



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 23 September 2009

Mercredi 23 septembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 septembre 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SECTOR EXPENSES REVIEW ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'EXAMEN DES DÉPENSES DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 17, 2009, on the motion for second reading of 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): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It is a real pleasure to be back in the Legislature after a couple of days of paying attention to rural Ontario. It is my privilege as the critic here to address the opposition's response to Bill 201. I would imagine that most members have had the opportunity to review the bill and to consider what it indeed intends to accomplish. In the very limited time I have, which is about an hour, I will try to spend a considerable time on the merits of the case, and also some glaring examples of where this legislation may not be the appropriate way to deal with the issue.

We reserve judgment, as the opposition party. What we are impressed with is the urgency at this time for the government to start to speak towards and address the issue of accountability and transparency, which they talked about in the election in 2003 endlessly but have done very little about, after the lottery scandals and the—you could call it the summer from hell. Well, it isn't from hell; it's the summer of a lot of scandals that erupted while they were out vacationing.

Without trying to be trivial, I just want to read the explanation and purpose clause here; it's very important. "The purpose of the Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009 is to enable the Integrity Commissioner to review the expense claims of certain persons who are employed in or appointed to public entities." I'm wondering why they have to appoint an arm's-length agency in the first instance. The reason I say this is that it has been the

tradition for 100 years or more in this place and other Legislatures that the minister who is acting on behalf of the crown is in fact responsible for due diligence and oversight. After all, the ministers themselves don't actually run the ministries. They appoint qualified, legitimate people whom I have the highest regard for, our public sector civil servants, to actually run the day-to-day business. These are large corporations. In fact, if you look at it, Mr. Speaker—you'd be very familiar; you've been here many years—you would know that the budget is now over \$100 billion.

In that, there is an executive committee, much like a board of directors: cabinet, who are really the government officials who set the policy direction and allocation of resources to the execution of these policies. In that, they have oversight. We would all agree, I think on both sides, that the ministry and the cabinet—specifically Premier McGuinty, respectfully—have the final say. As the old saying goes, the buck stops here. I think it was a famous US President who said that. In this case here, just reading the first phrase in this explanatory note, it would appear that they are going to skate around, blur or just transfer some of these important responsibilities to an arm's-length agency, the Integrity Commissioner.

Now, having been a member here, as all members have—mine is closing in on 15 years, which I have enjoyed and hope to continue to enjoy, at the leisure of the people in the riding of Durham, of course—I have to file a report to the Integrity Commissioner each year, which is due this weekend; I remind members to get those forms filled in. It's sort of like doing your income tax twice. I don't see why we don't just send in our income tax; I mean, I've already done that and paid for it. But anyway, I'll get on topic here.

We all know that we have the highest regard for the Integrity Commissioner's office and the work they have done. I'll refer to a specific case here shortly. The work they have done is commendable and a good point of reference as a resource to the minister, who could actually consult with them from time to time on issues. In fact, I think this minister has consulted with past Integrity Commissioners on various issues personally, because he has been a member of cabinet for most of his time here—I think all of his time. In fact, I would say he has worked very hard at being a minister, and I think in this case here perhaps the Premier is shuffling it off to him to sort of make sure this thing isn't getting a lot of press.

It really is, ultimately, our opinion that the ministers, the Premier, cabinet as a whole and Management Board—I think they have the qualifications to have the

oversight, the ability and the integrity, hopefully, to do the job. But it appears that there are a few times, with OLG and eHealth, that they haven't done the job—it appears. The Premier had promised that they were going to get PricewaterhouseCoopers to look into it, but they didn't. Maybe they were afraid of what they'd find. I have no idea.

Does the Premier have to agree with the advice of this arm's-length agency, whether it's from the WSIB, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board—do they have to agree? No, they don't actually have to agree. They can take the advice and they can shelve it, file it, look at it, refer it. They can do lots of different things with it. They don't have to follow with direct action on these things from these outside, arm's-length agencies.

But I'll go on here: “Any entity in the public service in Ontario or in Ontario's broader public sector may be prescribed in the regulations as a public entity that is subject to this act. An expenses officer will be prescribed for each public entity (separate expenses officers maybe prescribed for employees and appointees). This individual is required to submit the expense claims of certain persons designated in the regulations to the commissioner for review.”

Now, it's my understanding that the commissioner's office today has under 10 employees. I know a couple of them personally because I've been there and actually consulted; I think they're terrific people, with integrity as the number one thing on the checklist of what I think of them. It's my understanding that there could be as many as, say, I don't know, at least several thousand people who would be required to submit these expense reports. If they do them, say, 10 times a year, there could be hundreds of thousands of these expense reports that have to be filed. I just can't imagine the amount of paperwork and how many accountants they're actually going to need.

0910

To get qualified accountants, chartered accountants, CAs, CGAs—they're also qualified as far as I understand—and CMAs, certified management accountants—these people should probably make, let's say, \$70,000 to \$200,000 a year. I'm concerned that they are creating a whole new bureaucracy here, like huge, perhaps as many as hundreds of these qualified professional auditors to overlook these.

What's missing here is leadership in the first instance, saying, “Look, let's start.” I think that the ministers—I know that each of us, if we have expenses each month, are required to file, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure you do, with the exception of the Speaker's office, of course. They don't have to file. They can file but they're not public. I think they should be public. I'll say on the record today that any of these trips, junkets—sometimes Peter Kormos calls them junkets—should all be public. After all, we are in the trust of the public, spending public money, and we're saving it.

On the explanatory note—I don't really have quite enough time to get through the whole bill because of

some of the opinions I have on it—“The Commissioner may review the expense claims of designated persons for each public entity and determine if the claims are allowable in accordance with standards set out in the regulations. These regulations may incorporate by reference government of Ontario policies and directives.”

I worked for a large company—I won't mention the name because it's not the same company any longer—for 30 years, and we always had to file expenses. There were clear directions on what the meal allowance was. There were clear directions that there was no alcohol involved, period. You are representing the corporation, you shouldn't be involved in it, and I endorsed that and followed those rules for 30-plus years at the company I was with. I did travel to various parts of the world, and I did so with some apprehension. When you went to other countries that weren't as safe as Canada—let's put it that way—but I always at the end of that filed an expense report. They were audited, generally by the accounting department. There were clear rules. We were given a manual—“Here are the rules.” If you are in violation of those rules, I think there should be consequences for breaking the law. I think in this case here, I would assume that the Premier—well, it's the Minister of Finance who fired the person from OLG.

Now, it's my understanding that the person from eHealth—some of these people are going to sue the government. It's my understanding that they've filed a claim and these claims are going to ask for \$8 million. If you looked at it, it looked good. It really looked good that the Minister of Finance stepped up and fired the people, like it's very decisive action. But was there just cause? Because in here they're admitting that they are going to set out in regulation what is an appropriate expense. Did they not give them clear instructions? People making \$200,000 a year plus—I think she was making \$400,000. It's an unbelievable amount of money and it is questionable what they actually did.

In the lottery business, OLG, I'm even curious why they have such a big bureaucracy. I can't imagine why they have these people. They are all appointments, of course, and I think those appointments are sometimes people who know the government, sometimes they're friends of the people who know the government and sometimes they're just friends of the government. It doesn't mean they aren't capable, I suppose, and that isn't my job here. My job here is not to cast aspersions on any of these, but I would expect a person with a job making \$400,000 a year—one example is that they spent \$25,000 on one speech. This one this morning is free but, of course, you often get what you pay for.

My point here really is that \$25,000—my goodness, I think for some of the clerical people that's all they make in a year in this very building. If I look at the young pages here this morning, and I might suggest that—I have a page from my riding and I'd like to take time just to mention that. So far, she has done an impressive job and, as far as I am concerned, has no expenses to be reported at this time.

In the event that they designate in regulations who should report what—I know that there is a statement of our entitled expenses; I have a copy with me now. It's out there now. I don't know what this new set of rules is all about, except to clarify the rules that exist. They have existed for many years and, I think, have been well done. There have been occasions; I remember that Cam Jackson was accused, and in fact resigned from cabinet.

This leads to the diceyness here. This is the nuts and bolts of this legislation. Does the commissioner's ruling have to be followed by the Premier? Should a person be sanctioned in some way for a breach of the rules—that, ultimately, is the question as we see it—or is this just a way of obfuscating or getting around the rules? In my view, the minister isn't running the ministry on a day-to-day basis. He's directing, in a policy sense, and allocating resources, which is very important—don't get me wrong—but he's not running it; he's not directing traffic. Chief Fantino is doing that on the highways, and he's probably running more than that. But he's certainly running that much, I know for sure, and, I would say, pretty much doing a safe job. And I'm happy that they're going to be implementing this ban on the use of cell-phones while driving. I think that's very important, and they're going to have a tough time enforcing that. But there is a case where there are rules and you have enforcement and you have consequences. That's why this relates to Bill 201, which I'm discussing this morning.

I'm going on to the next explanatory note in the very limited time that's left. "If the commissioner determines that all or part of a claimed expense is not allowable, the commissioner shall notify the expenses officer"—there are two layers of bureaucracy here: the commissioner, who is going to do the audit, and the expenses officer in the ministry. Why don't they just give the expenses officer the authority to say, "Look, you're claiming alcohol here; not allowable. Please return the money." And if it's not, they should be sanctioned somehow, depending how expensive the wine was.

The commissioner may review the expenses of the designated person for each public entity and determine if claims are allowable in accordance with standards set out in regulation. If the commissioner determines that all or part of a claim is not allowable, the commissioner shall notify the expenses officer and may require repayment of all or part of the expense and may recommend other remedial action—hmm, remedial action. Have them read the instructions on expenses again, perhaps.

"The expenses officer is required to report back to the commissioner as to whether the expense has been repaid or the remedial action undertaken." Talk about red tape. Who's got the button here? Do you understand? We've got the ministry and their own person who's looking after this stuff; we've got the minister overseeing that, who would see and approve expenses that exceed a certain amount or special trips outside the province, probably for valid reasons, but they should be able to say, "No, you can't do this or that." Maybe you shouldn't be able to travel first class or whatever it is; I don't know what the rules are, exactly.

The point is, there are a lot of layers here. There's the minister's oversight within the ministry, and I get that; I think they're qualified people. All I'm asking is that they step up and do their job. If somebody within the ministry is allowed to break those rules, they should be sanctioned, and it's up to the minister and the Premier to deal with that. Now we've got this other person, the Integrity Commissioner, whom they can blame: "Well, the Integrity Commissioner didn't report." What's that about? It's just another layer of bureaucracy to hide from the obvious thing of the executing of your duties.

"Each year, the commissioner is required to give a written report about his or her review of expense claims under the act to the Speaker." Now they're implicating the Speaker; that's your office, Mr. Crozier. "The commissioner also has discretion to make a public report respecting any matter related to the commissioner's functions under the act." If they're anything like André Marin, the Ombudsman, I hope they take advantage of that ability to issue these reports. They would be noticed a lot more than most commissioners, let's put it that way, and maybe they'd do it to be noticed; who knows? But if they're making a valuable contribution to the public oversight, I think that's good. In this case here, I think that—in any case, a member under the integrity act today, any member, can make accusations, but they have to be substantiated or at least able to stand the test of credibility by the Integrity Commissioner.

0920

In fact, that was done in the past, which leads to the second part of my remarks, which I hope won't come across as unkind or unfair, but they are part of the public record and as such they should be read. This is a report issued on January 4, 2006, to the Legislature. It goes to the Speaker, as this legislation would, and it's the Office of the Integrity Commissioner report from the Honourable Coulter Osborne, Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, re the Honourable Harinder Takhar, Minister of Transportation and member for Mississauga Centre. It's a very long report. There was an accusation launched—and this isn't to be mean-spirited. We're talking about this very office and this very minister, and the role of the Integrity Commissioner. I don't want to get too far out on the ice here, but it says that, "The Sunday, June 12, 2005 edition of the Toronto Sun included the photograph of the minister speaking on his cellphone outside the Chalmers offices. It accompanied a column headlined, 'Caught in the Act?' by Sun reporter Christina Blizzard. That article appears to be the first public disclosure of the minister's attendance at Chalmers on April 29, 2005. In her article, Ms. Blizzard referred to comments made by the minister in relation to his attendance" at Chalmers Group.

Some background: Mr. Takhar was the Minister of Transportation and he has been a successful business person in his life as an engineer, I believe maybe with a master's degree, and quite qualified and well recognized as an expert, I guess, in transportation suspension systems. Because of being appointed to cabinet, he had to have an arm's-length relationship with that and have a

trustee in place. That's really the essence here. I guess the commissioner went on and there were some judgments made and testimony given. Under the act, someone can report this, and it was reported and there were hearings, and there was a course of testimony. I think sometimes people don't do things intentionally—I'll put that on the record, and I would hope that that's the case here—and sometimes out of not knowing, which refers back to the bill.

Lots of people expense things that maybe they aren't sure if they should. Maybe for a \$100 bottle of wine, they should ask somebody, "Do you think I should expense this?" Or in the case of a coffee and a doughnut, "Wait a minute here; I think the coffee and the doughnut"—if you're getting \$400,000 a year, maybe you can skip expensing that, because you're taking it from the hand of a child at school. They're talking about having full-day kindergarten and the big issue there is the money. They said this morning they may not be able to implement it because they haven't got enough money. Well, if they had taken care of the money they had, they wouldn't be chasing the money they don't have.

In a case of somebody spending recklessly or without regard for the public, they should be sanctioned, no question about it, period. It doesn't mean they get fired or anything else; it means they certainly pay it back or make restitution, maybe do public service by working in a food bank or something like that to learn that a \$100 bottle of wine would probably pay for meals for a month for a family, or certainly for a week. We've got to put this stuff in perspective and I, for one, would like to think that's important.

I'm not going to go through this testimony and review in the report by Mr. Osborne, but here's the series of interviews that were held: Joseph Jeyanayangam, trustee—gone; Balwinder Takhar, the minister's wife; Christina Blizzard testified; Brett Kelly, who was the director of research for the opposition at the time; Jeff Kroeker, policy adviser to the Minister of Health; Earl McKinnon, the minister's driver; Muriel Alvarez, minister's executive secretary; and the honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. Takhar, were all interviewed by the Integrity Commissioner, Coulter Osborne. There wasn't a conclusive—I would say from my reading. Over the signature of the Honourable Coulter Osborne it just says, "It is imperative that ministers take their obligations under sections 10, 11 and 12 of the act seriously. Those obligations include having a trustee, where applicable, who is in an arm's-length relationship with the minister. Although I regard this as a serious matter, I have to recognize that the minister did not go about intentionally trying to short-circuit the system. I accept his statement that had he realized that his arm's-length relationship with" his CEO "was compromised, he would have taken steps through this office to straighten things up. I also recognize that in circumstances like this, there is a political price that sometimes has to be paid." That's fairly important here. "Since this is a matter of first impression, I think it would be unfair to sanction the minister beyond issuing a reprimand under section 34(1)(b). Upon the filing of this

report with the Speaker, that reprimand will be duly recorded."

In fact, the Integrity Commissioner, I think in fairness, listened to all the evidence, didn't think there was anything done intentionally and issued a sanction. It was up to the Premier to ask—now, in all fairness, the opposition, in the past, I can think of two cases of persons: one who is here, Mr. Runciman, who unknowingly, unintentionally, unmaliciously issued the name of a young offender in this place and had to step aside until such things were heard. It was the same thing with Minister Jackson, who at the time was accused of making certain things, which was not held up under scrutiny, and had to step aside.

All I'm saying here is the Premier didn't take the advice of the Integrity Commissioner. It wasn't Minister Takhar. He was sitting there as kind of the innocent victim of the whole thing. I think he's sitting here again as the innocent victim. Imagine giving this to him, this particular bill, which causes us to do research about reports of the Integrity Commissioner. I come across this report, the very report about the minister who is the author of this bill on integrity. I don't know; if I was Minister Takhar, I would on principle alone question the Premier: "Why didn't you give this to Minister Wilkinson, who's prancing around trying to sell the HST?" Can you imagine that, trying to flog a dead horse? I'm telling you.

But I would say that the truth here is that this report, in itself, no one can find fault with the idea. I think "Integrity Commissioner" should have been replaced with "Premier": "The Premier shall approve all expenses." Let's get on the record right now that the buck stops with the Premier of Ontario. People have entrusted him as the bridge between them and government. Government is the civil service that makes the hospitals run, makes the schools run and makes the province run, I guess. If they can't run, then you can blame the Premier for not giving them enough money or resources, human or physical resources.

But that Integrity Commissioner's report stands. When we ask questions about the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., where the first instance was, or back as far as the eHealth scandal that emerged this summer, in the summer of discontent, this is where the Premier should have stepped right in and said, "Look, step aside until we solve this problem." What did he do with the minister at the time, Minister Caplan? He probably called Minister Caplan's mother to find out what to do. I mean, he is her son and she was the Minister of Health at one time. But no, he wasn't spanked and he wasn't sanctioned in any way. In fact, he's still trotting off that he had nothing to do with those things. Well, somebody should have been looking at it: a person getting \$25,000 for a speech and \$400,000 a year, and other people charging a nice cup of tea when they go to bed at night when they're on a \$3,000-a-day expense thing? I don't know; it's a shameful abuse of public money.

Ultimately, we probably support the intent here, but there is a process already in place. This is shifting it. It's trying to shift the focus from Premier McGuinty's failure

of oversight and management duty to the Integrity Commissioner. In fact, there isn't even an Integrity Commissioner; there's a temporary one—who has done an excellent job, by the way. I'm surprised that she didn't accept the full-fledged commission of being the Integrity Commissioner, but I guess they're interviewing a judge. Coulter Osborne, of course, was a judge as well, so maybe they want somebody with the higher pay qualifications or something.

0930

Finally: Each year the commissioner will issue the report. What's the report going to be? Right now, there's the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. Anyone making over \$100,000 a year—that list is public. If they're on the public payroll, it's published. Every member of the Legislature, their entire expenses are published every year, already. You can tell what they spent on travel, expenses, stationary—you name it, they can find it. That's the way it should be. I think some of the public sector appointees like the OLG—take for instance the racing commission. There are all kinds of agencies, boards and commissions. I have no clue what they're making, and it should be published. I wonder why it isn't in this bill. If you're going to have a bill, let's make the rules clear once and for all. If you run on a platform of openness, accountability and transparency, let's get it done. You'll find complete support under our leader, Tim Hudak. That's what it's about: openness and accountability. There are mistakes made, in fairness, by all sides. I can remember we had—

Mr. Paul Miller: You'll move up a row, John, with that one.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm working on two rows. We want the two-row move.

Mr. Paul Miller: You're moving, kid, you're moving.

Mr. John O'Toole: As long as it isn't backwards. Anyway, up here we consider that we're actually in the penthouse. You've got to look at things positively in life. I think that's important.

But I digress. I've got to stay on the topic in the short 30 minutes I have left here to talk about this bill. This bill, by the way, is almost three pages—not quite, though. It has a lot of details. I think it's important that the public knows the purpose. The purpose clause is where you first go to when you read legislation. What are they trying to do here? They're establishing a redundancy, an oversight that already should exist. It's clear from the evidence presented in the last two weeks in question period, whether it's eHealth, whether it's the Ontario Lottery and Gaming commission, whether it's MPAC or—I don't think the list is done yet. I think the culture of entitlement had already taken place. It's only those things that we found that have been disclosed. We're looking for more. Apparently, there are thousands and thousands and thousands of pages of freedom-of-information requests.

Now, I'm going to get to the substance of how difficult it is for the opposition to do the job. In the report that I read in the paper last week—I'm actually going by memory here. Last week in one of the papers there was a

report that said, under eHealth—no, it was the OLG scandal. There are so many of them that I get confused after a while on these things. Under the Ontario Lottery and Gaming, the CEO was asked by the minister, according to the press, to fire someone. Respectfully to this person, she initially refused to follow the orders or at least gave them an alternative and said, "I would rather handle it this way." I read that, and I thought, "Gee, that is a person who believed that the intention of the government"—this is my own impression—"under the OLG, was to give the impression to the public that they were acting decisively and swiftly to stop the hemorrhaging of public spending or wasting of money." That was mostly for the media, really for the photo op, for the impression—bingo, a person being trashed; they're responsible. They should have been trashing the minister, that's who they should have been trashing. Who's been watching the vault all summer while they're giving away cars and taking trips to various places and drinking expensive wine, eating big three-inch steaks and all those—it was almost disgusting, really, when you read it. But I'll stay on topic.

The key thing that I found in reading the article was that the professional person who was the head made recommendations on how they could handle these unfortunate circumstances of people wasting money in their expenses, taking lavish trips. Although she would have some fiduciary responsibility, I think she should have stepped in herself, making—I think it was \$400,000 a year she was making. Anyway, they fired her. They wanted her to fire a couple of other people, too. As it turned out, she believed that she was wrongfully dismissed, so she's turning around and, in a court action, making some of this information public and suing the province of Ontario for something in excess of \$8 million.

She had said to them, "Look give me my severance"—which would be one year's pay, half a million dollars—

Mr. Paul Miller: Five for most people.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, a couple of years' pay. She might have got a million bucks or something and lived happily ever after. Well, maybe not happily, but certainly able to pay the bills. I guess the key is, they didn't accept that.

My impression—and I'm not qualified, nor are we as legislators qualified; the judges can do that. Perhaps the Integrity Commissioner's first duty should be to rule on whether or not they should waste money on lawyers. It'll cost \$10 million by the time they get the \$8 million.

She'll probably win, I would suggest. Just reading the media release, it would look to me like she offered alternatives and took some sense of responsibility. It's sort of like going to confession. You do the penance and I guess you're forgiven, but you should not repeat it again. You sort of make a solemn promise: "I will do better the next time." But some people digress and fall into their old habits, and this is what I'm concerned about.

We've learned now there are three commissions or arm's-length agencies, all of which have wasted millions of dollars on wine and cheese parties or things and un-

necessary, lavish expenses in hotels and trips. Often I wonder where Minister Papatello is.

Mr. Paul Miller: Globetrotting.

Mr. John O'Toole: Globetrotting, junkets. Hey, look, I'm sure there will be reports from the Integrity Commissioner. That's what I'm looking for—every minister's expense reports outline the lavish entertainment. When Greg Sorbara was Minister of Finance—the receptions for the prebudget hearings.

We would probably propose an amendment here and the amendment would probably be in the tone of “no alcohol should be served.” I think that's an appropriate request. No alcohol should be paid for by the government either in a ministry's office or out of a ministry's office. Let's be clear.

What are the penalties? I don't see any penalties here. I would expect the minister to step aside, at least as a symbolic gesture. The symbolic gesture here was firing the lady from OLG and setting her as an example: her picture in the Toronto Star walking out with a box full of papers.

Mr. Paul Miller: Pass the buck.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's the third party delegation.

But what are the consequences? There's no clear—it says here they may take each year a review of expenses to the Speaker. “The commissioner also has discretion to make a public report respecting” the “matter related to the commissioner's functions,” but also whether or not—what actions were taken by the ministry, because it ultimately goes back.

