqvi has moved private member's notice of motion number 87. Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): All matters related to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move adjournment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The minister has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? So ordered.

This House is adjourned until Wednesday, September 23, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1603.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

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

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

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Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Brotten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB) Gélinas, France (NDP)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville Nickel Belt	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Linda (LIB) Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud Trinity–Spadina Cambridge	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB) McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP) Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB) Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Huron–Bruce Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O’Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L’hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l’Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L’hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L’hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l’opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L’hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L’hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l’Énergie et de l’Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L’hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L’hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L’hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l’Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L’hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l’Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l’opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	St. Paul’s	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Leeanna Pendergast
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Laurel C. Broten, Helena Jaczek
Kuldip Kular, Amrit Mangat
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
David Oraziotti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Yasir Naqvi, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Ted Arnott, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Sophia Aggelonitis, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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