I say this time and time again. They've hired another fancy level of bureaucrats, similar to the LHINs, the local health integration networks. That's a shield for the ministry. That's all it is. They're not performing surgery or giving vaccinations. They're not doing anything but travelling around with coffee and doughnuts and telling people about health care, how you can get a doctor or something like that. I maybe trivialize it a bit, but that's another layer shielding the minister. You say, “Minister, why are you looking at closing the emergency in the Bowmanville hospital?” What do I get back for an answer? “Speak to the LHIN.” That's a tragedy. The Minister of Health is in charge. He's got the gold pin. He signs the cheques. He's got it all, and yet he's not responsible. “Why did that person in that hospital not get that service in a timely way?” “Well, we've done reports, we've done this, we've got people.” Minister, if you can't do the job, step aside. I know a government, or at least a group of individuals in a caucus, who are prepared to step up and take over in 2011.

0940

Kelly McDougald, the former CEO of the OLG, is the person mentioned here. And it's right here: “Ms. McDougald alleges she was fired from her \$400,000-a-year CEO job with no severance after refusing to sack the corporation's chief financial officer and one other senior employee, as demanded by Finance Minister Dwight Duncan to make it appear the ‘boils are lanced.’” That's in quotes, the boil has been lanced. It's appearance here;

it's not substantive. This is the tragedy: How things look are not always how things are.

I think the public can see through this bill much like this “The boil has been lanced.” Premier McGuinty would like to think that we've solved the problem, with Bill 201, of all the lavish spending and waste of taxpayers' money. Minister Takhar is bringing it to us and asking us to speak to it, and they'll say, “Well, they didn't support a bill on accountability and integrity.” There is no need for this bill. I believe that Minister Takhar—and I say this respectfully—is qualified. He ran a very large, successful company. I'm impressed that he's here giving public service, but the issue is, now the Premier is saying, “He's not qualified. I'm going to get somebody else.” It's shameful.

I think the ministers should be standing up and rebelling. They should be standing up and saying, “Look, Premier, we're capable. We're not just puppets reading the speeches you give us.” But then, maybe they are. Maybe they are just saying, “Oh, I'll read that. Give me that; I'll read that quietly and carefully.” They're in charge of the ministries. That's why I think when the minister was in charge of transportation—no disparaging remark on Mr. Bradley; I think he's doing a fine job. Certainly he's reading all the speeches that he's given quite well, anyway.

My point here is that there are CEOs working with them. The deputy ministers are qualified—in many cases I've met some of them—and they're working with highly qualified ministers, respectfully. Why do we need this bill?

Let's stand up here as a group today, and I would move that we just set it aside. Don't bring it forward anymore because it's not needed. What's needed is Premier McGuinty to get up there, give his ministers the authority and the accountability and say, “Look, we're going to govern according to the principles and rules of integrity, openness and accountability, and Minister, if you mess up, screw up, whatever, you're finished.” I think they will respond. I think that the OLG scandal would be gone.

Minister Caplan should be at least asked to introduce this bill. He's the one who should be the scapegoat here. You could say, “Look, Minister Caplan, it wasn't your fault.” It was probably George Smitherman's fault, really, because all this stuff happened when Smitherman was the minister. They put David Caplan in there. I think if he stepped aside, we'd probably support this bill, because at least then I'd say, “Okay, before this bill was law, somebody was responsible.”

Now, who was it: Caplan, Smitherman or McGuinty? I wouldn't think that the Premier should resign, but then, of course, I'd leave that open to the House. But I would say certainly somebody over there should step aside. Then we can deal with this bill. It sends a better signal than sacrificing this poor Kelly McDougald.

Again, I'm referring here to an article from the Toronto Star. It's from September 16, and Rob Ferguson and Rob Benzie commissioned this: “Kelly McDougald

says she was axed amid scandal after refusing government order to fire underlings.” Well, we’ll see how this plays itself out in the courts. I would say the public should follow this closely. Watch it and see if the government really played this hand wrong.

You know, it’s funny the way that whole thing worked. There was the week of scandals here. It wasn’t just eHealth and OLG; I think there was MPAC. There were a bunch of them, really, and there are still more to come. This is going to become a novel, a bestseller.

I say to the people of Ontario: Stay tuned. There are thousands more of these cheques that have spent your money on wasteful entertainment, trips and travel by a government that’s going to blame someone else now—the Integrity Commissioner—if it’s not caught. Meanwhile, the ministers are twiddling their thumbs, I guess, and letting people run about, doing as they wish, without much accountability. I’d like to think that isn’t the case, as much as I’d like to criticize the government—it is my duty as the critic—but I remain concerned that this issue has not been properly dealt with in Bill 201, An Act to provide for review of expenses in the public sector.

This implies that there isn’t any process today. There certainly is. I’ve just explained that I have to file every month; I have to file every year—the Premier does; everyone does. The Integrity Commissioner reviews all this. It’s set up. It’s under the Integrity Act today. The public sector already has reporting. They have expense forms, they have expense guidelines, and if somebody breaches the rules, sure, there should be sanctions. I don’t see any sanctions in here. It really says that “the expenses officer is required to report back to the commissioner as to whether the expense has been repaid or the remedial action undertaken.” I don’t even know what that is in terms of remedial action.

Let’s look here: “Supporting documents

“(4) An expenses officer shall,

“(a) ensure that each expense claim he or she gives to the commissioner is accompanied by supporting documents.”

That would be a credit card notice. I don’t think so. It should be the detailed list of how many glasses of wine, how many people, why they were there, who approved it before the meeting or the soiree at the big restaurant. That should all be on there. I don’t want just the Visa bill showing you spent \$4,000 on a steak dinner for 10 people who were all friends. This is what has been going on. I am putting that on the record. It’s there.

“(b) indicate whether each expense claim he or she gives ... was paid, in whole or in part, by the public entity or out of public funds of the province of Ontario.”

“(5) The commissioner may make a written request to an expenses officer for information and documents relating to expense claims made by the relevant designated persons for expenses that are reviewable under section 3.”

There’s a review by the commissioner: “Discretion of commissioner

“(3) The commissioner may, in such circumstances as he or she considers appropriate, choose not to direct the

repayment of an amount and choose not to recommend other remedial action.”

I would hope they don’t use that section. I think they should be recommending repayment—and “...gives a direction or recommendation under subsection (2) shall promptly give the commissioner written notice of any action taken by the expenses officer in connection with the matter.”

“(5) If the amount is not repaid or remedial action that the commissioner considers appropriate is not taken on or before the specified date, the commissioner may advise appropriate persons as to any matter that the commissioner considers appropriate in the circumstances.”

Who would the commissioner advise, do you think? Let’s just put that simple phrase—I’m going to leave it for the minister in his two-minute response to my shortened speech here this morning. It says here—I’ll read it again—“If the amount is not repaid or remedial action that the commissioner considers appropriate is not taken on or before the specified date, the commissioner may advise appropriate persons....” I wonder who that would be. Would it be the minister? Would it be the Premier? I would ask them to advise me, and I’ll be raising it in the Legislature the very next day. And who would I ask that question to? I’d be asking the Premier, because the buck stops with Premier McGuinty.

If it all goes well, the Premier’s taking credit for it. He’s out saying, “What a great job I’ve done.” And if all goes badly, he should take credit for that as well. It’s only fair.

Let the people judge here if this bill is going to shuffle this off to the Integrity Commissioner, whatever their name will be, because they haven’t been appointed yet. There has been a vacancy there for a while, and it has been a temporary appointment, and now they’re going to make it—this eight-person office is located on Bloor Street, isn’t it, the Integrity Commissioner?

0950

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes.

Mr. John O’Toole: I haven’t been there this year, but I will be there in the next month or two. It’s on Bloor Street and it’s quite expensive real estate. In fact, there was an article in the Toronto Star today and that article was saying how expensive. It was \$300 a square foot per year. The most expensive real estate in all of Canada is on Bloor Street. Why are they located there?

Mrs. Julia Munro: So you can walk there.

Mr. John O’Toole: No. They should be located where I can walk, in this building. Let’s get them in here. There’s all kinds of room for it.

Now, that being said, they’re going to have to move. Look, I am advising the people from the integrity office on Bloor Street—it’s about the eighth or 10th floor or something. Right at the corner there where they’re building the expensive condos is where it is, over the Hudson’s Bay Centre. Now, they’re going to have to move. In fact, they may take over the whole building, because there are going to be thousands of auditors now, thousands of them, and all making \$100,000 a year. Where

are they going to park? They're going to have to build a parking garage for them. It's unbelievable.

This bill is going to set this government back. The deficit will be \$30 billion now, easily, because of this new bureaucracy that they are creating. No disrespect to the integrity office; that's not what I'm saying. It's the government's initiative here that's going to cause the expenditure.

I should tell you that I've been following this quite closely. I have a question on the order paper. The minister, I see, is here. The question is, how much is this going to cost? It's only fair on behalf of the people—it was never in the budget. It's not in the budget, and they're going to cut junior kindergarten. Apparently, they're not going to introduce that. It's going to cost too much money. How much is this going to cost? Maybe the minister, in his response, would give us the privilege of knowing what the average pay would be for all the thousands of accountants. There could be a million expense reports issued a year, and I think it's worth us knowing what in fact is going to be the bottom line here.

If I look at it, we respect and support the work of the Integrity Commissioner and we're confident that the commissioner will have a role to play in ensuring accountability. That is the case today and it's what we support. We will continue to insist on an all-party committee of the House reviewing the eHealth and OLG spending scandals and any other scandals that emerge. It will take them a year to set this up, by the time they hire somebody to interview all these thousands of people and relocate the Integrity Commissioner from Bay Street to, I don't know, some other executive tower.

With this accountability legislation, McGuinty is trying to delegate integrity to someone else. What a shameful statement. It has to come from the Premier. We've said that all along. The Premier's announcement pre-empted the Auditor General's report on what went on and what went wrong at eHealth. Are the Premier and his cabinet, Minister Smitherman and Minister Caplan, interested in accountability and integrity, or is this another knee-jerk reaction that is attempting to distract from the summer of scandal? Tragic. Being accountable is the job of Premier McGuinty, his cabinet and his government. Unfortunately, the Premier insists on shifting responsibility elsewhere, to a third party review that was cancelled, to the Auditor General, and now to the Integrity Commissioner. They said PricewaterhouseCoopers was going to look at this, and then they cancelled that. They are stalling. The evidence is here.

Is he saying the ministers are not capable of overseeing aspects of their ministries that they should be responsible for? I hope he isn't. There are several ministers here, and I think they are very capable people, as the people on all sides of the House are capable. But I am wondering if this is a subtle put-down of his own cabinet. What does it say about their own competence?

At what cost? That's the question. How can the nine staff that are currently in the Integrity Commissioner's office oversee expense accounts of these many agencies?

Is Premier McGuinty creating a new bureaucracy just to avoid an all-party committee having direct responsibility for reviewing eHealth and OLG and other scandals? Will this added challenge detract from the current work of the Integrity Commissioner in the five existing areas of responsibility that they have today: members' integrity, lobbyists' registration, review of ministers' and opposition leaders' expenses, ministerial staff ethical conduct, and public service disclosure of wrongdoing? Will it interfere with the current mandate of the ministry? Will it be separated from—and let's just admit it's another level of bureaucracy.

How do we know this government will follow through on its promises? As we've seen in the past, whether it's the tax issue or whether it's the issue on many things they've said they would do—closing coal plants: They'll be blowing smoke, just like the coal plants. They had already promised to the House an investigation by PricewaterhouseCoopers into eHealth and then mysteriously cancelled that.

A key consideration: The "largest agencies, boards and commissions will be required to have their expenses reviewed by Ontario's Integrity Commissioner.

"Under the new rules, employees who claim unacceptable expenses like personal items and alcohol for staff functions will repay taxpayers." I guess so. Why they're doing it is the issue.

The culture of entitlement is rampant. We're seeing it in all our FOI requests; we're hearing it in the media every day. It has been the summer of scandals. What other evidence do we need? This is just a way of shuffling it off as a deflection.

The new rules will apply to Ontario Lottery and Gaming; Ontario Power Generation; Hydro One; the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator; the Ontario Power Authority; Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; the LCBO; eHealth; Cancer Care Ontario; Ontario Infrastructure Projects—there's one I'd like to have a look at. Wow. These little agencies—this one that's handling all the infrastructure money: Let's have a close look at that sucker; consultants and wine and cheese parties galore.

The Ontario Financing Authority—a pretty solid group there. Ontario Realty Corporation—there's another one we should have a look at. Ontario Public Service Pension Board—where are all the pensions? They're in the ditch, all of them. There's a big problem there. Who has been running it? Who's running FSCO, for that matter? Toronto area transit—there's another one. Who's driving the bus? Ontario Human Rights Commission—a good friend of George there. She has written a few reports on Oshawa this year, on housing. I don't know. The Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre is another one. Ontario Educational Communications Authority; Ontario Racing Commission; Ontario Clean Water Agency.

This is just a partial list to alert the people of Ontario. There are hundreds of agencies out there, many political appointments that are all being paid off for support in the last few years, by way of these appointments. They're earning salaries in excess of \$400,000 a year, and they

are spending money—you're paying for their cup of tea at night.

These aren't political statements. These are questions of a government's entitlement, and the rule of entitlement seems to be the play of the day.

I'm concerned that this bill is just one more step to obfuscate, to shuffle off, to deflect, to try to put out the fire. This is a scandal and this is just the tip of an iceberg.

Public sector money—and we have a deficit in this province that's growing exponentially. The deficit is now bigger than in the days of Bob Rae. It's raging and out of control.

We have over 300,000 people unemployed. We have large companies going aside and losing contracts because of this HST. This new tax is just a tax grab for another \$2.5 billion of your money. There isn't enough money to solve all the problems of this government, and now they're asking a lowly Integrity Commissioner with nine employees to audit these thousands and thousands of expense reports, which the minister should be responsible for today, to start with. What else are they doing besides meetings and briefings and question period with no answers?

It has just become a litany of suspicions on my part, and I've tried to shed some light on an issue where I think the people of Ontario should be outraged about what's going on.

We have issued FOI reports, and this is a final statement in the brief time that I've been allowed this morning. This is documented in the media, and it's clear that the ministry has tried to delay the release of these FOI reports—this is documented. The minister actually said, "We've delayed it as long as we can." I think it was the OLG scandal or eHealth—one of the scandals, anyway. Now they're charging for FOI requests. Why are the people of Ontario paying twice? There's suspicion of an error, we ask for information from the ministry, which is public and already paid for, and now they're charging us—which is your money—as much as \$7,000 and \$10,000 for these freedom of information requests. They're anything but free. This shadows on a cover-up, in my opinion, when you are charged money to get honest information.

1000

Mr. Paul Miller: A cover-up?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's shades of that. We didn't make any accusation; otherwise, Minister Smitherman would have jumped to his feet.

My point here is that there's a good example. If we want to move forward together—you use this phrase "moving forward" all the time; I think you've run into a ditch here—I would suggest that they make these freedom of information requests open and free. If it's a spurious accusation on the opposition's part, they should have to pay. But if we find evidence like we're finding today, it should be free. The people of Ontario already paid for the coffee and doughnuts. What we want is some action, and it's clear to me that this bill and this minister are being used to further remove the Premier from being accessible to the people of Ontario.

At the end of the day, the price will be paid, and it's called an election in 2011. I ask the people of Ontario not to forget. We are supposed to learn from history, and we've given you a brief history lesson this morning that the regime of entitlement has arrived, the evidence is clear and you will have the final say. The Integrity Commissioner isn't the final judge; the people of Ontario will be the final judge.

I can put to you that all members of all caucuses have learned a lesson here. But the government today is ultimately responsible for the actions of today. That government is Premier McGuinty and his cabinet, some of whom are here today. I'd say that this bill should be put down, we should put the responsibility back with the ministers, and certain ministers should resign when they've taken an inappropriate action or their subordinates have not informed them of what's going on in their ministries. I would ask every minister to come clean now. Submit your reports, stop the spending on alcohol and gaming and trips—put a stop to it. We don't need legislation to do the right thing. I've run out of time—really, I could ask for unanimous consent for more time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: The member from Durham is always quite to the point and sure knows the buttons to push, which is a good thing, because there's no sense in keeping things hidden. One of the expenses that really stood out in my mind, and I was absolutely disgusted when I saw it, was a CEO or vice-president at OLG who spent \$3,713 on one meal. Most of my constituents—I would say 80% of my constituents—do not make \$3,713 in one month. This oversight that continues with all these ministries and all these agencies has got to stop now. I've had several calls from my constituents, outraged at what has been going on in the summer of scandal, and it will continue. There's more coming. They're not done yet. There's more information coming in every day that this will go to other agencies and other situations.

You know, expenditures that are reasonable are accepted by the public. A \$60 meal or a \$40 meal is acceptable; \$3,713 is absolutely outrageous. There are many more incidents throughout this report of these things happening. You know, I for one, coming from my background, wouldn't spend that in a year on meals outside the home, and I hope the people in this room realize what's going on and do a lot more to stop these terrible things that have been happening.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was listening intently to the remarks this morning from my colleague the member from Durham, who I know extremely well, and who had a great career with General Motors and the separate school board and Durham council.

There are a couple of points I want to make. First of all, to anybody looking for an economical lunch, I recommend the East City Coffee Shop in Peterborough. A western sandwich and soup is \$6, so if you ever want to have any meetings, you can go there.

None of us on any side of this House condone when the public trust has been broken. Clearly, in this case

related to eHealth and the Ontario lottery corporation, the public trust has been broken. Therefore, the Minister of Government Services has proposed Bill 201, the Public Sector Expenses Review Act.

I want to get a few facts on the record this morning. The member from Durham talked about thousands of people coming under this umbrella. I'm told there are only 400 people who will come under this umbrella. Those are the top five people in the agencies that have been identified that are coming under review, the same kind of review that is required for cabinet ministers in the province of Ontario, the opposition leader in the province of Ontario and others who hold the public trust.

Freedom of information is an important part of our democracy. When the Leader of the Opposition was the tourism minister in 2001, the compliance rate for his ministry was only 40%. Only three ministries were lower. Our current Minister of Tourism has a 90% compliance record with freedom of information. When the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, his compliance rate was some 41%, and he had 19 total requests in the year 2000. So I want to make sure that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to be able to speak to my colleague's statement earlier today, his one-hour leadoff speech on public expenses. The member opposite would like to speak about public trust. Of course, Mr. Speaker, you'll understand that the public trust was breached this summer when we found out that millions of dollars had gone to untendered contracts in the province. As early as this morning, the Premier, speaking in his weekly scrum, didn't have the details on what type of untendered contracts might be occurring in our LHINs and at our hospitals across the province. That is simply sad.

I think my colleague from Durham makes an excellent point that ministerial accountability must be brought back into the system instead of consistently passing the buck.

I also go back and refer to my colleague from Peterborough's comments where he makes a decision to attack the leader of the official opposition when he was a minister of the crown. What I don't understand here is why the government opposite continues to reach back into a previous century to sling mud. And I don't understand, when they are expecting—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Excuse me, I missed the word—"to sling?"

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mud.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mud. I just ask members to be cautious with their words.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If that's wrong, Mr. Speaker, I'll withdraw that.

What I don't understand is why they have to consistently move to the back of the pack. When you look at what has happened at OLG and what happened at eHealth, you will recall that these are made-in-McGuinty problems in his summer of scandal. You'll recall that he hired all these bureaucrats he has now fired or has made a

"public example" of. I think we ought to start where my colleague from Durham suggests: with the ministers opposite. There should be a few of them who are fired.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to make comments about the member for Durham's hour-long lead speech. Certainly, we would have to say in the New Democratic Party that this bill is a baby step in the right direction, but it doesn't address some of the fundamental problems that were uncovered during this last summer. One of them is the allegations that are made in the lawsuit that the Premier's office sat on freedom of information requests and did not let those go in a timely manner. That is an incredibly serious allegation, and that's something that this bill doesn't look at. This bill also doesn't look at all the agencies, quite frankly, that come under the government's control. For example, we noted with interest the Ontario Securities Commission or FSCO, the insurance and pension regulation agency, is not covered by this. We wonder why. There are conspicuous agencies left out. Is that because there's some trouble brewing there? One can only wonder when it covers some agencies and not all agencies.

The other aspect of this, of course, is will this act have any teeth? Because the Integrity Commissioner has nine staff and a limited budget, so either the member from Durham is right and that staff is going to be expanded ad infinitum or she simply won't have the staff and/or the resources to do what this bill is requiring of her, which is to look at hundreds of expenses and dozens of agencies. This is clearly too much for the structure that we now have in place. Her original job was to look at MPPs, cabinet ministers and their expenses, and that was it. Now it's been expanded beyond all proportion.

Of course, there's the ethical call here. Whether a minister falls or not, it is certainly incumbent upon this government to apologize to the taxpayers of Ontario for the egregious spending that is, by some estimates, illegal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): To the member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. He did mention the one meal by one person and their guests for \$3,713—unforgivable. This is what this is about. The member from Peterborough did mention a fine restaurant in each city, but other than that, he was really reading the government's message lines. The member from Nepean–Carleton I think said it all. It's really about ministerial accountability. We're encouraging the ministry to take a second look at this and bring back the traditions of ministerial accountability and the appropriate follow-up actions. The member from Parkdale–High Park brought to the attention of the people of Ontario that the freedom-of-information requests have been sat on, delayed, held back, withheld—use whatever word you want, but they're not forthcoming.

I think the key thing here is that there are only apparently, according to the member from Peterborough—

whom I trust and think highly of in many respects outside the Legislature—five people in each of these ministries. What if they're all, like with Minister Papatello, travelling around the world? There's got to be an entourage. They're all probably signing it off. Some of the assistant deputy ministers sign these expense reports, and then they're not FOI-able under the minister's report.

There are other ways of changing the focus. What we really want here is for Premier McGuinty to come clean, to step up, take responsibility for the actions of his ministers in cabinet and for them to step up and do the job, which they're being well-paid for, and actually say, "Look, this is exactly what we expect"—set the tone in their ministry and set the example. This is anything but that. This is saying, "Look, we screwed up. We know it. It's in the media. It's not us saying it; we're just doing our jobs here." They're giving it to the Integrity Commissioner, who's going to review all of these inappropriate expenses after the third time.

Ultimately, all of these things—the appointment of the commissioner himself—will be a political decision. Premier McGuinty will appoint the very person who's ruling.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to the standing orders, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Mario Sergio: We are delighted today to have in the House wonderful guests from Ghana, this wonderful country. We have in the Speaker's gallery Nana Serwaaprah I, Queen of Adanse-Praso in Ashanti; we have George Opoko; Chief Evans; Nana Doggo; Nana Pokuaa; Kofi Adjei Perprah; Vida Adjei; Abea; Peter Vecchiarelli; and author Debbie Moskovich. I'd like to welcome them to the House. I hope that they will have a wonderful time enjoying the workings of our Parliament here today.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to welcome the family of our page, Jacob van Wassenaer: his mother Violet van Wassenaer and his brother Philip van Wassenaer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's my pleasure to introduce some members from Colleges Ontario who are with us today in the members' gallery: Marsha Joseph, who's a manager of government relations; Spencer Wood, the manager of maintenance and operations at Humber College; and Chris Trewartha, executive director of the power application group. They're the advocacy organization for all our colleges in Ontario. They'll be hosting an information session in room 230 from 12 to 3. I encourage all members of all parties to attend.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They're not here yet, but at 11:00, the students from Holbrook public school in Hamilton, in my riding, will be here with their teacher,

Erica Read. They'll be in the east gallery and they're grade 5 and 6 students.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery three delegations from the Parliament of Ghana. We have the finance committee, led by the Honourable James Avedzi; the press corps, led by Mr. Andrew Arthur; and two researchers from the research department, Mr. Casmir Addo-Mensah and Ms. Judy Aikins. I'd also like to welcome Kwabena Asare, the consul general of Ghana here in Toronto. Please warmly welcome our guests to the Legislature today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday two prominent members of the eHealth board just disappeared. Why are Geoff Smith and Khalil Barsoum no longer on the eHealth board?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: We have—and the auditor will, of course, comment on this and it will be public—quite an excellent board. In both cases, both have done an excellent job on behalf of the people of Ontario, and we do thank them for their service. In both cases, both Mr. Barsoum and Mr. Smith requested that they be able to resign from the board. In fact, that is going to cabinet for order-in-council approval today.

I don't know, of course, what cabinet will do but we do thank all of the members for their service on behalf of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: With all due respect, this is a question to the Premier. I think, considering his summer of scandal and the ongoing problems at eHealth, the Premier would respond to these questions.

Back to the Premier: Geoff Smith is a top fundraiser for the McGuinty Liberals. He was appointed in March of this year but, oddly, his bio never actually made it on to eHealth's public website. Did the Liberals' bagman resign to avoid embarrassing questions about untendered contracts?

Hon. David Caplan: I think that characterization is, frankly, beneath a member of this Legislature. I know that Mr. Smith had done considerable work for the Progressive Conservative Party as well, and I know this is a gentleman who has provided incredible service to Ontarians in this regard. I know that we do have individuals come forward in the spirit of public service to serve on agencies, boards and commissions, and we have the benefit of their expertise.

I don't know the individual circumstances of Mr. Smith and his various commitments, but I can tell you that we were quite honoured to have him. Obviously, his circumstances have changed and he has requested to be able to resign from the board.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: We'd like to know exactly what circumstances suddenly changed, from a high-profile appointee back in March who suddenly disappears off the eHealth board.

I think the Premier and the minister are probably well aware that the PC caucus submitted a freedom-of-information request for contracts between the McGuinty government and EllisDon. Geoff Smith is president and CEO of EllisDon. That FOI is due in early October.

To the Premier: Did Geoff Smith or EllisDon receive any untendered contracts from the McGuinty government?

Hon. David Caplan: I think the member is aware that EllisDon is one of the largest construction companies not simply in Canada but in the world. I can tell you that in fact they have won many tenders to construct hospitals and many projects across this province. It's because of the investment in infrastructure that was a hallmark of this government—a \$30-billion infrastructure plan—that not only EllisDon but PCL and other companies, like Bondfield Construction, I know, like Aecon or others, were able to successfully get Ontario and the foundation of the Ontario economy moving.

It is these individuals who in fact have responded to public tender and are doing that work. I anticipate that we will continue to move forward with infrastructure investments. I hope these companies will bid on that work and will—

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

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I find it unfortunate that the Premier is obviously avoiding responding to my lead questions today.

Let me try again, to the Premier. Premier, during your summer of scandal the media reported that eHealth board member Khalil Barsoum billed taxpayers \$2,400 for flights from his vacation home in Florida to attend board meetings in Ontario. He remained on the board for some time after that, but now suddenly is gone. The opposition submitted an FOI request on contracts the eHealth board handed out to IBM, where Barsoum was an executive. Is there something in there that will explain why Barsoum is suddenly gone?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I must tell you, we're again fortunate to have had people like Mr. Barsoum assume the public duty of serving on this important public agency.

Mr. Barsoum decided about his own personal circumstances, that he wished to resign from the board, and it is with regret that we have accepted his resignation.

I can tell you that, as I have said on numerous occasions in this House and outside, the rules for procurement in government are strengthened. In fact, we expect our

agencies, boards and commissions to live not only by the letter of the law but by the spirit of the law. It is my contention that it's not simply because it is allowed that you can do it, that it necessarily follows that you should do it. That's precisely why I've asked the auditor to take a look at all the expenditures at—

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

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I have asked you four straight questions. Four straight times, you've sent off that question to your health minister, refusing to answer questions about basic accountability at an agency at the centre of an enormous scandal this past summer. For a Premier that's passed off any kind of accountability for his ministers, I find it sad that he refuses to answer my questions in the Legislature today.

Back to the Premier: When it came to dealing with the OLG, you called a big press conference; your finance minister made a convenient political scapegoat out of the CEO, but for your Liberal friends like Smith and Barsoum there wasn't even a press release. Why is the Premier allowing his Liberal friends to sneak out the back door rather than making a big show like he did with the OLG?

Hon. David Caplan: Four questions, now five; I will answer as many as the member opposite wishes to pose. The answer will be the same: We are determined, on this side of the House, to get down to the bottom of these matters. That's why I took the opportunity to contact Jim McCarter, an independent officer of this Legislature, the Auditor General. I know that the member opposite and his colleagues have had problems with the auditor in the past, but we on this side of the House believe that the auditor performs a very useful function and, in fact, does it in a non-partisan and independent way. My friend opposite might have a particular partisan perspective, and that is his right.

We, of course, are moving forward on delivering on an important eHealth agenda: a diabetes registry, an ePrescribing regime. It's interesting: One million children in the province of Ontario have an electronic health record. Four million Ontarians are part of an electronic medical record as well. These—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Five questions to the Premier; five times he punted the ball down the field. Premier, if you're not going to answer these questions today, you're going to answer these questions soon enough and tell us exactly what has happened with the eHealth board.

Premier, can you guarantee that this is it? Can you guarantee that no board members at eHealth or their companies benefited from untendered contracts handed out by your government?

Hon. David Caplan: I know, as I've said now on five or six occasions to the member opposite, that an independent officer of this Legislature will in fact be able to report to the Legislature, and individual members of this Legislature will have an opportunity at the public

accounts committee to speak to him and to review his report. I will not presume what the auditor will say, but I can assure the member that it will not be the partisan speech of the member opposite but unbiased and independent. That, in fact, is the hallmark of an officer of this Legislature.

I will say that members on this side of the House are moving forward to modernize the electronic health infrastructure of the province of Ontario. It is regrettable that such moves were not taken by the member and his colleagues when they had the privilege to serve on this side of the House. But Ontarians know health care—

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. It seems that health care spending scandals are becoming a fact of life under the McGuinty government. First, it was eHealth handing out \$16 million in untendered contracts to well-connected insiders. Now we learn that in London Health Sciences they're doling out \$3.3 million in untendered contracts. This is more than a coincidence; it is fostered by a government that seems to have little regard for the public's money.

When will this Premier finally take charge and end the blatant and disturbing abuse of our precious health dollars?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know my honourable colleague understands the steps that we've taken recently and those that we've taken since we earned the privilege of serving Ontarians in government. We recognize that Ontarians work hard for their money and we have a special responsibility to use their dollars wisely.

In the past, we have expanded the ambit of the freedom-of-information legislation to take into account Hydro One and OPG. We've also given the auditor additional powers so that he can now look at, for the first time, our universities, our schools and our hospitals. We're also requiring that the auditor take a look at the government finances before going into an election so we're all clear as to the true state of affairs in that regard. Most recently, we've put in place a number of new measures that are specific to our agencies, boards and commissions, and I know that my colleague understands all of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, it's the Premier who just doesn't seem to understand what's at stake here. This isn't pocket change being handed out, it's tens of millions of dollars, money that could make a real difference in an already overstretched health care system. In London and across the South West LHIN, local residents are experiencing a loss of hospital services: Maternity and physiotherapy services are vanishing, beds are closing, and deficits are soaring. How can this Premier seem so content to just sit back and watch as precious health care dollars get poured down the drain, with no accountability?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just can't agree with my colleague's interpretation of reality. The fact of the matter is that we've invested significant new dollars in health care during the course of the past six years. I think health care spending has been increased by close to—

Hon. David Caplan: Forty-five per cent.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Forty-five per cent. Wait times are down, we are building new hospitals, we've hired thousands of nurses, we've expanded our medical school spaces. I think we've got 800,000 more Ontarians who are now attached to family care. I think we've made real, measurable progress in a number of ways.

There's always more work to be done, but I don't think it could be objectively argued that we have somehow produced a reduction in services. In fact, we've dramatically increased quality of care for many Ontarians.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier needs a reality check. He just needs to go to talk to the people of this province and see what they think of the quality of their health care here. Across Ontario, 1,200 nurses have lost their jobs. Next door to London, at Grey Bruce Health Services, they're looking to make deep cuts because of a \$6.2-million deficit, yet it's very easy to shovel \$3 million out the door at one hospital in a sweetheart deal.

This Premier has no problem—no problem at all—telling Ontarians that they have to make do: They have to make do when their emergency rooms close; they have to make do when hospital beds disappear. But when will we finally see him stand up and clamp down on the appalling waste of our health care dollars in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: None of us want to see any waste in our health care system and none of us want to tolerate that. There is something that happened at a hospital in London—my friend makes an oblique reference to it—and it's the responsibility of the board of directors there to ensure that they're enforcing a rule they have on the books, and we would encourage them to do that as quickly as they can.

But again, as a government, we have moved quickly and effectively to improve the quality and number of services available to Ontarians. For example, we have funded close to 1.7 million new procedures and we've reduced wait times dramatically in a number of areas. Now, 907,000 more Ontarians have access to family care. We have 14 new MRI machines and double the number of MRI hours of operation. We have close to 1,800 more doctors practising. We've increased medical school spaces by 23%. There are 150 family health teams, with more to come. I can speak at length about the progress we've made—

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

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is again to the Premier. Yesterday the Premier's harmonized sales tax scheme was heckled and jeered. Obviously, rural and

northern families think the HST is a bad deal, and that's not surprising. The HST is a blatant tax grab that makes life less affordable for the people of Ontario, and it will slow down job growth by some 40,000 jobs every year, not according to me but to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

My question is straightforward: How much polling has the government conducted on the harmonized sales tax and how much money has it spent to do that polling?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I was at the International Plowing Match held yesterday in Earlton and I don't know about the heckling and jeering that was raised by my colleague. But I can say that there is obviously continuing interest in the harmonized sales tax, and I can say that our intention here and our motivations are very clear. We think it's the right thing to do for Ontarians. We think it's the right thing to do for our future. We think it's the right thing to do to ensure that we can grow this economy, that we can create more jobs so we can support services like health care, which my colleague just asked me about.

If we're going to continue to have the financial wherewithal to support the quality of life we enjoy here in Ontario, and particularly the public services that sustain that quality of life—our health care, our education, protections for the environment and so on and so forth—then we must have a strong economy. And the single, most important thing that we can do to strengthen that economy is to move ahead with a harmonized sales tax.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's what we found through a freedom-of-information request: A poll paid for by the Ministry of Finance shows that support for the HST is falling. When this government's pollsters, in fact, tell Ontarians that the HST will apply to new goods and services, nearly 70% are opposed. One can only imagine what the number would look like if Ontarians were told that the HST will kill up to 40,000 jobs each year.

How does it surprise the Premier that Ontarians know a bad deal when they see one?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's an important debate. We embrace this responsibility. We will not shy away from it as my colleagues did when they were in government and as the Conservatives did when they were in government. They know in their heart of hearts it's the right thing to do. We all understand this is not an easy thing to do. When you have the support of the business community and food banks at the same time, we know that we are on the right track. Tom Cooper, who is a well-recognized, and in fact, as I understand it, a highly regarded anti-poverty activist in Hamilton, has said that this is the right thing for us to do.

We look forward to getting my colleague's support so that, together, we can do what is right for the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government's own polling shows how angry people are about the HST. Half of Ontarians classify themselves as strongly opposed to the tax, and there are very few regional differences in this poll, very few differences in terms of the opposition. Maybe that's why your backbenchers are feeling so nervous these days.

I don't think the government needed to pay for a poll to find out anything about how people feel about this tax. The Premier could have walked into any coffee shop in any community in this province, a place like Earlton, a place like Kirkland Lake or Timmins, and they would tell you they are not happy about this tax.

Given the depth of opposition from everyday Ontarians, why does the Premier not admit that the HST is a bad idea and pull the plug on this tax grab once and for all?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The complaint that my colleague seems to be making is that we're not governing in keeping with the polls. She's right. That's what leadership is all about. We're doing what we believe is right for Ontario.

We didn't move ahead with the Green Energy Act because there was a groundswell of support for that. We did that because we want to put Ontario at the forefront in North America. We're not moving ahead with early learning in Ontario because there's a groundswell of support that prompted that in the original case. We're doing it because it will put Ontario at the forefront in North America. We're not moving ahead with the HST because of the groundswell of support for it. We're doing it because it's going to put Ontario at the forefront in North America.

These are all about leadership. They're all about doing the right thing for the people of Ontario. They may not be easy, but they're the right thing to do.

HOSPITAL SPENDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. A pattern is developing. Executives in the McGuinty government are following the example the Premier and the Minister of Health set when they hired Sarah Kramer, who gave \$16 million in untendered contracts. Diane Beaty, vice-president at London Health Sciences Centre, recently gave untendered contracts worth over \$3 million to her former business associate.

The Premier and the Minister of Health clearly don't have a handle on these scandals. Why does the Premier continue to have confidence in a Minister of Health who clearly doesn't have control of his portfolio?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The honourable member, I gather, is asking for the minister's resignation and I disagree. Although there are over 150 hospitals in the province of Ontario, each with their own set of rules and regulations, largely in keeping with the advice of the Ontario Hospital Association, she is saying that this particular minister ought to be responsible for the activities of

any one individual working inside the hospital when it comes to sole-source contracts. I don't agree with that.

I think it is important for us to set a standard. We've said no sole-source contracts for consultants. That's what we've done on behalf of the government. The hospital is taking responsibility for the course of action which it feels appropriate in the circumstances, and we support them in that regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: There's little point in calling another hastily arranged press conference to blame a scapegoat or to pass the blame off to a third party. Beattie was discovered. An audit has been conducted. Since there's no standard of accountability with his ministers, will the Premier please tell us whether Ms. Beattie is going to be publicly fired like the CEO of OLG, allowed to resign quietly like his Liberal friends, or be kept on like his ministers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know my colleague does in fact understand that the hospital has a board of directors. There's a line of authority and accountability connected with that. There is a due process to be pursued in these kinds of circumstances.

My understanding is that the hospital is on to this issue. They feel it's an important issue. They are taking responsibility for doing what they feel is appropriate in the circumstances, and we support them in that regard.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, a year ago you promised Ontarians an expanded retraining program and you said you were going to help more laid-off workers. Yet on September 14, the five brokers in Hamilton for Second Career, which include the John Howard Society, VPI, Mohawk College, Employment Hamilton and Goodwill Amity, were advised by the ministry that the program had been capped and no more applications were going to be received.

Why have you closed the door on so many needed applicants?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very pleased with the success that we've seen on Second Career and I'm very pleased to report to this House that, as of today, we've had over 17,500 people come forward for Second Career, which I think shows a great success. We have a number of outstanding stories that have come forward.

What the honourable member says is wrong. We have not closed the doors on Second Career. We continue to work with all applicants. Applicants who come forward, come forward to Employment Ontario to receive help in terms of finding a job and finding job opportunities. We certainly make sure that they do their due diligence and look at a whole range of options that are available to them. Second Career is but one program amongst a suite of programs to allow people to move on and make the transition back into the workforce.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You'd better check in with the Hamilton Second Career folks, because the program has been capped. No more applicants were going to be received as of September 4. I don't know where you're at, but that's the information we have.

This program is a mess. It was a mess two years ago and it's a mess today. We hear about a lack of accountability, conflicting requirements for acceptance, a lack of clarity about the funding formula and the length of time applicants have to wait. Now, with no warning, you have capped the program. The people who trusted you have been betrayed.

What do you have to say to the unemployed applicants who spent months finding an appropriate Second Career placement, whose employment insurance is running out, and who have now been left high and dry by your ministry?

Hon. John Milloy: I find it more than passing strange when he stood up week after week and said that this program was a failure, and yet here we stand today with 17,500 people who have entered into this program.

The honourable member is wrong. We saw an incredible interest leading up to the start of the school year. We're in a process of assessing the program. We're in a process of dealing with the applications that have come forward. They have not been capped.

I remind all members that when a person comes forward and is looking for help through Employment Ontario, we make sure they explore all options so that they move forward with the most appropriate program—Second Career, Ontario skills development, employment counselling, the whole range that moves forward.

The honourable member is wrong. The honourable member should be standing up and congratulating us on a program that has welcomed 17,500 people into its ranks.

TAXATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Minister, my constituents in Guelph are proud of the strength of the manufacturing industry in our city. People who work at companies such as Polycon, Denso, Guelph Tool and Linamar rely on their jobs to support their families. But many of my constituents have only been hearing half the story when it comes to the HST. They've heard claims made that the HST is not good for the economy and will actually deter the creation of more jobs in Guelph.

Would the minister tell us if these claims are correct? My constituents are looking for some clarity, preferably from the business community itself. We saw a news release this morning which stated that a group of Ontario business leaders have united in support of sales tax reform. Who should we believe, those who tell only half the story or the very businesses who will be affected by the HST?

1100

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend from Guelph for the question. It is true that this morning,

a group of leaders from the business community in Ontario put out a news release in support of sales tax reform here in Ontario. Calling themselves the Smart Taxation Alliance, this group includes—I'll share with the members here—the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, AGS Automotive Systems, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters—Ontario, the Certified General Accountants of Ontario, the Ontario Road Builders' Association, the Ontario Trucking Association, the Retail Council of Canada, TD Bank Financial Group and the Toronto Board of Trade. What do they say? They say that we need to modernize our 20th-century taxation system and get it into the 21st century so we can compete for jobs in the 21st century.

I know that in Guelph, we need to send a strong signal to our manufacturers who export around the world that this indeed will be a—

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty supports the HST, and he said the single sales tax “is the single most important step that provinces with RSTs could take to stimulate new business investment, create jobs and improve Canada’s overall economic competitiveness.” Yesterday, former Ontario Finance Minister Janet Ecker also came out as an enthusiastic supporter of the HST, stating, “Moving to a harmonized sales tax is very good for the economy and it’s certainly going to help with our business competitiveness.” And now today, we’ve seen this non-partisan coalition of leaders from the business community support the HST.

But one thing does concern me. Do my constituents have an additional tax burden? Those who are currently unemployed and seniors who live on fixed incomes do not have—

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend. One of the things we have to remember is that we’re going to be providing some \$15 billion over the next three years of income tax relief for people, for small businesses and for corporations, and that 93% of personal-income-tax filers here in the province of Ontario will be receiving a personal income tax cut.

But I’d say to the member that it is important that the people who she’s referenced in her riding, people of low income, seniors on a fixed income, middle-income people with a lot of children, will also benefit from targeted tax credits. We’ll ensure that we apply this new modernized tax reform in a compassionate way. I can tell seniors particularly that we’ll be enhancing the Ontario property and sales tax credit.

But those who receive the GST rebate from the federal government will see from their provincial government a large increase in what they receive as well to ensure that this is applied fairly—

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

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Attorney General. Last Thursday, members of the PC caucus asked the Minister of Finance how much public money the McGuinty government had spent on the Windsor Energy Centre, something that should be a simple matter of public record. Minister Duncan, the Minister of Finance, was unable to answer that question, citing a lawsuit against the OLG, which makes no sense to me.

Attorney General, just how many lawsuits are there against the OLG?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I’ll pass the supplementary over to one of my colleagues who can better answer the question.

It’s a well-established principle of the law that if a matter is before the courts, it is not appropriate to debate it in other forums. It shows disrespect for the process, it potentially damages reputations outside of the court process and it can undermine the result of the process. That’s why we have a system of justice, so that matters can be aired fully before it according to the rules and protections that exist.

I’ll wait for the supplementary and determine what he really would like in answer from the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: That answer, with due respect, is not an answer.

We know of at least two lawsuits: the wrongful dismissal suit by Kelly McDougald and a lawsuit by the party that won the bid to design, build, own and operate the Windsor Energy Centre. Neither lawsuit makes an issue of how much public money the McGuinty government has spent on the energy centre, yet it seems that this government is using these lawsuits as convenient cover.

So my question is again for the Attorney General: Is it your legal opinion that these lawsuits are reason enough to hide the truth about how much public money the McGuinty government spent on the Windsor Energy Centre?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw the one comment.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, as the Attorney General has pointed out, there is a commercial dispute between the operator and OLG, so I won’t be able to comment on that specific lawsuit.

I can say this: In fact, if one looks at public accounts for 2007-08, page 2-99, he will find the following reference—and by the way, this was a project that was separate from the Casino Windsor expansion—“The corporation is committed to the design, construction and commissioning of the energy centre on Casino Windsor property with total costs currently estimated to be in the range of \$65,000,000 to \$70,000,000. As at March 31, 2008, \$50,555,000 (2007-\$11,899,000) has been expended.”

It's in the public accounts. It's clear. You ought to read your documents before you ask questions like that.

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

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Last week on the Global television show 16:9, reporter Mary Garofalo exposed Dave Switzer and his accomplice, Doreen Henderson, now living in New Hamburg, Ontario. She also had interviews with at least a dozen victims, people who were bilked out of life savings.

Why has this man not been arrested, charged and put to trial?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member knows, as does every other member in this place, that investigative decisions are made by the particular police service.

If, in fact, a decision is made or an investigation is made by a police service and an individual is not satisfied with that investigation, that person has the right to go to the police service, to the police chief. If, after that happens, that individual is still not satisfied, he or she then can appeal to OCCPS, the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services. I would suggest that if there's a concern, there is a process in place.

If the member is asking me to interfere with policing operations, the answer is categorically no.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: People have been making complaints about this con man since 2005, and since the broadcast aired, countless other people have come out of the woodwork identifying themselves as victims as well. These people just don't understand because, when they call the police in any number of jurisdictions, the police are passing the buck. They need assistance to ensure that this person, Dave Switzer, is arrested, charged and prosecuted and some effort is made to get restitution.

Why won't you have your deputy minister instruct the Ontario Provincial Police to examine the concerns that have been raised about Dave Switzer?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me just reinforce: I won't be instructing the OPP. I don't interfere. No minister is responsible to interfere with the operational aspects of any particular police service. What we do have in place is a very, very strict oversight procedure.

Let me repeat: The individual can appeal to the individual police service. If not satisfied, they then can appeal to an oversight body called the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services.

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

1110

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, as you know, the

OPA is still planning to bring a power plant into the southwest GTA-Clarkson area. However, the Clarkson airshed study indicated that we have a stressed airshed. In particular, the study showed elevated levels of PM2.5, which has many people concerned about what this might mean to our health. That's why community leaders, ratepayer groups, Her Worship Mayor McCallion and I are united in saying that we don't want a new gas-fired power plant in our airshed.

Minister, given the findings of the Clarkson airshed study, why is the OPA pressing ahead with its plan to put a power plant in the southwest GTA?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to say to the honourable member, it is duly noted that he is in opposition to a gas-fired power plant in the southwest GTA. I've said on many occasions that it's understandable: Not many people are looking for more energy infrastructure anywhere closer to them than they have to have.

But in the case of this process, we have had a variety of proposals for the location. The city of Mississauga has been instructive in previous advice in saying that they didn't want to see Lakeview continue as a source of power production, so that was taken out of play, to the benefit of the local community. But we are left with the necessity of ensuring that there is an adequate supply of electricity in an area where demand has increased over time. That's why we're committed to working in that airshed with the Ministry of the Environment on strategies that will mitigate emissions, with a view towards helping to improve the quality of air in that area, working alongside the honourable member and others in the local community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Minister, you recently directed the OPA to delay the RFP to locate a natural gas power plant in the southwest GTA. The purpose of the delay was to give the OPA time to develop a plan to reduce emissions in the Clarkson airshed.

My community has been calling for emission reductions for many years now. There have been numerous town halls and meetings on this very issue. Many have called on me to share their concerns about our air quality in Mississauga South.

We all agree that reducing emissions in our area is the right thing to do, but members still don't know what this plan entails. My question: What is being done to reduce air pollution in south Mississauga?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do think that one of the points here that is important is that an airshed has local contributors, and it has those contributors which have come from upwind. The efforts that we're making in the province of Ontario to eliminate coal from our electricity generation, including upwind influences like Nanticoke, will obviously be beneficial overall to air quality in much of Ontario and will have some substantial implications for the southwest GTA.

We recognize that there is work to do in this airshed. That's why the plant has stringent environmental requirements, much beyond those that are demanded by the law,

and that's why the Ontario Power Authority will work again with the Ministry of the Environment and my ministry and other local parties to have strategies over the longer term which will mitigate the emissions in the airshed, with a view towards enhancing air quality there, as we all work together, through the elimination of coal, to advance better air quality all across the breadth of the province of Ontario.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Attorney General. We all know the principle that not only must justice be done, it must also be seen to be done. Today we have Patricia Marshall and her two daughters, Lindsay and Courtney, here with us in the chamber. Their situation is one where this principle failed dramatically.

It's your ministry's policy to involve victims in the criminal justice process, yet a senior crown attorney, under your watch, failed to advise Ms. Marshall and her daughters that he was dropping charges of criminal harassment against their neighbour. Attorney General, what do you have to say to Ms. Marshall and her daughters today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I would say directly to them that the conduct in question was deeply disturbing. Any time a person's sense of privacy, their sense of dignity is violated, it's deeply disturbing, and the crown said this directly to them in a very extensive letter. He has a responsibility to review the facts and circumstances and to determine whether a charge should proceed. He reviewed all the circumstances and made that determination.

He also assessed the sense of public security to make sure that, to the extent one is able, the public security would be advanced, and was being advanced, through the individual obtaining treatment. But he clearly said that he should have and would normally have spoken—and doesn't have a reason why he didn't speak—to the victims and the family before he made the decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The same crown attorney told Ms. Marshall that a primary objective in dealing with this young man was to avoid recidivism. Yet, for Ms. Marshall and her family, the story isn't over. Forced to shower in their basement, they're still living in fear. This is totally unacceptable in the province of Ontario. Faced with this, Attorney General, do you have anything else to say to Ms. Marshall and her daughters?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I indicated directly to them, we take any conduct such as this very seriously. The crown clearly took it very seriously. He reviewed it very carefully, took a look at all the material that the police investigation had gathered, the other material relating to the facts and circumstances of the case, and made the determination which it is his responsibility to make—not always popular, but the responsibility to make. He also made an assessment as to the public safety and the future safety of the individuals in question and the community

generally, and he reached a determination. In the interests of public safety, it's his determination to make, and he did so responsibly.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. At least 30 Niagara grape-growing families are threatened with bankruptcy right now, families like Don Wiley's who have been farming for 60 years. The Wiley grapes are ripe, but they remain unsold. The reason? The McGuinty government is okay with the domestic content in cellared-in-Canada wines to sit at a measly 30%. In March, the government ended its 30% rebate program, to add insult to injury, on Ontario VQA wines that are sold at the LCBO. Why is the government standing idly by while the Wiley family and dozens of other families face losing their livelihood in the Niagara region?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank my friend from Hamilton, the honourable member opposite, for the question. As Ontario's wine industry has matured, it has been vital that we try to balance the grape side with the wine side and understand that it's one industry. The McGuinty government has asked both the Grape Growers of Ontario and the Wine Council of Ontario to work together to help us, in partnership, come up with a strategy that can see us move forward into the next phase of the more mature industry. We're really pleased that they've taken that responsibility very seriously. We've had a number of meetings with them, we continue to meet on this issue and we're quite hopeful that we'll have a strategy going forward with respect to this.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The clock is ticking. If the Wileys and others don't get support now, they face bankruptcy and poverty. Last fall, the McGuinty government came up with a program to buy unsold grapes. This year, three times as many grapes, some 9,000 tonnes, remain unsold and in danger of rotting on the vine, and the government is doing absolutely nothing. Why is this government ignoring the plight of these grape growers?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: With all due respect, I need to point out to the member opposite and to other members in the House that it's the McGuinty government that has provided over \$40 million in assistance to the wine-producing industry since 2003, including \$4 million last year to purchase uncontracted grapes. We support the grape growers, of course, by focusing on VQA wines. VQA wines, for the information of the member opposite, are wines that contain 100% Ontario grape, and that's really our flagship. Both the grape growers of Ontario as well as the Wine Council of Ontario understand, appreciate and have been advocating for an even greater focus on VQA wines, and we intend to accommodate that moving-forward strategy.

1120

LEGAL AID

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Attorney General. There is no doubt that this government is working hard across the board to reduce poverty and provide a wide range of support to families who need it most. We know that Ontario's legal aid system serves some of the most vulnerable amongst us and that in these difficult economic times, there is an even greater demand for legal aid services. For many women and children in Ontario, family legal aid is what stands between them and poverty and abuse.

Legal aid has an obligation to ensure that people in very difficult circumstances have the representation they need, yet this vital service was subject to years of cuts and freezes by previous governments. Would the Attorney General tell this House what steps the government is taking to ensure that Ontario's most vulnerable citizens have access to such essential legal aid services?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member is quite right, and he has been one of a number who have advocated very strongly for improvements to the legal aid system. He's recognized that we've increased the tariff 15% over the past six years and funded those increases, but he says, "What's the next step?"

So I was very pleased that we recently announced the single largest investment in legal aid's history to make sure that we can support access to justice for the poorest Ontarians. One of the areas where that investment will make a real difference is in the area of family law, because I have—and I know my colleague has—heard throughout the province that those who come before the family courts want access to more information very early on, opportunities to resolve their issues in a collaborative way and opportunities that are in the best interests of the children. This investment will help achieve that justice for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Back in June I had the opportunity to tour Community Legal Services, located in downtown Ottawa, where I have seen firsthand the vital services being delivered there to those who are most in need in our community. It is clear that investing in Ontario's legal aid system will certainly help protect our most vulnerable and drive significant reforms in our family and criminal courts. This means Ontarians using legal aid services and representation can benefit from more solutions and a client-centred approach.

I know that one of the priorities of the Attorney General has been to take action to reduce delays in our criminal justice system and ensure justice sector resources are being used in the most effective manner possible.

Could the Attorney General inform this House about how this investment in legal aid will contribute to increasing the effectiveness of our criminal justice system?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Again, a very important point. There are two broad initiatives, and we're going to

be setting up advisory groups so that we can get the best advice from those who do the work as to how this investment will improve access to justice for the poorest Ontarians, and our criminal justice and other reforms.

One of the areas in the criminal law sphere is to make sure that people get access not only to advice, but that that advice is supported in a way that encourages early and effective decision-making. We want to make sure that the lawyers who are doing the work have the appropriate support, so they can make the right decision in the right case as early and effectively as possible. We'll be moving, for example, to block fees in that area, which we had before, which will better support justice effectiveness in the long run.

CEMETERIES

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, I'm advised that the Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries is a non-profit, non-share capital corporation dating back to a special act of the Legislature passed in 1871. This organization, as you would know, holds stewardship of two of Toronto's oldest, most historic cemeteries: the Toronto Necropolis and Mount Pleasant Cemetery. It now encompasses 10 cemeteries and over 1,200 acres of valuable land in Toronto and the GTA.

However, I'm advised that there is no longer an open process for recruiting board members and that there are concerns over public accountability for what is essentially a valuable national treasure. Over the years, the publicly owned agency has begun to take on the characteristics of and act as a private company.

Minister, in view of your government's recent commitments to transparency, will you take steps to make this process at Mount Pleasant more open and accountable?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: To the Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: As members of the House know, the government works with a designated administrative authority, namely the Board of Funeral Services, with respect to a number of issues that arise from time to time. The specific issues referenced have some very specific legal implications, and I understand that there's talk or action with respect to legal actions launched, so it would be inappropriate for me to get into any of that detail, as the Attorney General pointed out on a previous question. Suffice to say that we are aware of the situation and our ministry is in the process of working with the partners there to see what role, if any, our ministry might play in moving forward with a successful resolution.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, the Mount Pleasant situation was brought to Minister Smitherman's attention during the election in 2007, and he promised there, in the public forum, to respond. As well, the Premier has been advised, as well as you. The reason they have sought legal opinion, Minister, as you would know, is that you

have frustrated their attempts to have an open, accountable disclosure on behalf of the Mount Pleasant Group. Yet, so far, I can imagine that the citizens have drafted new recommendations for governance that are based on the spirit of the original trust. This would include accountability through elections of directors and making annual financial statements public. Some citizens are concerned that the cemetery—there is an intent to mislead the public or become a regular corporation through stealthful means.

Minister, will you make it clear here today that you will take action to assist this group to establish this as an original trust as it was in law in 1871? Or are you going to keep this under the radar and force them to—

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: In fairness, I can't make that commitment today because the legal issues are very complex. This goes back to the late 1800s, and there is considerable legal dispute about the ins and outs, the terms of reference and the carriage forward with respect to those. We are working and will continue to work with Minister Smitherman and the partners involved in looking at this issue, to whatever extent we can move it forward and win some kind of win-win resolution. That, of course, is the kind of action that our government would be committed to.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question for the Minister of Transportation. Greyhound bus lines has said that they will shut down bus services in northwestern Ontario on December 2, leaving literally hundreds of communities and First Nations without transportation services. The government of Manitoba last week met with Greyhound and worked out an agreement so that bus services will continue in rural Manitoba.

My question is this: Why hasn't the McGuinty government met with Greyhound to discuss maintaining bus services in northwestern Ontario? Why doesn't the McGuinty government seem to care about quality bus services in northwestern Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Let me deal with the second part first, because I think most independent and fair-minded people would not agree with that assertion. The member will be aware that the obligation of Greyhound, when they are withdrawing service in areas, is to find a replacement for their service. Already, when they have withdrawn from certain routes, there has been a company or companies that have come forward to provide that service—because I share with the member himself, who represents the area, a concern that there be adequate service for those individuals who require that service. So I am optimistic that there are those who are going to move forward to provide a service for the people in the area with which I think they will be satisfied.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The minister needs to take a closer look at what is happening because, in fact, over the

last six years under the McGuinty government, communities have lost frequency of bus service and some communities have lost bus service altogether, and they don't have rail service and they don't have train service. So saying that someone else is going to come in and do the job hasn't been working.

I want to remind the minister that the Ontario government is the principal operator already of two bus services in the province. This government gave GO Transit \$35 million last year to provide bus services for people to move from municipalities outside Toronto into Toronto. You gave Ontario Northland \$25 million to ensure that there were bus services and some train service in north-eastern Ontario. How do you then tell the people of northwestern Ontario, "You're on your own," and, "Oh, we hope that somebody else comes along to pick up some kind of service"? How do you justify that differential of attitude?

1130

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: What has happened to the old Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario, when you have that going on in the House?

I say to the member, it's a very good question because it's a service that is really required, but the service that has been provided, I am informed, by Caribou has been a good service for people. That does not mean there's not a need for exploring further options, and I do know MTO is prepared to meet with the company to explore those options.

I know what the member said about Greyhound at the time. He may have changed his mind, but I remember he said that Greyhound is crying poor in Manitoba, even though it has just built a new terminal at the Winnipeg airport, and, "I have no doubt that they're probably losing money ... but this is more than anything else a bargaining tactic." So I know—

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

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I know that our government uses Justice Linden's recommendations in the Ipperwash report as a guide for working together with First Nations and Metis across Ontario. One of the key recommendations in the report is the implementation of the new relationship fund. This summer you announced over \$12 million in funding for First Nations and Metis communities and their organizations through the new relationship fund.

Minister, my constituents and the First Nations in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex would like to know the status of the new relationship fund and how it will help aboriginal communities to grow and prosper across Ontario.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to respond to the member's very important question, but first I have to

recognize the efforts the member is making in her community to bring her municipal community together with the people of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. It's tough work, but it's very, very important as we work towards reconciliation.

That's what the new relationship fund is all about. We're investing \$25 million over two years in this fund to help First Nation and Metis communities more effectively engage with government and the private sector on important land resource and other development initiatives.

In July, our government helped 105 Ontario First Nation communities build up their capacity. In August, our government provided \$2.6 million to the Métis Nation of Ontario on behalf of its 26 community councils by providing these—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you very much, Minister, for your comments and recognition of the importance of building relationships.

I know that the new relationship fund was established in 2008 to fulfill a key recommendation of the Ipperwash inquiry report and is another step in strengthening the McGuinty government's relationship with the aboriginal peoples of Ontario, but this fund is only one of the ways that this government can build stronger, more prosperous First Nations and Metis communities across the province. What else is your ministry doing and what else has it done to build strong relationships with our aboriginal citizens?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Over the last six years, times have changed in this province when it comes to the relationship between the government of Ontario and the First Peoples and Metis communities and leaders in this province. We've taken on a number of initiatives, all in partnership with First Nations and Metis people.

We've established the Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities in Action Committee to partner with First Nation and Metis leadership to identify and implement priorities.

We've signed an historic agreement, and I know the member was present when we did, with the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation to transfer Ipperwash Provincial Park.

Together with the Algonquins of Ontario and Canada, we signed a negotiation framework agreement, an agreement on consultation, to move forward with negotiations to resolve Algonquin land claims in eastern Ontario. This is the largest land claim in our province's history.

We've established a framework agreement with the Métis Nation of Ontario. For the first time ever, the Métis Nation of Ontario was acknowledged by the government of Ontario.

There are many, many more things we can talk about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has expired.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order under section 99(d), which states, "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sessional days, unless he or she indicates that more time is required because the answer will be costly or time-consuming or that he or she declines to answer, in which case a notation shall be made on the Orders and Notices paper following the question indicating the minister has made an interim answer, the approximate date that the information will be available, or that the minister has declined to answer, as the case may be."

I have six questions to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on the order paper, a number of which are from December 2008, and the others are from January 2009. I believe the 24 sessional days have since passed, and I would ask when I could expect a reply to those questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for the point of order. It is a point of order. It is my understanding that interim answers have been filed, but I would encourage the honourable minister to instruct her staff to meet the requirements of the honourable member as he has asked.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I too rise on a point of order on the same issue. On January 25, I filed an order paper question. Twenty-four sessional days have long ago passed and there has been no answer received.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask that all members—if you are to look at today as an example, on page 34, there are a number of questions that have not been answered. I would ask that the respective ministers review and have their staff review this list and to please ensure that the needs of the members are met.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: It's my pleasure to introduce guests from Brampton: Mr. Gursharan Singh Puar, who is the father of my parliamentary assistant; Mr. Hariqbal Singh Puar, who is visiting from India; Mr. Mann Singh Aulakh, who is an airport taxi driver; Mr. Tejbir Singh Dhillon, who also works at the airport as a taxi driver; and Mr. Bhupinder Singh Grewal, who is a small business operator in Brampton. Welcome.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I just want to introduce everyone to the newest Van Bommel grandchild. She was born at noon today and her name is Lily Van Bommel. Her parents are Angela and Rene Jr. She has two brothers, Rene III and Matthew, who are now responsible to make a tomboy out of her. I have to go out and get some nifty red boots, and I'm going to see what Opa has to say about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Congratulations.

I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition to welcome some guests in the west members' gallery today: Ambassador David Lee, the representative of Taiwan in Canada; Mrs. David Lee; Mr. Phillip Leong; Mr. K. J. Wang; Mr. Wayne Fan; Mrs. Cindy Fan; and Constance Wong. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JIM McCARTER

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I rise today to pay tribute to an officer of this Legislature and a good friend: Ontario's Auditor General, Mr. James McCarter. This summer, Mr. McCarter was elected a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario. Fellows are elected by the council of the institute once every three years in recognition of having brought distinction to the chartered accountant profession with outstanding achievements in their careers, community leadership and service to the profession.

This is a great honour. Less than 3% of the chartered accountants are given this title, and a two-thirds majority vote of council is required to elect a nominee.

Having worked closely with Mr. McCarter for the past six years as Chair of Ontario's Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I certainly recognize how deserving he is of this honour. Jim is very thorough, very fair and very helpful to the public accounts committee. Ontarians are very lucky to have such a diligent and hard-working person looking out for their tax dollars.

I know that all members of the public accounts committee and all members of this Legislature join me in congratulating James McCarter on this distinction.

CELEBRATE BISEXUALITY DAY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Today, it's my honour to read a statement from the NDP LGBT committee on behalf of Celebrate Bisexuality Day, September 23. This is a day that takes place each year on September 23, started by activists in 1999.

Celebrate Bisexuality Day puts it on the map with its call to promote bi-visibility and celebrate the wonderful diversity of bisexual lives. Events are held all over the world, including Canada, on and around this date to raise the profile and bring people's attention to the uniqueness of those lives.

The LGBT committee of the NDP proudly pledges our solidarity and support with our bisexual brothers and sisters on this day of celebration. The LGBT committee of the New Democratic Party believes in halting roll-backs of achieved rights, including spousal benefits and same-sex marriage; supporting international struggles against discrimination; and including gender identity and

expression in the Ontario Human Rights Act and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

In August at the Halifax 2009 convention, they adopted a resolution drafted seeking to end discrimination in health care, including to work proactively against homophobic, transphobic and heterosexist discrimination in the health care field.

I certainly second this initiative by the LGBT committee and wish them well on this day.

UBISOFT

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: We all recognize the emergence of the knowledge-based economy. To compete with countries like China and India, we need to continue to make investments in our strongest asset, our people.

Our government has long recognized this, and I'm very proud to be part of a government taking bold action to create the next generation of jobs that build on the existing strength in Ontario's economy. The McGuinty government's \$263-million strategic investment in Ubisoft will help them establish a presence in Toronto and see them invest in a new state-of-the-art studio that will begin operation later this year.

Ubisoft chose Ontario because of its talented workforce, competitive tax environment and strong ties with Toronto's film industry. This cutting-edge studio will not only produce some of the best-selling video games, but will create high-quality jobs in the new knowledge economy.

This government's investment will create 800 jobs over 10 years and countless spinoff jobs. The investment in the jobs of today and of the future underscores our government's commitment to Ontario workers.

We will continue to work hard to create a positive business environment and stronger economy for all Ontarians. As chair of the government's Toronto caucus, I'm proud to see this investment and new development here in our city of Toronto.

LEGION WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to recognize Royal Canadian Legions across Ontario during this week, as we mark Legion Week.

Since its inception more than 80 years ago, Legions have honoured Canada's war dead through many acts of remembrance and by providing support and a strong voice for our service members, both past and present, and their families.

As the representative for Dufferin-Caledon, I want to especially recognize the Orangeville, Shelburne, Alton and Bolton Legions for building a legacy of volunteerism in our communities through their programs and fundraising efforts supporting many local programs and activities.

At every event I attend organized by the Legion, I'm reminded of the important role they play. Whether it's sponsoring a public speaking competition for students,

fundraising to upgrade their facility for better accessibility to meet the needs of their community or providing assistance to a soldier returning from Afghanistan, the Legion is a pillar of support in Dufferin–Caledon.

I applaud every Legion member this week for their incredible contributions and outreach in our communities.

RAPPORT YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: Last week, I had the pleasure of attending the 40th anniversary dinner of Rapport Youth and Family Services in Peel.

I first met the leadership of this group when I was elected to the Legislature in 2003. At that time, they had just completed a four-year volunteer connection program which was funded by Trillium.

Rapport recognized a long time ago that Peel has a higher proportion of young children and young families in our midst. Since that time, Rapport has worked hard to create innovative programs to offer high-risk youth in Brampton programs that benefit the entire community. These programs address anger management issues as well as bullying, by building self-esteem and social skills in our young.

Rapport has come full circle by now organizing a symposium for youth to learn about and get involved in programs focusing on creating a world that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. This annual event is also designed to encourage youth to engage and reach out to community-based organizations, exploring opportunities to transform their interests into action through volunteerism.

Rapport is a grassroots organization staffed by people who try to improve the lives of young people between the ages of 12 and 20 who are experiencing personal, social or family problems. Rapport volunteers are people in ordinary circumstances doing extraordinary work.

Thank you for the leadership you provide, the services you deliver and the 40 years of strength that you've brought to the community of Brampton.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Arnott: Halton Healthcare recently applied for a CT scanner at the Georgetown Hospital. This new CT scanner would mean reduced wait times and improved local access to this essential diagnostic procedure. It would mean better medical care all around.

In October of 2007, on the very day after I was elected to the Ontario Legislature, I did not take the day off. I was in my office, and my first official act that day was to write to the Minister of Health. I wrote to support Georgetown Hospital as it prepared its application and urged the minister to review it swiftly. I have written several subsequent letters expressing my strong support, including one as recently as August 28. I intend to continue being an active advocate for the health care needs of the people of Halton Hills.

1510

Further, I want to thank the Mississauga Halton LHIN for its support of the Georgetown CT scanner and its quick turnaround time. Cindy McDonnell, chief operating officer at the Georgetown Hospital, also deserves our thanks for her leadership in this proposal. I also want to thank the hospital's board, foundation, doctors, staff and dedicated volunteers for their important work.

Some time ago, I requested a copy of the submission, and I've had a chance to review it. Today I urge the Minister of Health to respond quickly in the affirmative to Halton Healthcare's application and approve a CT scanner for the Georgetown Hospital, serving the community of Halton Hills, which I'm so privileged to represent.

ASSOCIATION FRANÇAISE DES MUNICIPALITÉS DE L'ONTARIO

M. Phil McNeely: La semaine dernière, l'Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario a fêté ses 20 ans de succès à l'occasion de sa rencontre annuelle de 2009. Des représentants de 39 corporations municipales et de plus de 30 associations et institutions provinciales se sont rendus à Cochrane, Ontario, pour soutenir les intérêts des francophones de la province.

L'AFMO travaille à maintenir et à améliorer la prestation de services municipaux en français et offre des services de perfectionnement aux personnes élues. Il en résulte que les Ontariens, francophones et anglophones, bénéficient tous les deux d'une meilleure gouvernance. J'encourage tous les membres de cette Assemblée à participer à cette très importante rencontre en 2010.

Permettez-moi de féliciter l'association et ses membres pour leur engagement et pour les services de valeur qu'ils fournissent. De façon particulière, je veux reconnaître Lorraine Dicaire, présidente de l'AFMO; Jean-Yves Lalonde, vice-président de la région de l'est; et Clermont Lapointe, vice-président de la région du nord. Ces gens travaillent très fort à promouvoir les intérêts des francophones.

L'Ontario est enrichi par ces communautés francophones et anglophones très animées qui vivent côte à côte. L'AFMO renforce ce dynamisme et je la remercie pour son engagement.

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I would like to congratulate the faculty of St. Francis Xavier Catholic High School in Hammond on the success of their music program. St. Francis Xavier Catholic High School has broken a new record of enrolment for their music program. This year, the senior concert band is topping 135 students in grades 10, 11 and 12. This means that almost 50% of the school's senior students are part of the band, and it makes them one of the largest music programs in the Ottawa Valley. This is a huge accomplishment given that when

the program started in 1995, it only had 15 students in the senior concert band.

I would like to congratulate all the band members and acknowledge the very hard work of program directors Stephen Pankiewicz and Marc Larocque. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Education for recognizing the importance of the arts in school by introducing the \$45.5-million enhancement grant program to support initiatives in art and music.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. David Ramsay: I'd like to congratulate all the organizers and volunteers who have done a bang-up job in Timiskaming district in putting on the first-ever International Plowing Match in northern Ontario. It is one of the biggest and one of the best, and I'd like to thank the Premier and members from all sides of the House, who did come up yesterday to share in part of the opening ceremonies.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We were all there.

Mr. David Ramsay: It was really great—and the member from Timmins–James Bay was there, I know, as the neighbouring riding. He very much enjoyed it and felt at home there.

All members are certainly welcome to come—and just to say to all members: There's still time to come. It goes on until Saturday, and the weather's going to be great. It won't be 34 humidex up there either, that's guaranteed, so you'll be very comfortable.

I'd also like to thank all the following agencies and ministries of government that have helped put this on: the Ontario Trillium Foundation; Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund; the northern Ontario heritage fund; Ministry of Tourism Celebrate Ontario; the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; the Ministry of Transportation—and the minister is here today—for all the road-work that was necessary to bring in the proper accesses to the site; and the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Also, special thanks to the OPP and Hydro One for really making it a safe and efficient place to gather for rural Ontario. Again, welcome to everybody to come up this week.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

INTERPROVINCIAL POLICING ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES SERVICES POLICIERS INTERPROVINCIAUX

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 203, An Act to allow for better cross-border policing co-operation with other Canadian provinces and

territories and to make consequential amendments to the Police Services Act / *Projet de loi 203, Loi visant à permettre une meilleure coopération avec les autres provinces et les territoires du Canada en ce qui concerne les services policiers transfrontaliers et à apporter des modifications corrélatives à la Loi sur les services policiers.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Crime knows no borders. In our ongoing effort to reduce crime and protect Ontarians, we must adopt the necessary measures to make it easier for police to investigate criminals and their illegal activities wherever they happen in Canada. Therefore, we must give police the powers they need to continue their investigations across provincial and territorial boundaries.

The Interprovincial Policing Act, 2009, which I am introducing today, would, if passed, establish a process whereby an Ontario official appointed by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services could grant a police officer from another Canadian jurisdiction permission to enter Ontario and perform police duties. Similar legislation in other Canadian provinces and territories would grant reciprocal authority to Ontario police officers working outside Ontario.

On September 11 of this year, Quebec's intergovernmental affairs minister and Quebec's Minister of Public Security joined me in signing a declaration committing both our provinces to introducing this type of legislation. Such legislation would allow for reciprocity between our two neighbouring provinces in the matter of cross-border policing.

This would create a streamlined and efficient system for enabling police to continue their investigations outside their home provinces. It would update a system already in place and provide greater accountability while enhancing the ability of police to pursue investigations across borders. We would also make sure that extra-provincial police officers working in Ontario and Ontario police officers working in other jurisdictions would be held accountable for their actions.

The proposed legislation would provide a more seamless approach to law enforcement and will help make Ontario safer. Currently, extraprovincial police officers operating in Ontario must be appointed as special con-

stables by a municipal police services board or the Ontario Provincial Police commissioner, with the approval of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. This process can sometimes delay the operations and criminal investigations of our police services.

The special constable system does not automatically allow for the extraprovincial police officer to have all the powers of an Ontario police officer, nor does it address issues of oversight, discipline and civil liability for the extraprovincial police officer. In addition, Ontario police officers do not automatically retain their authority when they cross provincial boundaries.

1520

In recent years, police services have increasingly been faced with investigating criminal activity that extends beyond their provincial boundaries. For example, major investigations in bank robberies and organized crime, including motorcycle and youth gangs, often straddle these borders.

Police services in Ontario and other provinces have called for legislation that would allow provincially appointed police officers to retain their police officer powers when they travel to another police jurisdiction on police business. A working group set up by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada addressed this issue and, in 2003, proposed a model statute on cross-border policing for all provinces. Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick have already adopted cross-border policing legislation based on that model, which establishes a process for granting authority to extra-provincial police officers. Ontario police services that border Quebec have asked that both Ontario and Quebec implement cross-border policing legislation to allow for seamless policing across provincial borders. The Inter-provincial Policing Act, 2009, which we are proposing today, responds to those needs, as expressed by police services.

Our policing partners, such as the Police Association of Ontario and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, also support this initiative because it provides a mechanism for their members to deal with the increasing incidence of interprovincial crime. The proposed legislation would allow the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to provide designated officers with the authority to extend the same powers held by Ontario police officers to out-of-province police officers who need to work in Ontario. It would also allow municipal police chiefs and Ontario provincial police detachment commanders to extend these powers for short periods in urgent circumstances. The process we are proposing would be more efficient and effective than currently exists.

Ontario's proposed legislation would address concerns raised by our police partners and would establish a system of oversight discipline and indemnification for civil liability. It would make it easier for police to target criminals and illegal activities, would enhance the existing collaboration between Ontario and Quebec on the key issues of community safety in both jurisdictions

and bring Ontario in line with several other Canadian provinces, and it would ensure that extra-provincial police officers working in Ontario and that Ontario police officers working in other jurisdictions could be held accountable for their actions.

This measure deserves the full support of the members in the House. It reflects the McGuinty government's commitment to community safety by helping our police target criminality wherever it is found, and that means greater safety and security for all Ontarians.

NATIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY WEEK

SEMAINE NATIONALE DES BIOTECHNOLOGIES

Hon. John Milloy: I rise today as Minister of Research and Innovation to speak about National Biotechnology Week, an important one for Ontario. Biotechnology, as members know, is vastly important to our province and our citizens. Ontario's thriving life sciences sector, which includes biotech, employs more than 43,000 people at some 850 companies generating about \$14 billion in revenues annually.

Just yesterday I attended an event hosted by the Biotechnology Initiative. This stakeholder event was held at vaccine maker Sanofi Pasteur to celebrate National Biotechnology Week. I was standing where some of Canada's greatest biotechnology achievements have emerged: the development of a diphtheria vaccine that has saved thousands of children, the injectable polio vaccine, work leading to the eradication of smallpox, and the world's most advanced whooping cough vaccine.

But biotech is not just about innovative vaccines, drug development and health care. Our government is investing in research and innovation that will help green our world and create the next generation of high-paying jobs in other key biotech areas as well. We can speak of the research that's being done across our province to find new ways of using crops to build stronger, lighter, greener auto parts through our support of the Ontario BioAuto Council. There is the work that's being done in Thunder Bay at the new centre for research in the bio-economy, which was launched earlier this year, and the related work happening across the province, from Sarnia to Kingston, to find new revenue streams for the forestry sector through innovations in forestry bioproducts.

In biofuels, we have projects in London at the University of Western Ontario, where researchers are partnering with business to develop the next generation of biofuels using agricultural by-products like corn husks.

Le monde recherche des solutions qui permettraient de mieux traiter et de mieux prévenir la maladie, de créer des soins de santé durables, de faire face au changement climatique et de trouver des moyens plus propres et plus durables de produire l'énergie qu'il nous faut.

En Ontario, nous voyons les défis mondiaux et aussi les énormes possibilités qu'ils présentent, celles de collaborer et de mettre à contribution nos dons, notre

engagement et notre imagination pour la réalisation de bioproduits, de services et d'emplois de l'avenir.

The McGuinty government is proud to be a global leader when it comes to support for the bio-based sector. FierceBiotech has already named us one of the top five places in North America for biotech. Premier McGuinty was honoured with the global Biotechnology Industry Organization's leadership award this year, a worldwide recognition of the actions of the McGuinty government, the actions that they're taking to support and advance this important sector.

Let me tell you more about what we are doing. Ontario's innovation agenda will see \$3.2 billion invested to support the work that innovative people and companies are doing across our province. Specifically, we are supporting our world-class researchers to the tune of \$1.3 billion because we know that it is their discoveries that will lead to the next generation of products, services and technologies. It's also why we created the \$150-million biopharmaceutical investment program or, as it's affectionately known, BIP. We are getting results. BIP has already leveraged an additional \$139.8 million in private sector investment over the past 18 months.

Earlier I spoke of Sanofi Pasteur. Through BIP, we were able to partner with Sanofi to build a new research and development facility at their north Toronto campus. This means retaining 900 existing research and manufacturing jobs and creating 30 new, permanent high-skill research jobs alongside 300 new construction jobs. Our government is committed to attracting, retaining and igniting growth in more companies like Sanofi.

We recognize that tax incentives are important to attracting innovative thinkers and companies to our province. In fact, after Ontario and federal corporate income tax incentives are implemented, a single dollar invested in R&D will cost as little as 35 cents.

We are also cutting Ontario's marginal effective tax rate on new investment in half, and we are creating a 10-year tax exemption for companies that want to commercialize, in Ontario, intellectual property coming from college, universities and research institutions across Canada. Our harmonized sales tax is also an important cost-saving measure for the biotechnology industry.

Everything we are doing is aimed at making Ontario one of the best places in the world to turn new knowledge and new ideas into better health care, cleaner energy and more sustainable ways of doing business and going about our daily lives. Our goal is to be one of the top three jurisdictions in the world for biotech. We will succeed in the same way that we always do, by thinking big and working together.

Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, on behalf of the opposition and our leader, Tim

Hudak, I'll be responding, in the first instance, to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services on behalf of Garfield Dunlop from Simcoe North.

Listening to the minister's comments on that, we would agree on this side. There's been no stronger advocate for law and order and supporting our police services than Garfield Dunlop. I think that can be attested by all the members here. We are of the opinion that crime knows no borders, and that is the issue that is at stake here. But I think it's a little too little, too late. The report that I'm responding to here was issued in 2003. That bill was modeled after the Cross-Border Policing Act, which was adopted in 2003 by both the criminal and civil sections of the Uniform Law Conference of Canada. When I look at other provinces, in fact, provinces that are less resourced, like Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, they have already enacted similar legislation. So I think it's a case that you close the barn door after the horses are gone.

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That being said, it is a very large bill that does affect the police services in Ontario. In fact, I would hope that are you're working in co-operation with the police association as well as the chiefs of police. Each member on this side I'm sure is in regular contact with their chiefs of police. I think of Chief Mike Ewles, who has told me often of the work they're doing, but not getting the fair share of resources when working with the drug enforcement squad and the guns and gangs from the city of Toronto. So there is a lot of work to be done, and I'm sure the minister is aware of that.

I think of the police chief in Toronto, Bill Blair, in terms of his work that is required—are you giving them the proper resources? I know you were slow out of the gate in terms of giving them the funding, that is, the resources to do the job, even though you promised it during the election.

NATIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY WEEK

Mr. John O'Toole: Turning the page to the statement today by the Minister of Research and Innovation, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: Again, on behalf of our critic, Jim Wilson, from Simcoe-Grey, I know that he is a great believer in innovation. On this side, I think we really cloned the term "innovation" in terms of trying to do things differently; otherwise, you're just repeating the mistakes of the past.

In support of the biotech industry, I recognize that this is biotech recognition week nationally and it's appropriate that the minister makes a statement. When I look at the details of the statement, he spoke of a number of sectors they've helped to, as he says—I like the one phrase that's really interesting, Mr. Speaker, if I digress humorously in the very limited time I've been given: the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. The Next Generation of Jobs Fund really says a lot. Their jobs fund will be in the next generation. It will be 10 years from now.

You've mentioned the one case, the BIP grant, the hundreds of thousands of dollars for so many jobs.

Working out the numbers, it's about \$200,000 per job over the next 10 years. You actually would be further ahead to cut them a cheque and let them get on with it. Then we looked at the Second Career chances. You've capped that fund. The question was asked this morning; you ignored it and avoided it.

When it comes to innovation, you have to learn to do things differently. I don't see any evidence of that. In the apprenticeship reform, I don't see any evidence there. I don't see it anywhere. In fact, they should have a debate this afternoon about the lack of innovation on the part of the government.

We're disappointed—how much of this money has actually flowed? How many jobs have actually been created? If I could have those questions responded to, I'd feel somewhat satisfied. You said you're spending \$3.2 billion. How many jobs have you created? All I know from the facts—and the economists are all stating it; they are concerned that there's going to be no growth until 2011. We've got a whole year. We have 330,000 individuals unemployed—330,000 people. That's 330,000 families that don't have an income and a paycheque, and you're spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to create jobs for people who are well educated and well qualified.

This really is another case where a government—now, there is another one. They did one more announcement. You talked about the auto sector. In the auto sector, you came up with a \$10,000 grant for the Volt car, but you cut out the only Canadian company, ZENN, that makes cars in Canada. You wouldn't approve them, so they're not entitled to the money. You're giving money to an American company but not to Canadians. What is this fund about, creating jobs outside Ontario or looking after Ontario?

Both of these announcements today leave me feeling somewhat disappointed. When you think of it, the people of Ontario are worried about jobs and the economy, and this is all false talk and false promises about things that are going to happen sometime in the future. Look to other provinces: They are taking things seriously and making a difference. I don't see any of that here today.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mr. Peter Kormos: I respond to the Minister of Community Safety on behalf of the New Democrats. I was at the announcement earlier today when he held a press conference. I found it an interesting proposal and acknowledge that this is based on the uniform law process. I'm looking forward to debate on it, even more so to hearings, because I want to hear what the police officers have to say. I want to hear what police service boards have to say. I want to hear what big city as compared to small town has to say.

The one thing that troubles me, and this is without analyzing the bill thoroughly yet, is that we have to be very careful not to relinquish our authority over who is a police officer in the province of Ontario. The appoint-

ment process, as it has been described, and especially the fast-track appointment process—the police officer has powers under the Criminal Code; he or she carries a gun—I think it's incredibly important that there be a clearing process to make sure that only the most qualified, most competent, most responsible police officers from other jurisdictions enter the province of Ontario to perform the role of policing.

Those are the sorts of things that we're interested in with this legislation. I suspect it's not going to be a lengthy process, but it's going to be a thorough one, because when we're talking about policing we're talking about community safety truly, but we're talking about the welfare of police as well as the welfare of the public.

So I want this to be an exhaustive understanding of what the legislation does. I want to ensure that it is based on the uniform law proposal. I want to ensure that it's consistent with the other existing regimes that have this process available to them.

I want to take advantage of this opportunity to raise once again, because it was only this morning that we were talking about policing here in the province of Ontario—we were talking during question period about con man Dave Switzer and his accomplice, Doreen Henderson, who have been ripping senior citizens off—some, of their life savings. A broadcast on Global Television resulted in even more people contacting Global and talking about being victims of these people, yet we haven't seen them being investigated by the police. What is the minister saying—that we need Quebec police officers in Ontario to do the job that Ontario cops are supposed to be doing? I hope not. And I'm saying that this gives me an opportunity to underscore once again how these victims have been let down by policing here in the province of Ontario itself, never mind any other jurisdiction.

SEMAINE NATIONALE DES BIOTECHNOLOGIES

M. Gilles Bisson: Le gouvernement a bien le droit de dire que les bioproduits, c'est quelque chose qui est important pour l'économie de l'Ontario. Les néo-démocrates y sont complètement d'accord. La question devient, quelle est la manière pour être capable d'achever le but, d'accélérer les investissements dans cette section d'une manière qui est intéressante pour l'industrie et pour le Canada et l'Ontario en général.

Le gouvernement a pris certains pas. Il ne faut pas dire que le gouvernement n'a rien fait. Le gouvernement a pris des pas, mais ce sont de tout petits pas. Les souliers ne sont pas bien grands. Si on mesure la pointure de ces souliers-là, ce n'est même pas rendu à des deux ou des trois. On a besoin d'avoir des pas plus importants que ça pour avancer les investissements nécessaires.

On sait qu'aujourd'hui, l'économie est en train de se reformer et on a besoin d'investir dans ces industries qui vont donner à l'Ontario l'habileté de se situer dans le futur d'une manière qui est intéressante quand ça vient à la compétition avec d'autres juridictions, telles que les

autres provinces canadiennes, mais plus important, l'Europe et l'Asie, parce que c'est une grande partie de la compétition avec laquelle on a à faire.

Donc, le gouvernement a fait des annonces. Ils ont mis en place ce fameux programme BIP dont ils aiment beaucoup parler qui coûte \$140 millions ou \$150 millions, mais c'est un « token » quand ça vient à combien on a besoin de mettre en place pour assister. Oui, on a besoin d'accélérer des crédits d'impôts pour être capables d'accéder aux chiffres plus importants et plus intéressants quand ça vient à l'investissement, mais on a aussi besoin de travailler avec d'autres ministères à travers le gouvernement. Collèges et universités—c'est le même ministre qui est responsable d'un ministère, et de l'autre ministère qui est aussi important quand ça vient à ces investissements-là.

On a besoin de donner du soutien aux collèges, aux écoles secondaires et aux universités à travers cette province pour qu'ils soient capables de mettre en place une programmation qui est là pour attirer les jeunes du secondaire et les amener au collège ou à l'université pour faire l'ouvrage qui est nécessaire et qui va accélérer les investissements dans ce secteur.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a triple-hitter here today.

It's a pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"Whereas many Ontarians are concerned that the McGuinty government's new local health integration networks (LHINs) will lead to the concentration of health care services in large regional centres; and

"Whereas many local hospitals provide outstanding care in smaller communities; and

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"Whereas Lakeridge Health Port Perry"—as an example—"serves as an excellent model for a wide range of hospital care provided close to home; and

"Whereas citizens want to see the continuation of these services, including obstetrics, general surgery and the ER;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the province of Ontario support community-based hospitals through fair funding and through policies that recognize the importance of local hospitals" in smaller and rural communities.

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and present it to Robert, one of the new pages here.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm really pleased to present another 200 names on a petition to bring a PET scanner to the Sudbury Regional Hospital. It reads as follows:

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

"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, will affix my name to it and will ask page Nicole to bring it down to the Clerk.

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition that was given to me by a number of seniors at the Peel Fountain of Youth Seniors Club, and I'd especially like to thank Edla Steward, Grace Dolly and Anne Fenner. It reads as follows:

"Whereas a retail sales transaction in Ontario should not be subject to two separate taxes, at two different rates, under two sets of rules, and payable to two different levels of government; and

"Whereas Ontario will implement a comprehensive package of income and business tax cuts in 2010, which will especially benefit working families and retired seniors; and

"Whereas the income taxes of Ontarians will be cut permanently, seniors will receive double their former property tax credit and other permanent savings will flow to Ontarians; and

"Whereas the cost to businesses to produce goods will go down permanently as embedded sales tax is permanently eliminated from the business cycle, enabling these businesses to lower business costs, and pass savings along to their customers; and

"Whereas these measures represent the most comprehensive tax reform in a half century, enabling Ontario to be the most competitive place in North America to create jobs, move, grow and operate a business;

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

"That the government of Ontario, and the members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly, swiftly enact Ontario's comprehensive tax reform measures, including the move to a single sales tax in Ontario, as proposed in the province's 2009-10 budget."

I absolutely agree with this. I'm pleased to affix my signature and ask page Jacob to carry it for me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I remind all members that you can summarize long petitions.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas there is no law in Ontario prohibiting pornography and other sexually explicit material from being viewed on computers in public schools and libraries; and

“Whereas there are public schools and public libraries that do not use Internet filtering software on computers that blocks such inappropriate material; and

“Whereas parents in the province of Ontario have the right to ensure their children are protected from pornography and other inappropriate material available on the Internet in their public schools and libraries;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: That all public schools and libraries in Ontario be required to install Internet filtering software on computers to avoid viewing of sites with inappropriate, explicit sexual content.”

It's signed by dozens of my constituents, most of whom are from the Centre Wellington area.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows from the good city of Mississauga:

“Whereas \$45 million a year for five years was promised for dental care for cash-poor people during the 2007 provincial election campaign and the accumulated \$135 million expenditure was approved in the 2008 provincial budget; and

“Whereas so far only \$14 million has been released across Ontario, earmarked for children 14 to 17 years of age, and none assigned to helping seniors; and

“Whereas Peel region is spending \$1.9 million annually from regional funds to help cash-poor seniors in need of dental treatment; and

“Whereas Peel has a wait-list of 3,000 cash-poor seniors needing dental care and the wait-list is growing by 75 seniors a week; and

“Whereas Peel region has 16,000 low-income seniors, many of whom would benefit from dental care which they cannot now afford;

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

“To release immediately the remaining portion of the \$135 million for dental care among low-income families and apportion the money so that Peel region receives a fair share according to population and need.”

It is signed by, as I said, the good people of Mississauga and Peel region. I am in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and

“Whereas the average annual PM2.5 concentrations measured in the Clarkson airshed were among the highest found when compared to data obtained from the ministry's air quality index monitoring stations; and ...

“Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and ...

“Whereas the MOE stated that industrial emissions may contribute as much as 25% of the PM2.5 concentrations in the Clarkson airshed study area; and

“Whereas the MOE stated that it would focus on achieving reductions of the target pollutants from the 57 identified emitters that currently operate in the area; and

“Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

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

“That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area.”

I sign the petition and provide it to Megan.

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas residents in Burlington do not want the McGuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended ... tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax grab 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 families.”

It is signed by dozens of my constituents. I agree with this petition, and I will hand it to page Jacob.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today for Seema Khan. She lives at 1357 Birchview Drive in Mississauga, Ontario.

“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 better be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients, and free 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 agree with this, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Ava.

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TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in Dufferin–Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax grab 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 families.”

I support this petition, and I’m pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Megan.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study

area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and

“Whereas the average annual PM2.5 concentrations measured in the Clarkson airshed were among the highest found when compared to data obtained from the ministry’s air quality index monitoring stations; and

“Whereas the interim 24-hour ministry ambient air quality criterion for PM10 was exceeded on several occasions; and

“Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and

“Whereas concentrations of toluene, xylene, styrene, ethyl benzene, trichloroethene and acrolein were higher than those at the 12 Environment Canada national air pollution surveillance stations in Ontario, including those located in Toronto (4), Brampton, Windsor, Hamilton, Sarnia, Kingston, Ottawa, Kitchener and London; and

“Whereas annual average 24-hour nitrogen dioxide concentrations were found to be among the highest when compared to provincial air quality index stations in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas; and

“Whereas the MOE stated that industrial emissions may contribute as much as 25% of the PM2.5 concentrations in the Clarkson airshed study area; and

“Whereas the MOE stated that it would focus on achieving reductions of the target pollutants from the 57 identified emitters that currently operate in the area; and

“Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

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

“That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact east Oakville’s environment and the Clarkson airshed study area.”

I agree with this petition wholeheartedly and will sign it.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke do not want the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, hydro, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to new home sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax grab 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 families.”

I support this petition and sign it and pass it down with Alyssa.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Joe Dickson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas current changes to ServiceOntario will expand and improve access to licensing, registration, health card renewal and other services, it will also close effective and service-oriented local businesses and cost us local jobs, such as the licence office that the Donald family has owned and operated in Whitby and Durham region for over 50 years; and

“Whereas we recognize the quality of service provided by the Donald family to be rated above the 100% efficiency level, including extended hours;

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

“That the Donald family be maintained as a licence bureau of the highest quality in the region of Durham.”

Attached to this petition is a number of high-profile correspondence of businesses who use volume throughout Durham region. I will sign my name to that and pass it on to Kaitlin.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BARRIE-INNISFIL BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA MODIFICATION DES LIMITES TERRITORIALES ENTRE BARRIE ET INNISFIL

Mr. Watson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 196, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of Barrie and the Town of Innisfil/ Projet de loi 196, Loi concernant la modification des limites territoriales entre la cité de Barrie et la ville d’Innisfil.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister Watson, the floor is yours.

Hon. Jim Watson: I’m pleased today to stand in the House for the second reading of the proposed Barrie-Innisfil Boundary Adjustment Act. Our government introduced this bill to ensure the continued economic health and well-being of Simcoe county. By 2031, more than four million additional people will call Ontario

home. Many of those people will settle in central Ontario, and many of them in the Simcoe area, as a result of our forecasted 75,000 new jobs in that particular area of the province by the year 2031. It is imperative that we look beyond municipal boundaries and focus on what is best for regional economic growth.

Nous comprenons aussi qu’il faut s’adapter à cette croissance de façon responsable.

As well, planning for growth requires an overall vision and plan that contributes to a better quality of life. This includes responsibility for protecting the environment, and we have a strong track record of environmental responsibility and economic growth. This bill, if passed, would end a long-standing boundary and servicing impasse between the city of Barrie and the town of Innisfil.

For a number of years, the city of Barrie, the town of Innisfil and the county of Simcoe tried to negotiate an adjustment to the Barrie-Innisfil boundary. I know that my colleague the honourable member from Barrie and my colleague from Simcoe are well aware of the long history of not reaching a resolution on the Barrie-Innisfil boundary issue. Those negotiations included discussions among the municipalities through the Office of the Provincial Development Facilitator from 2006 to 2008. In February of 2008, the facilitator tabled a proposed solution. However, regrettably, no consensus could be reached. In my capacity as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we brought the two sides together and encouraged them to work for a local solution. Again, sadly, nothing was achieved, and the impasse continued. This bill, if passed, will resolve this impasse.

Just as important, this bill, if passed, would clear up a major roadblock to our major plan for growth called Simcoe Area: A Strategic Vision for Growth. Our strategy for the Simcoe area offers creative solutions to address key issues. Among them are: determining where and how to grow, identifying the critical infrastructure needed to support that growth, and identifying the most valuable things in need of protection.

Mr. Speaker, just on a point of order, with the consensus of the House, I regret that I forgot to mention that I’d like to share my time with the member from Barrie. Is that permitted at this stage?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The fact that you’ve mentioned it, it will be done, if she is here.

L’hon. Jim Watson: Notre vision stratégique de la croissance dans la région de Simcoe nous aidera à coordonner la prise de décisions et d’établir les priorités des investissements dans l’infrastructure.

Our strategic vision for growth shows how the region should grow over the next 30 years. It identifies priority urban centres where new economic and population growth will be encouraged.

Efficient use of land is both an economic and environmental cornerstone of smart growth initiatives practised around the world. By making the best use of existing infrastructure, we can maximize the value of the public investments in infrastructure we’ve already made.

L'accent mis sur des centres-villes forts et le réaménagement des friches contaminées est conforme aux pratiques exemplaires en matière de développement économique urbain.

Our government is committed to building and supporting strong communities across Ontario and we've taken a number of actions to fulfill that commitment. For example, we made revisions to the Municipal Act, 2001, to provide communities with autonomy to make decisions that best suit their communities.

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We also recognized the burden of downloaded service costs that were being covered by municipal taxpayers—costs that I think even members opposite understand should never have been thrust upon the local municipal property taxpayer. I remember, when I had the honour of serving on municipal council, that the downloading that took place from the previous government really did debilitate the municipality's ability to grow and prosper, because so much tax burden was placed for social service costs and costs that should never be associated with property taxes back on the municipal property taxpayer.

That's why Premier McGuinty announced, in collaboration with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the city of Toronto, the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. With the uploads of Ontario Works costs currently paid by municipalities, the Ontario drug benefit, the Ontario disability support program and court security costs by 2018, savings will provide a total of \$1.5 billion net benefit to Ontario municipalities. Just think about that for a minute: \$1.5 billion lifted from the property taxpayers in places like Durham, Nepean and Ottawa back to the provincial government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): On a point of order, the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: We're debating a bill on the Barrie-Innisfil boundary, and he's talking about something that happened 10 years ago. Stick to the topic. You've got your notes; just read them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Normally a point of order isn't directed to him, it's directed to me. And I'll be careful to listen very carefully. Minister.

Hon. Jim Watson: This is very relevant. I know it's very sensitive to the Conservative Party, because they were the downloaders.

Let me talk about Simcoe county in 2009, because the honourable member has an interest in Simcoe county. He should have an interest in Durham. I was there last week, and they were asking where their member was. But that's another point.

In 2009, the benefit of the social programs upload for the county of Simcoe totalled \$3.56 million and is projected to save \$53.5 million by 2018, when the uploads are complete. The people of Simcoe will benefit as a result of the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. The Municipal Act amendments and the review were built on the relationship the McGuinty government has established with Ontario's 444 municipalities.

Nous étions et nous restons déterminés à collaborer avec nos partenaires municipaux pour créer des collectivités robustes dans un Ontario fort.

In 2005, our government introduced the greenbelt, a 1.8-million-acre stretch of land across the Golden Horseshoe. We have protected environmentally sensitive areas and agricultural lands from urban sprawl, and we've improved the quality of life for millions of Ontarians. We're also helping to build stronger communities through the provincial policy statement, which promotes a comprehensive approach to planning and builds on the priorities of local communities.

Nous nous sommes efforcés, et nous continuerons d'enfoncer et de favoriser la durabilité des collectivités et la croissance partout dans la province de l'Ontario.

In keeping with our philosophy, our strategic vision for the Simcoe area would accomplish four major goals. First, it would curb urban sprawl and focus development into existing cities and towns that can accommodate new growth. We've identified five centres, called urban nodes, in the Simcoe area in which to focus employment growth. We plan to focus major office and institutional development in the primary urban node of Barrie. We will also encourage smaller-scale mixed-use developments serving the local population, including smaller office, commercial and institutional developments in other existing downtowns and Main Streets. This will strengthen town centres and create places with a good balance of jobs and homes.

The second goal is that our strategic vision would build on Simcoe area's diverse economic base to create new jobs. Nearly half of Simcoe's land base is agricultural, an industry that is vibrant and productive in the area. However, there are also resource-based industries, small and large manufacturing operations, research and creative industries and a strong service sector in Simcoe. We are protecting the employment areas for these industries and for future investments, and most importantly for future jobs for the people of Simcoe.

Third, our strategic vision would outline a vision for the city of Barrie as the area's largest urban centre. Under our plan, the city of Barrie must achieve a minimum intensification rate of 40% of new residential development each year in the built-up area, thereby discouraging sprawl. This is a plan that I think from an environmental point of view, from an economic point of view and from an urban planning point of view simply makes sense.

Further, with respect to the city of Barrie, it must achieve a minimum density of 150 residents and jobs combined per hectare in the urban growth centre, making even better use of current infrastructure, because the great thing about intensification—if it's done properly, if it's compatible—which I have always been supportive of, is that it cuts down on the municipality's costs and the county's costs; you don't have to duplicate and triplicate water plants, sewers and so on.

Barrie must achieve a minimum density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare in designated greenfield areas, discouraging inefficient use of these lands.

The fourth goal our strategic vision would achieve is protection of green spaces and agricultural areas and a cleaner Lake Simcoe, which I think members on all sides of the House supported—the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, if I'm not mistaken. Our plan would reduce development pressures on rural and agricultural lands, thereby protecting valuable natural heritage, farmland, sensitive watersheds and Lake Simcoe. The Lake Simcoe watershed contains significant natural urban and agricultural systems, including parts of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt. Its protection is critical.

On y trouve aussi des terres humides, des boisés et des zones agricoles à fort rendement d'importance provinciale, y compris des zones de culture spéciale comme le marais Holland.

We all know, admire, respect and love the Holland Marsh and the importance of the Holland Marsh—really the breadbasket of Ontario.

Ontarians have made it clear they support a comprehensive plan to protect and restore the ecological health of Lake Simcoe and its watershed. I commend my colleague the Minister of the Environment for bringing forward the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and for the work that is being done to ensure that that important body of water, from a recreational point of view, a tourism point of view, from a health and wellness point of view and from a sustainability point of view is protected for generations to come.

The strategic vision for growth in the Simcoe area—which is really a joint initiative with my colleague George Smitherman, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, who's working very closely with our ministry to ensure all parties understand their responsibilities within this process—is part of our plan to protect Lake Simcoe and its watershed. This vision, though, requires municipalities to include within their approved settlement area boundaries a sufficient supply of land to accommodate population employment growth for a maximum of 20 years. We've chosen 20 years because this time frame ensures sufficient land is available to meet growth needs while preventing the designation of excessive amounts of land and the associated urban sprawl. While there is more than enough land in approved settlement area boundaries to accommodate the next 20 years of growth, the land is not necessarily in the appropriate locations.

C'est que les anciennes désignations de l'utilisation du sol n'étaient pas assujetties aux critères rigoureux que nous utilisons aujourd'hui.

What's more, these land use designations in the past did not consider where future demand would be highest and where the development could be efficiently serviced. There is a need, therefore, to rationalize and align the land supply with demand in a manner that meets the requirements of the growth plan in the Simcoe area. We need to prioritize intensification and development to areas where access to employment, access to commercial services and access to public facilities already exist.

Nous devons nous assurer de progresser vers ces objectifs d'intensification et de densité avant de libérer des terres pour des nouveaux aménagements.

The proposed Barrie-Innisfil Boundary Adjustment Act, 2009, is a central component of our overall strategy for the Simcoe area. If passed, it would not only resolve a long-standing dispute but it would help set the stage for future growth and prosperity for a significant number of Ontarians. This bill is good for the Simcoe area and it is good for Ontario.

In a perfect world, we would love to have seen a local solution. I thank the honourable member who represents Innisfil, because we did have a number of conversations and we both agreed to the premise that local solutions are the best solutions. Unfortunately, after numerous attempts—and they were failed attempts—we could not get the two sides together, namely, the town of Innisfil and the city of Barrie. We attempted to bring in the county of Simcoe to help and the provincial facilitator. I personally met with all sides, brought them all together on at least two occasions and, sadly, we were not able to come up with what we often call that great Canadian compromise, where all sides were willing to put a little water with their wine and come up with a solution that everyone could live with. So that's the reason why we're here in second reading of the bill.

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Just in summary, before I hand it over to my colleague the Minister of Culture and minister responsible for seniors, I do want to remind members what the bill will accomplish. In essence, it would transfer 2,293 hectares from Innisfil to Barrie. It would accommodate Barrie, which is the designated urban employment growth node, land needs to 2031 and beyond. It would allow Barrie to work with Simcoe county to put strategies in place to create needed jobs for the residents of the entire Simcoe area. As we all know, when you live in an urban setting, you don't necessarily live in the urban setting; you could be living in Innisfil, working in Barrie, and vice versa. It would continue to provide a buffer to the community of Stroud in the town of Innisfil—the mayor of Innisfil was very insistent on this particular community being protected, and we have recognized that and put this in the legislation—and provide that the Innisfil Heights area, including the Georgian Downs racetrack, stays within Innisfil, for a number of reasons, including financial, obviously. The Georgian Downs racetrack is an important component of the financial well-being of the town of Innisfil.

I thank my colleagues for their attention on this particular piece of legislation, Bill 196. We think it is a balanced approach; it's not one side wins, the other side loses. Innisfil still retains its autonomy and its council. This is a boundary adjustment. In the global world we live in, I think the days of squabbling over a boundary between one municipality and another doesn't make any sense. We've got to be firing on all cylinders, particularly in the midst of a recession, to ensure that communities have the land, have the proper designations to actually go and attract the industries that are going to move to Simcoe, to Barrie, to Innisfil and create jobs.

The great thing, when you look at some of the great thinkers in urban planning, the ideal urban plan is where

you can live, work and play within the same community. That's exactly what we're trying to do to, to create an environment that is compatible with that kind of philosophy and stop the kind of urban sprawl that, quite frankly, was going to dominate the debate in Simcoe county for far too long. If you allow growth anywhere, in sort of a helter-skelter fashion, it's not good for anyone. It's certainly not good for the taxpayers of that community. That is why this particular bill, I believe, deserves the support of the House.

I cede the floor now, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Culture.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Culture and the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank my honourable colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs for his well-informed and articulate explanation today of why the government is coming forward with this bill. As he has mentioned, the issue of Barrie's shortage of residential and industrial land that was needed to accommodate our rapid growth predates my time as a member of provincial Parliament, but it is an issue that I had made a priority to see resolved.

The proposed act will conclude the long-standing boundary question between the city of Barrie and the town of Innisfil. I might point out that this boundary solution that is proposed is the same one that the Office of the Provincial Development Facilitator suggested over a year ago, after spending many months examining a number of alternatives. Most of the lands that are involved in the proposed boundary adjustment are moratorium lands which had been set aside for agreement and for development back in the 1980s.

The proposed boundary adjustment would provide the city of Barrie, as has been mentioned, with 2,293 gross hectares of land, which will satisfy land needs until 2031 and beyond. The Ontario government recognizes that these type of land disputes and subsequent resolutions have a very direct impact on the lives of citizens.

In times of economic uncertainty, we need to focus our attention, as has been mentioned, on ways to attract jobs and opportunity. But an essential ingredient to accomplish this is by providing stability to a region that has been in turmoil over the boundary for far too long. Business needs predictability and business needs stability to plan investments, and those investments are what produce economic growth. So this proposed boundary adjustment is not just about the city of Barrie and its land needs; it's about a region and bringing new jobs to our city and our region. The forecast is for 73,000 new jobs in the area by 2031.

The Ontario government's growth plan for the Simcoe area has designated Barrie as a major urban growth centre in central Ontario. It is where major office and institutional development will be concentrated. Barrie will indeed be required to conform to the growth plan and the corresponding provincial policy statement, both of which are aimed at curbing sprawl. The growth plan

and the provincial policy statement focus growth on where it can be best accommodated, where the broad range of services is located and where future investments in infrastructure make the most sense.

The provincial growth plan, as I have said many times in discussion of this issue, does not assign growth to Barrie; growth is occurring in Barrie—rapidly occurring. Instead, it's about strategically planning for controlled growth in the city so that our children and our grandchildren have an even better place to live and work and learn and play.

The city of Barrie has been very diligent with regard to meeting its density targets. In the past, Barrie has refused to approve plans by developers until more density was included. Two examples that come to mind are the townhouse development at Harvie/Essa/Ferndale and another near the GO station at Mapleview East. In both cases, the city told the developers to increase the density in their projects. This promises the designation of downtown Barrie as an urban growth centre and focuses even higher-density targets and therefore more jobs in the downtown area of the city. This makes good use of existing infrastructure.

City officials in Barrie have already said they plan to intensify density downtown and along major arterial routes. Barrie has an aggressive \$220-million infrastructure renewal plan in place to repair roads and sewers and water systems. The infrastructure program is creating approximately 1,100 jobs in construction and an estimated 1,100 indirect jobs. The city of Barrie is committed to looking after its existing infrastructure and is looking to see it used more productively.

Indeed, the best use of local infrastructure is why the proposed boundary solution includes the land south of Barrie. Starting in 2004, the province, Simcoe county, Innisfil and Barrie jointly undertook comprehensive studies that looked at the local watershed, at the infrastructure needs in the area and at how local governments can manage growth pressures. That plan, which was called IGAP, the intergovernmental action plan, recommended that Barrie indeed expand to the south. The IGAP study verified that Lake Simcoe and its tributaries could handle that growth better than the Nottawasaga River valley, which is already stressed by settlements.

The neighbouring town of Innisfil is a viable community. Through the proposed boundary adjustment act, we are working to support its future prosperity. The proposed boundary adjustment directs growth and intensification to the urban growth centre, and it clears the way for possible employment lands in Innisfil near Highway 400. These potential employment lands can help bring jobs and new assessment dollars to Innisfil.

In closing, the proposed boundary adjustment is in the best interests of the residents of Simcoe county, the town of Innisfil and the city of Barrie. It is also in the best interests of the watersheds in the Simcoe area. We need the stability that this act will bring to our region. It will have been a long time coming, and that is why I encourage members of the House to support this bill.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I will have an opportunity later to make further remarks, but I just want to put on the record the fact that the minister has referred to the 2,293 hectares of land that are to be turned over to the city of Barrie and at the same time talks about how this is going to prevent sprawl. Much of the comments that he made this afternoon were with regard to the question of sprawl. I, of course, think of those almost 2,300 hectares, which to me represent exactly the opportunity for further sprawl. So there seems to be a bit of a problem here with the fact that after they've absorbed the 2,300 hectares of raw land, then there won't be sprawl, although the member for Barrie also referred to the fact that this would take them to 2031 and then they might need more land. So I think there's a bit of a problem herein: whose definition of sprawl we're talking about. Because certainly, to those people who live in the area to be turned over to the city of Barrie by this bill, it looks like urban sprawl.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently because this is an opportunity to listen to not one but two ministers speak on what I think is a very contentious topic. I listened intently to what they had to say. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing talked about uploading, some vague references to the Harris government, some talk about Places to Grow and the environment. The Minister of Culture talked at great length about how it was going to help the city of Barrie and, as an afterthought right towards the end of her speech, talked about Innisfil. But I think that neither one of them has talked about the key issue, and the key issue to my mind has to be, how did this government make this determination to take from one town 2,300 hectares of land and holus bolus give it to an adjoining city? It is like somebody coming along and coveting your house and just one day saying, "I have growth needs. My family is larger. I'm going to take over your house. Too bad, so sad." This is what has not been explained.

I have no doubt that the good people of Innisfil are angry. I have no doubt that people in the surrounding community wonder what the rush is about. I have no doubt that they're wondering what is going to be built on prime agricultural land other than more homes and factories and commercial development, the extension of sprawl as Barrie heads south. None of these questions were answered by my colleagues from across. Neither minister put their mind to that. In my leadoff speech I will be, I hope, talking about some of those things. But I would implore these two ministers to have this bill go to committee. I think the good people of Innisfil need to be called upon, the people of Barrie need to be called upon, the environmentalists need to be called upon, the people who are trying to save Lake Simcoe—all have something very important to say about this decision that encourages sprawl.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is a pleasure to stand here today to spend a couple of minutes commenting on the minister's debate. I must say that I think the minister highlighted quite well the attempts that we have made, or I should say the ministry has made, to bring the two parties to the table, over and over again. Sometimes we're called upon to make those tough decisions, and when they hear our rationale—the ministry brought experts in and they made some recommendations. Basically, we're following the recommendations. It's not that the minister woke up in the middle of the night and said, "These are what the boundaries should be."

I must tell you that in my riding I have two municipalities—well, four municipalities, I guess—that accomplished boundary realignment. One is the city of Quinte West with the city of Belleville, which is Minister Dombrowsky's office. There was some discussion. I mean, it was obvious: One municipality had no services in part of that municipality, yet the abutting municipality, which was Belleville, had commercial and residential development right to the boundary line. It just made so much sense not to duplicate the cost to provide services to that piece of land that now belongs to the city of Belleville.

In Cobourg and Hamilton township a few years back, south of the 401—Hamilton township is predominantly north of 401. Cobourg needed some expansion. They made some agreements and also some agreements on shared services.

I think we've tried all that. It's time we need to move on. I think, as we debate in this House, we'll make sure we'll get it as right as we can.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: In short order we're going to be hearing from Michael Prue, the critic for the New Democratic Party caucus, and I know that he has a very complete and sophisticated analysis of this issue. I think that folks watching—and there are folks watching—are going to be very interested in what he and the New Democrats have to say.

This is a most unpleasant way to, as the government would put it, resolve an impasse. Darn right the impasse is resolved, because you come in with the big guns and the big hammer and you just club it to death.

So, like Mr. Prue, I'm very interested in what folks say at committee hearings. I suspect there could be some real polarization. There are going to be fans of the proposal—more likely than not, people living in Barrie. There are going to be some opponents to the proposal—more likely than not, people living in that beautiful rural area. I suspect also they're going to hear things about the environment, hear things about sprawl, hear things about big government using a heavy fist to simply end an impasse rather than help resolve a problem. One would hope that the communities here would be encouraged to spend yet more time at the table so that it truly could be a

made-in-Innisfil-and-Barrie solution, rather than one made down here at Queen's Park in Toronto.

One of the problems with Queen's Park is that the folks think that as soon as you get north of Eglinton, you're somehow in another world. This institution is so Toronto-centred and so fixated on big-city solutions. It just doesn't understand the culture of rural Ontario and small-town Ontario, and I don't think this bill is going to help at all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response? The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'd like to thank the members for their comments.

Just to clarify a couple of points, one member asked, "Why the rush?" This has been going on since 1981: almost 30 years of bickering back and forth. The time to act is now because there was clearly a polarized position between Innisfil and Barrie. Simcoe was not able to resolve it; the province was not able to resolve it. We actually brought in the provincial facilitator to help, and he was not able to resolve it.

Where did the boundaries come from? It was as a result of the work that the provincial facilitator did with Innisfil and Barrie. There was signoff by Barrie on the proposal by the facilitator, but at the end of the day Innisfil did not support it.

This is all about smart growth. We talk a lot about smart growth, but often some municipalities and some counties don't practise smart growth. If we simply allowed the county to allow development wherever the lower-tier municipalities wanted to, that would not be smart growth. Maybe it might be smart politics to appease the lower-tier municipalities, but it would be costly to both the taxpayers and to the environment. So this was about coming up with a compromise position based on the provincial facilitator, who has done much more work on this file than anyone in this Legislature and who has more expertise on it, and we accepted the recommendations of the provincial facilitator.

So this bill has not been rushed. In fact, if anything, previous governments should have dealt with this sooner. We're taking a leadership role. We're moving on it after 30 years. Enough is enough. Let's get back to economic development, smart growth, good planning and creating the jobs of tomorrow for the people of Barrie, Innisfil and all of Simcoe county.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I understand that there is all-party consent to allow me to precede my colleague from York-Simcoe in this debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You were the next one to stand up in rotation.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, I want to be very clear, Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There may be that agreement; I'm just saying that you don't need it. You were the next one to stand.

Mr. Michael Prue: But I understand that she will go next in the rotation if it is done this way. She has accommodated me—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. I'm not part of the agreement, but can anybody—

Interjection: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It's agreed. There we go.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much. And I'd like to thank my colleague from York-Simcoe for being so very generous to accommodate my need to be out of the Legislature in short order at around 5:30.

I'm here to talk about this bill in a number of aspects. I want to first of all talk about this bill and how it is likely to affect the town of Innisfil. I do not represent that riding. In fact, my friend from York-Simcoe represents that riding, but I'm very familiar with it and what is likely to happen. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing knows only too well as a former mayor of Ottawa, as I am a former mayor of the borough of East York, what is now part of Toronto, the province can deal with a very heavy hand upon municipalities whenever it chooses to do so, and the municipality at the receiving end of what cannot be called government largesse is the one that often suffers.

I can see in the handprints all over this what is happening to Innisfil. I can see a small town in Ontario being crushed by a medium-sized city and the might of the Ontario government. It was only a few months ago when a former member of this Legislature and a minister said that the Ontario government was in the business of picking winners and losers. Well, I think that the government has picked a winner and a loser in this whole debate. The winner, without a shadow of a doubt, is the city of Barrie, because the city of Barrie has got exactly what it has been requesting for many years. They signed off on the agreement in advance and that is exactly what is being delivered here today. The town of Innisfil, which did not agree with the process and did not agree with what they were going to be given, has been given not one iota of change from the agreement that they refused to sign and that they disagreed with the entire time.

What has been lost here to the town of Innisfil is 2,300 prime agricultural hectares. But more than that, what has been lost to them is that they are going to get absolutely nothing in return for the loss of this valuable land. They have lost tax revenue and potential tax revenue: Innisfil will lose over \$80 million in tax assessment as a result of this bill. This is not a large municipality like Toronto or Ottawa or Mississauga, which could take \$80 million and, although they would not be happy, could probably swallow it. It is Innisfil, small-town Ontario, that is losing \$80 million in tax assessment. It makes up, in total, 2.5% of their current assessment base—gone—and Innisfil should be compensated. I have read through this entire bill and there is not a word of compensation to Innisfil. That means for Innisfil to make this up, they are going to have to immediately raise taxes for the existing and remaining properties by 2.5% if they are to keep services going.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: My friend here from small-town Ontario is talking about, “What about the services they don’t have to deliver?” Perhaps if he had done some research, he would have known that many of the hard services have already been built—and I’ll get to those in a minute—because they have built sewers and trunk lines, they have built roads, they have built connections, and they have plans too.

You also to have look at the fiscal impact on this servicing ability, because there is the whole question of the debt, and the debt that Innisfil was about to encumber upon itself in order to service it. They were going to debenture it and it has not yet been amortized for the debt, but there is nothing in the bill that requires Barrie to pay it. They’re going to take it over, but this is going to cost Innisfil some money. Innisfil should be compensated by the province or by the city of Barrie for the annual revenue loss, and it approximates about \$30,000 a year; that’s just on the debt that’s been encumbered to date. There’s nothing in the bill that says that.

The future growth potential and the capital costs: There will certainly be future development on the annexed lands once the transfer to Barrie—it’s not being transferred to Barrie so that it can be farmland. Let’s be real here. This is not why it’s being transferred to Barrie. It’s not about who controls 2,300 acres of farmland; it’s about who controls the future of subdivisions, of commercial and industrial buildings and workplaces along the 400 corridor. It is going to be transformed from farmland that pays a modicum of taxation to industrial, commercial and residential, which pays a lot more, and this is a complete loss to the town of Innisfil.

Developers are counting on this to be developed; they’re counting on it. You can read the handprints all over this. It is the developers who can work very easily with the city of Barrie who are looking at this and thinking, “How can we develop 2,300 hectares of land?” And you know that there are plans afoot, you know that the province has plans afoot and you know that people are planning what can go in there along this corridor. How many homes can be built, how many factories can be built and how many commercial enterprises can be built? And Barrie knows it too, because that’s why they want the land. They don’t want it because it’s farmland. They don’t want to leave it as farmland. They know the development potential and they want to use it.

This will require Innisfil and the county to maintain and improve everything they’ve done around it. Innisfil and the county have already built roads—as my friend didn’t want to wait for me to say—they have built county roads; they have built municipal roads; they have built structure into and around these lands in anticipation that one day they would be able to do something with them. They are not going to be compensated. In fact, they are going to have to maintain all these roads as they enter into the new city of Barrie. All the lead-in roads are from Innisfil, and these lead-in roads and these lead-in connections, whether they be above or below the ground,

are funded by the people of Innisfil for use by the people of Barrie.

There are even a couple of conundrums here. One of them is that one of the housing developments that is now going to be inside the city of Barrie has its water supply in the town of Innisfil, which is going to have to continue to provide water. At whose cost? There’s no compensation. There’s nothing in the minister’s statement or in the bill that the town of Innisfil is in any way going to be compensated for this.

There’s the whole future growth-related capital costs. There will certainly be future development on these lands, as I have said. The Barrie residents on these lands will use Innisfil and county roads, as I have said. There’s a significant future cost to Innisfil, as I have said, and we think that Innisfil should be compensated. Barrie could and should be required to implement a special development charge for doing exactly what they’ve done. This has been done in other municipalities that have provincial largesse pushed upon them. They have been forced to compensate the municipality which has lost land, services and monies. I’ll give some examples of those in a minute.

The town of Innisfil estimates that there will be a loss to themselves of nearly \$50 million more in assessment for the town of Innisfil once this all plays out. The county of Simcoe will suffer similar devastating losses by the removal of these lands from Simcoe county and should also be compensated. There is not one word in the bill that is going to do that. In fact, there is not a commitment from this government, in spite of the fact that there are numerous precedents for compensation in other parts of Ontario. I’d just like to cite three of them.

The first one is the lands transferred from the town of Tecumseh and the county of Essex to the city of Windsor in 2003. There was compensation there. Tecumseh was given compensation by the city of Windsor for the lands that were transferred. The second one is the lands transferred from the township of Rideau Lakes and the united counties of Leeds and Grenville to the town of Smiths Falls in 2004. There’s nothing being compensated here. And the third one is the lands transferred from the township of Blandford-Blenheim to the city of Woodstock in 2005—and again, absolutely nothing.

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What I am asking is for the minister, in committee, by word in this House or however he has to do it, to provide for compensation for the residents of Innisfil in the same way it did for the residents of Woodstock, Smiths Falls and Windsor, or in the alternative, I suppose, withdraw the bill.

I’ll go on to talk about other minor amendments. I have already referred in part to the difficulty in the way the map has been drawn and the land that has been transferred to Barrie. The act divides local and county roads and intersections in half, making it difficult to manage the roads system. In one case, the description separates a subdivision in Innisfil, called Doral Business Park, from the stormwater management pond that serves that

subdivision. The pond that serves the subdivision will be located in Barrie; the subdivision itself will remain in Innisfil. In another case, it puts the county forest now located in Innisfil into Barrie.

I'm not understanding what plan the government has for this. I'm not understanding what consultation took place or how it fits with smart growth. Perhaps the minister can elucidate this. I think this Barrie annexation—I don't want to be melodramatic—is a betrayal in the long list of McGuinty government reversals and secret deals in Simcoe county, all to the benefit of those who stand to make huge and handsome profits as a result. This government is kidding itself when it thinks that the public was consulted fairly about this act or the Simcoe growth plan or the Lake Simcoe protection plan. There are tens of millions of dollars of development-driven lawsuits outstanding against critics of development in Simcoe county, a situation this government not only seems to favour, but has allowed to grow far beyond anything during the Harris years.

At one level, the bill before us seeks to resolve an ongoing dispute over a transfer of land from Innisfil to Barrie. The bill will transfer those lands as the minister has set out, and on the surface how can anyone say it's a bad thing? The city of Barrie has shown that it has some commitment to smart growth and some commitment to the environment. But the bill also allows the development of 2,300 hectares of land and the lifting of the development moratorium on the land. These are farmlands. This is the greenbelt. This is some of the best agricultural land not only in Ontario but in the world, and it is going to end up being condominiums and towers and homes. That's what is going to happen to it. What has happened to the government's talk about sprawl? If there is not sprawl here, I don't know what constitutes sprawl. Until now, this has been duly designated for agriculture and resource extraction only. Now it will be rezoned for employment and residential. The minister has been a little bit silent on that.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing assures us that should the bill pass and the transfer of land go ahead, the land will be developed in a sustainable way. I want to quote him. He said during first reading that this bill "is a key part of the Ontario government's support for sustainable and managed growth in the Lake Simcoe area.... Resolving the long-standing Barrie-Innisfil boundary dispute would help us address the growth planning and environmental protection issues in the area."

I have no doubt that it will promote growth. The whole intention of this bill is to allow Barrie to run holus-bolus over what was agricultural land and grow it in a way that will increase sprawl exponentially. But where is the evidence that this bill will protect the environment? Will it be developed in a way that sustains the ecological integrity of the already-vulnerable Lake Simcoe watershed and its water quality and water habitats? I didn't hear the minister talk about that, and I don't see anything in the bill. It will increase smog as people commute to

and from Toronto and Barrie to attend these employment growth areas. It will hinder the development of a vibrant community that is growing in Innisfil and in Barrie today. It will threaten the watersheds, and it will definitely eat up valuable farmland and green space.

The Places to Grow Act was supposed to encourage smart growth: revitalized downtowns, public transportation options, healthy communities and the curbing of urban sprawl. This isn't doing something for downtown Barrie. This isn't putting in smart bus lanes or transportation or allowing the buildings to go up rather than go out. This is extending the city and a whole bunch of residential and commercial construction to the south of it. This is wanton growth.

We trust the McGuinty government's assurances that it will ensure that these 2,300 hectares will be developed in a way that protects the already vulnerable Simcoe watershed. There are a number of reasons I have to hesitate before giving the government a blank cheque to go ahead with the transfer and development of the boundary lands.

First, reputable environmental associations and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority indicate that if the annexed lands are developed according to current practices, about 60% of Lovers Creek and Hewitts Creek will be paved over—far more than what Environment Canada allows at 10%. This will be paving over streams and rivers and rivulets in what is currently the town of Innisfil.

According to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, this will increase phosphorus levels in Kempenfelt Bay of Lake Simcoe. That will be a result. Kempenfelt Bay has been identified by MNR, another ministry of this government, as the most significant nursery zone in the lake which would allow for a self-sustaining cold water fishery. The minister may not be a fisherman like I am, but a cold water fishery would more than likely involve walleye, lake trout and whitefish. In fact, the spawning grounds of these three species are located in Kempenfelt Bay. If you increase the water levels and if you increase the temperatures, you may put these species at risk, and nothing has been talked about in this bill. Increased phosphorus levels and decreased oxygen levels will threaten the survival of juvenile trout and whitefish for sure, and the entire viability of the whole Lake Simcoe fishery.

Now, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority recommends that "The proposed boundary adjustment contained in Bill 196 only be considered after"—they use the word "after," and I underline that—"it can be demonstrated that such growth is environmentally sustainable and does not further negatively affect the impact on the health and quality of Lake Simcoe and its watershed."

I think this government has failed to demonstrate that the proposed development of the boundary lands will be benign in its impact on the environment. In fact, the government is pushing through Bill 196 and allowing development to proceed on the annexed lands before key

studies on the impacts of development of the land have been conducted.

Just to name a few that are under way and that are supposed to come out in the short period of time where the government precipitously felt that it had to rush this through—and I say rushed through in spite of the fact that there has been an ongoing dispute for nearly 30 years. The conservation authority and the Save Lake Simcoe campaign indicate that a range of studies need to be done to assess the impact of future growth, and I list some of them: an assimilative capacity study to assess impacts on water quality, which is due at the end of this year; a study to assess the impact of stream temperature associated with the boundary change and associated growth; an evaluation of the impacts on water quality, quantity and erosion.

The conservation authority concludes that “It is extremely important that the appropriate studies and strategies be completed prior to the approval of Bill 196 to ensure that the proposed growth contained within the boundary adjustment is environmentally sustainable for Lake Simcoe and the watershed.”

We all remember that a couple of years ago there was a wonderful group called the Ladies of the Lake. They came here to the Legislature; I believe it was in the last Parliament. They had a calendar of themselves in various poses around Lake Simcoe. They were raising funds to try to save the great lake that is the home and party place, with summer cottages, summer campgrounds and swimming holes, for people right across the GTA. They came here and begged us to do everything we could to save that lake.

I'm simply asking the minister to do the same thing. I'm asking the minister to delay this action until we know what the impact of having thousands or tens of thousands of new homes and factories and commercial establishments on this land will be on Lake Simcoe. If we allow that lake to die, if we allow it to become polluted or unproductive, if we allow the fish that have swum there for millennia to suddenly die off, then I don't think that this annexation by Barrie will be seen to be a good thing.

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The assimilation study of phosphorus impacts is another one: It's not due until the end of the year. A sub-watershed study is not due until after that. I ask again, why is the McGuinty government rushing forward with a bill that allows further development when it doesn't even know the full development and the full impact that that growth is going to have on Lake Simcoe and its surrounding tributaries? It is unwise and rash to push forward a bill that opens up more land for development when we don't know whether the watershed can support that development.

It's not just Barrie getting the land; it's what is going to be done with that land. We know it's being transferred so it can be developed in a way that the government approves, I suppose.

Moreover, if the McGuinty government is so committed to protecting the watershed, why is there nothing

in this bill requiring developers to meet the highest possible green building standards, in terms of building standards and water protection? We already know it's going to be developed, but there's nothing in here that will require them, upon the transfer of the land, to use those high standards.

There's nothing in here about whether it's going to be energy-self-sustaining or energy-dependent. What proposals are there in the bill to maximize the use of solar panels and solar, thermal or geothermal heating? Will storm water and sewage be dumped into the lake or will existing technologies be required to dramatically reduce the amount of water taken from and dumped into Lake Simcoe? Will these developments be built using green gravel—that is, gravel taken out as the land is being developed—or will it be trucked all the way from Niagara, as it has been in the past?

If the McGuinty government is so committed to the ecological integrity of Lake Simcoe, why did it negotiate a secret deal committing the government to supporting the unprecedented 1,000-slip mega-marina at Big Bay Point? I know that went to the Ontario Municipal Board. I also know that the people who went there were slapped with a SLAPP suit. They were threatened with millions of dollars in costs by the developers for trying to stand up for the lake and for the environment. They have become too afraid to speak out.

We have the luxury in this House of being able to speak out without fear of lawsuit. We have the luxury of standing up here and saying things that others only wish they could but don't because of the developers' big pockets and their lawyers and planners and everything else.

The McGuinty government has done nothing in response, preferring to allow the silencing of critics of development over the troublesomeness of free speech and democracy.

I ask, if the McGuinty government is so committed to containing urban sprawl and protecting prime farmland in southern Ontario, why did its political staff intervene in the form of not one, not two but three extraordinary ministerial zoning orders, overriding its Places to Grow plan, that allow big developers to pave over 1,800 acres along the Highway 400 corridor in Bradford West Gwillimbury? Where is the staff report justifying this extraordinary backroom deal that disregards Places to Grow?

How are Ontarians to trust a government that makes high-and-mighty statements about protecting land and ecosystems when it cuts secret deals with developers behind closed doors? How are Ontarians to trust this minister, and this Premier, who campaigned in 2003 against the Conservative government's secret zoning order to pave over Richmond Hill and then six years later does exactly the same thing in Bradford and is now proposing, I guess, to do the same thing here?

The 2003 Liberal platform, Growing Strong Communities, condemned the Eves government for its secretly approved plan to build 6,600 new homes on one

of the most sensitive spots on the moraine in Richmond Hill. The then incoming Premier promised a higher standard of ethics and accountability, and now we have a secret deal where the minister stands up one day and simply imposes his will upon the people of that area.

How do the Premier and this minister justify secretly cutting a deal with developers and reversing the opposition to paving prime agricultural land in Bradford West Gwillimbury? Back to them.

Why do we find the Liberal backroom boy Gordon Ashworth giving advice to the Geranium Corp., the developer that has managed to negotiate not one, but two secret deals with the Premier in this very area?

Let me quote from the Toronto Star, that newspaper that almost always supports the Liberals, in its editorial. They had this to say back on December 5, 2007: “The government has already signed off on one of the most controversial Simcoe county developments, a 1,600-unit time-share project on Lake Simcoe’s Big Bay Point. Local ratepayers and environmentalists took the project to the Ontario Municipal Board and a decision is pending.

“Geranium Corp., the developer behind the Big Bay Point project”—and, I might add, the Bradford employment lands deal as well—“has signed up prominent Liberals to help make its case.

“One of them is Gordon Ashworth, a former senior aide to Premier David Peterson back in the 1980s and a key strategist in the current Liberal government’s re-election campaign this fall.

“Ashworth denies lobbying for Geranium. ‘I provide them with communications advice,’ he says.”

Why are there no staff reports? How can one trust a government that justifies a secret deal to allow development along the 400 to ostensibly keep a company from moving out of Ontario when the company itself, Toromont Industries, said it was never leaving? “Our company, Toromont Industries Ltd., has no intention of moving 2,500 jobs from Ontario. We have never threatened to do so or set conditions for the province to meet to avoid this non-existent threat.” That again from the Toronto Star, March 18, 2009. This is the kind of record that this minister is asking us to just buy holus-bolus, without explanation.

Again and again, this government has failed to abide by and enforce the Places to Grow Act. You know, it’s true that there was pretty much all-party agreement. We thought something good was going to happen with this act. But instead, we see backroom deals; we see a bill like this, with no explanation, coming forward, as mentioned, by secretly negotiating the minister’s zoning orders to allow 1,800 acres of urban sprawl on prime farmland in Bradford West Gwillimbury, land that drains into the Holland Marsh; by allowing Innisfil council to convert almost 1,000 acres of rural and agricultural land into residential development—which is done; by allowing the 10-fold expansion of the hamlet of Bond Head from 500 residents to 4,500 residents; and by failing to address population growth issues in the Lake

Simcoe protection plan—all of these have been done. But the bigger issue to me is how the development of this land and other valuable green space and agricultural land in southern Ontario will proceed. And that, this minister has not talked about. He has not said anything about it.

Well, I think the time for rampant, Wild West development has passed. It is not at all clear that this bill will lead to smarter planning, and given that studies are still outstanding, the environmental impacts of this bill on Lake Simcoe and its watershed are also very unclear. There’s supposed to be a discussion paper in tandem with this bill on the vision for growth in Simcoe county, but it bears repeating: Releasing the growth strategy for comment at the same time that the government appeared at the OMB to support the Bradford bypass and more sprawl is ridiculous.

Let me quote Campaign Lake Simcoe’s response last month to the government’s Simcoe-area vision for growth. It’s a rather long quote, but it’s a good one:

“Campaign Lake Simcoe, which has advocated for the protection of the Lake Simcoe watershed since 2005, is shocked that this government has put forth for consultation such a dismal ‘vision’ for an area of such great ecological, agricultural, recreational value.

“This ‘consultation’ is also one of the worst examples of a ‘sprawl first, consult later’ exercise we’ve ever seen. Although comments are due September 2, 2009, on this growth strategy, in early August the OMB approved a nearly 750-hectare employment area in Simcoe county, just north of the greenbelt, in the Bradford West Gwillimbury ... Highway 400 corridor. The OMB hearing was conducted in June 2009 and only after the McGuinty government reversed its opposition to the development by suddenly and without notice agreeing in April 2009 to issue three extraordinary ‘minister’s zoning orders’ ... to ensure approval.

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“The development so clearly contradicts the growth strategy that the OMB chair’s decision is conditional on the delivery of the rare and controversial” minister’s zoning orders. “We agree with the Toronto Star’s June 12, 2009, editorial: ‘The province could have—and should have—held off on signing any deal regarding development on the [BWG] Highway 400 corridor until the full Simcoe plan had been subjected to public consultation.’”

We agree, too.

The minister talked at the beginning—and this is why I said some of this—about how this has been outstanding for 30 years. If it has been outstanding for 30 years and nothing much is happening, what is the rush? We have at least six environmental plans that are coming forward for publication later this year. We have people who have not been consulted. We have a municipality, Innisfil, which is seeing a potential huge assessment loss, a huge loss to the growth plans that it had for itself. We have a city, Barrie, that has not stated publicly what they want to do with these lands. And yet we have a rush. Is there a special deal? What can we expect to happen? The same

thing that we've seen in other places? Is there a developer in the wings who wants to build this? Is there something of that magnitude that we don't know about?

The minister is asking us to support this bill. I would consider supporting the bill, but I want to hear a whole lot of answers to questions that not only I have but that the people in Innisfil, the people in Barrie, the people who are concerned about the environment, the people who slave daily and weekly to try to protect Lake Simcoe, have. They have stronger questions perhaps even than I do.

Strong government action is needed to shift development practices in southern Ontario in a direction conducive to environmental protection and healthy communities. It is not contained within the body of this bill. Better enforcing the principles of the Places to Grow Act would be a good place to start. Protecting citizens from developer lawsuits and stopping backroom land development deals with friends of this government would be another welcome change.

But most of all, I ask the minister to try to sit down again with the good people of Innisfil. This is a community that has been there since Confederation. This is a community that has owned this land and has been clearly marked off by surveyors since the time of Confederation. I don't know how Barrie thinks that they are suddenly entitled to it. If it makes good planning sense, make that good sense—because we have not seen any of that here to date.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Make the case.

Mr. Michael Prue: Make the case if it has to be taken away.

I said in my opportunity with the two-minute comment that it is like having a house next door and your family has grown too large and you covet that house and you take that house because you need it for your family, your children, or for whatever reason. You need it, therefore you want it. You want to grow and therefore it's yours. But the people who had ownership of that land, the town of Innisfil, should have something to say. If it is going to be taken from them, then they should be compensated. Heaven knows that when this government or any government seeks to expropriate land for good community purpose, there is compensation for that land. The town of Innisfil deserves to be compensated at the very least, and until such compensation is forthcoming, I do not believe that we on this side of the House can support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I do appreciate the opportunity to enter into the debate on Bill 196. I just want to make the members aware that I will be supporting Bill 196. The comment that I wanted to bring forward is that this has been an outstanding issue for 30 years. We stand in this House and we talk about finding balance. I believe a balance has been struck. One of the things that we also talk about is the economy, jobs, what we can do in ensuring that our communities remain strong. I see this as a path going forward for the people, so that they know

what the future will hold for them. It also will give the opportunity for them to speak specifically to this bill, as there will be committee hearings held. The people who have concerns will have the opportunity to either have a written submission or make a presentation which all parties will hear at that time.

But there comes a time when it's just important to move forward. We have to take so many things into consideration, but at the end of the day we want to ensure that our communities are sustainable for the people, the services that they provide, and that they have adequate growth contained within their communities to allow for future strength. I see this as a reasonable adjustment coming forward.

There's been no boundary adjustment that is not without its difficulties, but after 30 years I do believe that what the people want to hear is closure and moving forward and what they can expect of their government going forward. This is what we see represented today, and that's why, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting Bill 196. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I rushed back here because I knew the member from Beaches–East York was speaking and he is passionate about this issue, having been the last serving mayor of Beaches–East York at the municipal level of government.

Mr. John Yakabuski: East York.

Mr. John O'Toole: East York, actually; you're right.

I've heard people say everything from, "This is a hostile takeover," to "This is something that should have been done years ago." I think the issue here is this. When I met earlier this year in my role as critic with councillors from Barrie, they were very anxious about getting a solution here. I'm hoping that the minister has taken the time to find that perfect balance, and if not, that they are going to compensate them appropriately.

Hon. Jim Watson: Joe Tascona is with us.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, I would say to the member from York–Simcoe, I'm waiting for her comments on the record as well as the others members, from Simcoe–Grey and Simcoe North, of course, who are all focused on this issue and want the whole bottom line to be a fairness decision.

I would think that there are many comments that have been true. This has been discussed for a long, long time, and there's no annexation or other thing that's been without its pitfalls, but the ministry can step up. He spoke earlier in his remarks, saying that these transfer payments would benefit Innisfil; it's my understanding that he said that in his remarks. And I would hope that the town of Barrie, which is one of fastest-growing parts of the province, indeed the country—it really does need support. This is just the start, I hope, of providing serviced infrastructure and other supports for these communities to raise the appropriate level of taxation to allow for them to be healthy communities. But I'll be paying very close attention to this bill.

I once again want to reflect on the member from Beaches–East York, because he is a municipal politician in his background whom I have a great deal of respect for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's just as I anticipated. Mr. Prue delivers a comprehensive and very capable analysis of this legislation, and he raises some very disturbing things. For the life of me, I recall Liberals, when there was forced amalgamation going on here in the city of Toronto, collaborating with the New Democrats and resisting that. They felt that it was entirely inappropriate, unfair and unjust to force amalgamation on the communities of Toronto. Now you've got a government that talks a big game about rural Ontario, that talks a big game about preserving agricultural lands with its greenbelt and doesn't demonstrate the political fortitude to in fact make it happen.

Mr. Prue and others, Ms. Munro, I'm sure, will make reference to the fact this is some of the most significant and valuable farmland in Ontario, if not Canada, and here we're allowing it to be paved over. How does that preserve the increasingly scarce farmland? The people of Innisfil will never forgive this government for doing this—never—and they shouldn't. There are ways of addressing these issues, by sitting at a table and hammering things out so that you're fair to everybody involved.

Mr. Prue comments on the absence of any compensation, any whatsoever. This isn't even an expropriation because, if it were an expropriation, you're entitled to fair compensation. This is a land grab, I suppose, that equals the Liberals' tax grab in its arrogance. This bill should be no more supported than the government's HST.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I am pleased to rise and make some comments on Bill 196, the boundary adjustment act. I've seen the debate thus far, and that seems to be exactly what it is. It's a boundary adjustment.

A couple of questions seem to be rising in the early stages of this debate. One is, why the rush? Why now? It has been pointed out by the minister that some discussion apparently began in 1981. I had reason to want to know something about Canada's Wonderland in the last day or two, as I drove by it to the plowing match. Our children went there many, many years ago, and for my own interest, I found that Canada's Wonderland was built and opened in that very same year. That's how long this discussion has been going on: since Wonderland opened.

The other question seems to be how we're approaching this, but it's important to remember what we did in the past. The government did provide resources to help the municipalities find an agreement. It wasn't like we did this in isolation. We talked with the various persons who would be most interested, those being the local people and their municipal representatives. That wasn't successful. This proposal does reflect a recommendation

made by another, being the Office of the Provincial Development Facilitator, and that was brought about in February 2008, which again wasn't just yesterday.

We have this transfer of almost 2,300 hectares if this bill were to pass. It will accommodate Barrie's land needs, which I also noted as I drove through that area just yesterday, and it has long-range planning in it that would take them to 2031.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my colleagues from Huron–Bruce, Durham, Welland and Chatham–Kent–Essex.

I must say to my two colleagues from the Liberal Party that I was hoping for some edification when they stood up to talk for two minutes. They certainly didn't talk about anything I said or give any explanation as to why this government is hell-bent to proceed at this particular time.

The member from Huron–Bruce talked about services and that she was going support the bill. This does not surprise me, inasmuch as she is a loyal Liberal backbencher. And the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex did not refer in any way to other municipalities in a land boundary dispute, some of which were in close proximity to his own riding in southwestern Ontario, which I referred to. Two of them were from southwestern Ontario, one involving the town of Tecumseh and the county of Essex and the city of Windsor, and the other the township of Blandford–Blenheim and Woodstock. I know they're not exactly in his riding, but they are in close proximity.

I thank the member from Durham. He noted my municipal background and did have something to say about what I had to say. I trust that I raised some significant details to try to encourage a debate.

My colleague from Welland talked about compensation, and I think that's what this whole thing comes down to. There is the entire environmental impact that I don't think has been well reasoned; there are outstanding studies. But if one looks only at the compensation that is due to a town like Innisfil, a struggling town that is caught in the same economic morass and downturn that the rest of us are, to lose the potential of all this money, to lose these lands that would have been key to its survival in the long term as a robust municipality, is heart-rending. I think we need to talk about that too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to join the debate on Bill 196, the Barrie–Innisfil annexation act, 2009. It is a simple bill: Some 2,293 hectares of land are to be torn out of Innisfil and turned over to the city of Barrie without a penny in compensation to Innisfil. The people who live in the area to be annexed will have no say whatever about their fate, and neither will Innisfil council nor anyone else in the town.

Barrie's desire to annex land from Innisfil has a long history, including two bills before this House in the past 30 years. The town's fairgrowth.ca website lists the history, and I would like to include it here today for the public record.

"In 1891, 500 acres of Innisfil became incorporated as the village of Allendale, now part of the city of Barrie.

"In 1897, Barrie annexed a further 500 acres.

"In 1950, Innisfil had reached a population of 3,500. The advent of paved roads, the popularity of the automobile, the low price of gas and the even lower cost of housing outside Toronto encouraged commuter residents. What had previously been only seasonal development along Innisfil's shoreline, evolved to become permanent residential development. Today, about 90% of the shoreline consists of permanent residences....

"In 1967 another 600 acres of Innisfil land was annexed by the city of Barrie, to accommodate the establishment of what is now known as Park Place (formerly Molson's).

"In 1982 (January 1st), almost 9,000 acres of Innisfil land was annexed to the city of Barrie.

"In 1982, the Barrie-Innisfil Annexation Act also came into effect. This act identified lands at the northern boundary of Innisfil as moratorium lands. Land uses in this area were restricted and legislation ruled that the city of Barrie could not annex these lands," without Innisfil's consent, until either 1997 for one part or 2012 for the other part.

"In 1987, a little more than 700 acres of Innisfil was annexed to [the] city of Barrie. As a result of the annexations, Innisfil's population was reduced by approximately 27% to 12,153 permanent residents, and its total tax assessment declined by 20%....

"Between 2007 and 2009, Innisfil has attempted to negotiate an arrangement that would see [the] city of Barrie extend water and sewer services south of its city limits to businesses located along Highway 400 and Innisfil Beach Road. In exchange for such services, the city of Barrie has pursued land from Innisfil in order to increase residential and industrial growth. Negotiations among the parties have failed to yield an agreement which is agreeable and beneficial to all involved."

Only one reason exists to take these lands: massive commercial and residential development to the south of Barrie. Sprawl is what this is called. Since Barrie is governed separately from the rest of Simcoe county, development in the annexed area will not provide any tax revenues for services in the county. When I asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on May 26 about the action he was going to take, he said, "... at the end of the day, if we're not able to find a local solution, we will work collaboratively to find a solution."

Today we have a bill in front of us that represents the minister's solution. There are two things that I think are critical in understanding this bill.

One is the question of sprawl. Obviously, much has been said by various ministers on the evils of sprawl, and yet that's exactly what this bill contemplates. It con-

templates taking almost 2,300 hectares that are natural lands—agricultural and protected lands—and rezoning them for commercial, industrial, and residential opportunities.

At the same time as it does that, it obviously increases Barrie, according to those 2,300 acres of sprawl, without the recognition of the value of that land, without the recognition of the potential of that value. Obviously, those are two things that one would consider to be appropriate in any solution that one was looking for as an equitable solution.

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Brian Jackson, the mayor of Innisfil, told the Innisfil Examiner: "We regret that the Ontario government has seen fit to force a solution on us.... We believe there would have been a locally negotiated settlement if there had been a firm assurance there would not be any government intervention and had we (not) been dealing with Barrie negotiators who were not prepared, reluctant to make a deal and had no concrete proposals of their own."

At the same time, the province is launching a consultation on a Simcoe county growth plan, after it has decided where Barrie's growth is going to go. Many would regard this as a cynical gesture by the government. Innisfil residents will get to have their say about growth but it will make no difference to the town's new boundary. The Liberal government will use its majority to force the bill through the Legislature long before the growth plan is finished.

The federal MP for Barrie, Patrick Brown, stated in an editorial on June 4: "Growth must not be permitted to occur without the appropriate checks and balances. The county of Simcoe and city of Barrie's growth plans both aspire for residential development at a much too rapid pace."

On May 26 of this year, I asked the government about the growth plan and its effect on Innisfil. In response, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure said, "Certainly, we have a high expectation that the growth plan will be abided. It seeks to limit sprawl and intensify the development in particular areas where the infrastructure is well-suited to it. Barrie is obviously one of those."

This is all well and good, but the fact is that the government is planning this sprawl before it writes the growth plan. I think that's part of the concerns that people recognize in this particular bill, that while the ministers—several of them—refer to the need to avoid sprawl, it seems that the clock begins after they've taken the land from Innisfil.

Why didn't they prepare the growth plan first? Why didn't they consult with residents of Barrie, Innisfil and the surrounding communities to find out where growth should go? Maybe the answer would have been, "North of Innisfil." We will never know, because the decision was made by the government without consultation and without planning. So much for a real growth plan.

After the bill was introduced, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure came to Simcoe county and said, "I'm not going to tell the mayor of Innisfil or the regional

chair (what to do). We've put out a report designed to lend direction, shape and leadership (to growth), but we're also providing ample opportunity for dialogue. We've asserted what we think would be a good way forward...."

Maybe he should have told his colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs not to tell the people of Simcoe county what to do.

Local politicians in Simcoe county are shocked by the annexation process. Here is some of the coverage from the *Innisfil Scope*:

"Warden Tony Guergis told councillors that the decision imposed by the province in early June has made a shambles out of the county's work over the past two years.

"We have an imposed solution that does not reflect any of our voices," said Guergis. "The county did great work. Nobody else in the province can say they've done what we've done. We were pioneers. We were the first to go through the (Places to Grow) legislation."

"Adjala-Tosorontio mayor Tom Walsh was blunt in his assessment of the province's decision to cut his municipality's population growth substantially over the next 25 years.

"For somebody who hasn't got much to start with, it meant a lot. We were satisfied (with the county's plan for growth)," he said. "We should stand up and be counted."

"Essa mayor Dave Guergis said that he still could not understand the province's insistence on linking population and job growth so closely.

"Every day, I see hundreds of Barrie residents leaving Base Borden in my township and driving to Barrie, where they live," he said. "We have seen our growth cut by over 1,400 people, but we have already built our sewage and water treatment plant capacity for those levels."

The deputy mayor of Adjala-Tosorontio township, Doug Little, "said he was disappointed with the role of Barrie MPP Aileen Carroll, and her level of partisanship in the process.

"She may represent Barrie, but there should be some consideration given to the neighbouring municipalities. Barrie should clean up its own act before embarking on annexing land from its neighbours," he said."

Local farmers are against the annexation plan and are dubious about the growth plan. The Simcoe County Federation of Agriculture opposes the annexation. According to the *Innisfil Examiner*, "It put forward comments on land use policy in the Places to Grow legislation and regulations, designed to preserve farmland.

"The government never paid any attention to it," federation president David Riddell said in an interview. "Are we surprised? No."

"Riddell acknowledges the area in question has been subjected in recent years to ever-increasing pressures from the development industry, which has been buying up farmland at greatly inflated prices propelled by demand for industrial and residential growth beyond the greenbelt around the greater Toronto area.

"You can't blame the farmers for selling their property. If we could get a decent price for what we produce, the temptation wouldn't be so strong," he said.

"But on the flip side, Barrie has a lot of brand new industrial and commercial units right now with nobody in them. Why doesn't the city take the time to fill them first before taking up more land?" Some good questions from our Simcoe county farmers.

We must also ask what effects Barrie's sprawl will have on the environment and Lake Simcoe. I have already pointed out in the Legislature that Barrie puts two and a half times as much phosphorus per litre into the lake than Innisfil. Does the government seriously expect that allowing massive development to the south of Barrie will not harm the environment?

Local environmentalists are concerned about the government's plan for sprawl. Claire Malcolmson, co-ordinator of Campaign Lake Simcoe for Environmental Defence, referring to the growth plan, said, "Concentrating population growth in the area's largest centres makes good planning sense, particularly in Barrie, but opening up new areas for residential development and paving over prime agricultural lands to create new employment nodes in unserved areas is definitely a step backwards."

She goes on to say, "We always knew that Places to Grow and the Lake Simcoe Protection Act were at odds because saving the lake requires ... not paving massive areas of the watershed. Putting more jobs and housing in Barrie at least follows Places to Grow and supports compact development. We hope that the new development proposed in this announcement will not increase the phosphorus loads from sewage treatment plants in the ... watershed. The ... act is supposed to cap those sources of pollution, but now I'm not sure that will be possible. The province can still do the right thing and save agricultural land in Simcoe."

I first asked this government about the phosphorus levels in the lake in November 2006. I asked the then-Minister of Municipal Affairs:

"Your ministry is leading the intergovernmental action plan to assist in planning development in Simcoe county. As part of this, the Ministry of the Environment paid the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority \$1.5 million to develop the framework that provides advice on development plans and, most importantly, their impact on Lake Simcoe.

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"Despite the conservation authority's advice, your IGAP process is now recommending a strategy for development that would allow the level of phosphorus flowing into Lake Simcoe to increase, even though the authority told you that phosphorus levels in the lake are a problem.

"Minister, why do you support increasing phosphorus levels in Lake Simcoe?"

The minister of the day could not give me an answer to the question then. I wonder what he would think today, now that he is the Minister of the Environment. Remember, Barrie puts two and a half times as much phosphorus

per litre into the lake than Innisfil. I wonder if the current environment minister would be supportive of his two colleagues' plan for annexation and sprawl if he was the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Some of Barrie's leaders are concerned about the annexation's effect on the environment. Barrie's federal MP has asked if the development decisions are being based on what is best for Barrie. In his June 4 editorial he said, "The pace of growth occurring in Barrie over the last 20 years has had a significant impact on our quality of life. Future development must only be permitted in a fashion that does not overwhelm Lake Simcoe."

He went on to say, "We are just now turning back the clock on the environmental damage caused by our rapid development and have made tremendous progress in the past two years thanks to the unprecedented federal investment of \$30 million to help clean up Lake Simcoe ... I wonder if an additional 30,000 homes in the south end of Barrie would hamper our ability to keep Lake Simcoe clean. I believe it is incumbent on the provincial government to bring forth that case before any floodgates to massive residential growth are opened."

I think Mr. Brown has asked some important questions that this government is failing to answer.

The quality of life for people in Innisfil and Barrie depends on how we treat the environment and how we plan development. The MP for Barrie is concerned about the environmental effects of sprawl, but the federal government has no power in this area. I wonder if the MPP for Barrie will regret giving up the chance to champion the local environment and the lake in favour of supporting further urban sprawl.

I find it very interesting that a government that is so interested in placing a greenbelt around Toronto is so happy to sanction sprawl around Barrie.

A key question for Innisfil residents is the effect that annexation will have on their taxes and the town's economic viability. This concerns both the town as a whole and the residents in the annexed area.

On May 28, I said the minister, "Preserving the high quality of life enjoyed by residents of Innisfil depends on preserving the town's economic viability and"—that includes obviously—"its tax base. Barrie's desire to annex large sections of Innisfil puts the town's viability and quality of life at risk.

"Minister, what message do you have for my Innisfil constituents who are seeking to keep their town a great place to live?"

I am pleased that the annexed area is not as large as some feared. The town of Innisfil did not lose the Georgian Downs racetrack or a large chunk of its existing commercial tax base, but residents of the annexed area are concerned that they will see their taxes rise. One resident of the area to be annexed e-mailed me and said the following:

"I have been waging a one-man war against the annexors and I still have no answers about our future.... Quite frankly, I am expecting a large jump in our prop-

erty taxes next year simply due to our large frontage and our acreage, which is presently zoned rural residential.

"Having been forced to engage the city in the past on other issues like landfill and airports, I see how local politicians forge ahead with their own agendas in spite of those ... they serve.

"I believe my concerns are legitimate, but so far everyone I have spoken to has just passed the buck."

Before this bill becomes law, I would encourage you to provide my constituent with some answers. Even if you will allow no chance to stop this bill, he at least deserves to know if his taxes will go up. And if you cannot tell him if his taxes will go up, you should tell the city of Barrie to give him an answer.

Along with the council and residents of Innisfil, I have been fighting the proposed annexation for many months. Several months ago I arranged for the mayor and me to meet the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The town of Innisfil has actively promoted its views. On May 7, 2009, the town of Innisfil launched the fairgrowth.ca website and media campaign to raise awareness of the issue. On May 13, 2009, a fair growth rally was held in the Stroud community centre, where several hundred people attended to be able to hear the council and their update on the negotiations, as well as to voice their concerns.

One of the interesting things at that community centre meeting was the number of people who came from what is now Barrie but what had been annexed land from Innisfil, and they certainly, I think, felt very strongly against the proposed continued annexation. It was quite interesting to hear the kinds of statements that had been made to them some years ago, when Barrie had made the earlier annexation, on public transit and not impacting on their local taxes. Of course, they had seen the taxes go up and no local transit. So there was certainly much cynicism about the kinds of opportunity, if you want to use that expression, that annexation presented to those people who would now, under this bill, be annexed; certainly not a very promising picture from those who chose to come to the public meeting.

On May 21, 2009, a fair growth demonstration was held here at Queen's Park, and this event was organized by the Innisfil Chamber of Commerce. I think it's important that it was the chamber of commerce that recognized, if you like, the commercial threat, the question of the tax base and the commercial viability of the community, and the fact that there was, as we now know from this bill, no compensation for the loss of this land. But people rallied—as a matter of fact, four busloads of concerned residents attended this demonstration, and I think it speaks to the strong sense of commitment of the community to the need for some kind of compensation. I think many recognized that the writing was on the wall, but they also recognized that there was the need for a fair deal and that one municipality shouldn't have the ability to bankrupt its neighbour. I was very proud to speak at this rally on behalf of the Innisfil constituents.

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But I think it's really important that an opportunity comes when we complete second reading of this bill. I

think there is an important role for government to play in offering committee hearings, and those committee hearings should not just be at Queen's Park, but in fact should be in the community of Innisfil. My constituents, I believe, have a right to make their views known, and hearings will also allow this issue of compensation to be raised based on the proposed annexation. I think people see this as a fairness issue: If Barrie is allowed to profit from the annexation, Innisfil should be compensated for its losses.

I've outlined for this House many of my constituents' concerns about this annexation, but I would like to end my remarks by putting the bill in the perspective of the government's planning process.

What strikes me first about this is the complication of layers of planning that this government has taken on in the last few years, particularly where local planning decisions have historically been the question. When the government made the decision to introduce the greenbelt, people like me—because at the time I was the municipal affairs critic for our party—identified one of the consequences to that, which of course would be the question of leapfrogging, the fact that when you froze an area, there was going to be further sprawl. In fact, it's kind of an interesting irony, because people talked about freezing this land, as has happened with the greenbelt, but now we all face the traffic going through the greenbelt to get to these new areas that are opening up. Certainly, south Simcoe has been the recipient of much of the activity that the greenbelt forced. So we have in various parts the area of the greenbelt and the limitations that it provides. Then we have the question of Places to Grow, the question of the development of nodes and things like that. Then we have Simcoe county's official plan, which it is by law required to create. And then we have the government talking about its plan for Simcoe county's growth.

On top of all of those layers of decision-making and the IGAP process, where the conservation authority's \$1.5-million research was ignored, we have the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. While this act carries with it no money, no funding allocations, it does presume a level of environmental activity and regime and protection, by its very name and nature, which serves to raise questions in the minds of constituents: What trumps what? When is sprawl not sprawl? When Barrie wants it? When is protection of Lake Simcoe an issue? Only when it doesn't concern Barrie? When it's not the two and a half litres more of phosphorus loading than Innisfil? When is land really the issue, but then we can have ministerial zoning orders?

So there's a lot of confusion about this process and the fact that this bill then adds, frankly, further confusion, but I would also say that it raises questions of the future. What happens next? Obviously, the government believes—and there's certainly evidence in terms of making Barrie a nodal area, but then there are more places in Simcoe county, as I expressed earlier by the concerns of others, that also want to be considered. So it's a question

then, I think, of what the future is. Does this mean, without any changes in structure—are we going to have this conversation with Barrie and Innisfil and Simcoe county? Are we going to go over the same arguments in 10 or 20 years from now over annexations?

Right now, it seems to me that it's Barrie, all; Innisfil, zero.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: That was an interesting pause there, Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —but I understand.

I like Ms. Munro. She's a skilled and effective member of this Legislature. In the last 45, 50 minutes or so she's brought healthy, intelligent analysis to this debate. In fact, she's been more than generous with the government, because this government, with its bully tactics, is going to reduce us to pleading for compensation when in fact maybe the real issue is that there shouldn't be an annexation at all.

It's a strange thing going on. On the one hand, governments increasingly are inclined to give municipalities more autonomy, more powers, but it seems to me that it only applies to big-city Ontario, and big-city Ontario is being encouraged to bully and beat up on rural Ontario.

The authors of this legislation don't see the inherent quality of rural Ontario. The authors of this legislation don't see the inherent quality of good farmland.

Down where I come from in Niagara, we have an organization called PALS, the Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society. My predecessor Mel Swart, who was a great man, was a long-time spokesperson for PALS here in this Legislature. The struggle by people who love rural Ontario and the struggle by people who understand and love the culture of small-town Ontario to preserve rural and small-town Ontario is a profound one.

We've got to have public hearings. I think the government will be surprised at the intensity of the dislike of those rural Ontarians around Barrie for this disastrous proposal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I commend the speaker from York-Simcoe, who raised a number of issues. I would like to point out that in my community we have been through something similar. It was an amalgamation process—this, of course, is the dividing of two municipalities—and when we did that, we added some seven municipalities, from Pickering Beach, from Audley, from Pickering village, part of Pickering township, Squires Beach. We expanded the municipality of Ajax so we could continue to allow for the appropriate growth and the appropriate development in our area, a similar situation to what we have here through the municipal process.

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I guess it's a philosophy, when you hear some of the comments that are made throughout the day, that there is

no closure in contract; this is missing or that is missing. We all know after a process that there is a clean-up time frame and there is also a transfer of payments in one shape or form, one side or the other, and that's a given at the municipal level.

I commend the Premier. I commend the minister. Thirty years is too long to debate an issue. We can stand here and say, "Should we continue on? Absolutely. It has been 30 years already. Why don't we keep going?" Somewhere in this slow, mule-driven economy, process, bureaucracy, some day, somebody has to do something in a reasonable time frame, and I'm glad to see this going ahead. I'm pleased that the minister has brought forward the bill, Bill 196. I'm certainly going to support it, and I look for the support of the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I must respond to the comment from the member from Ajax–Pickering. He says that 30 years is too long to debate any issue. I have to ask him how long he has been married. But anyway, I also—

Hon. Jim Watson: Leave your wife out of it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not married 30 years yet, but I suspect Joe is.

I also wanted to comment on an earlier statement by the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, who said that this is a boundary adjustment, dismissing this whole thing as a boundary adjustment, as something that shouldn't be a big problem or a big deal. What I would ask him is, if your neighbour wanted to have a boundary adjustment which meant that he took half of your property and gave you nothing in return, I'm just wondering if you would have a problem with that boundary adjustment. That's what is happening here.

The city of Barrie, which needs to expand—we understand that; they want to grow—wants to take part of Innisfil. Innisfil is not going to say yes. In fact, they're going to defend their rights to be Innisfil. You wonder why this has taken 30 years; it's because, obviously, Innisfil does not believe that there has been any offer put on the table that is satisfactory to them and their future. Where do they go from here? How do they preserve what they see as their historical rights and their lifestyle that has been part of what has made Innisfil Innisfil since, as the member from Beaches–East York said, prior to Confederation?

It's not a simple matter of just saying, "You used to live in Innisfil; now you live in Barrie." That's not the matter, and the people from Innisfil have some real questions. The member from Welland, who talks about cities taking over rural people, is right. That kind of thing can't be done without due consideration.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It's regrettable that such permanent, long-term decisions are made without a plan for how the change is going to be managed. I think, as I've said before, that this is a pattern of this government—to make wonderful announcements and to try to impress on people that somebody is working here on their behalf at

Queen's Park, but in reality, what it is is a headline. It is a headline, and there's no substance to the initiative.

In this case, there are so many unanswered questions. Whether or not the decision to go forward with this was a good one or a bad one, the results are not going to be good. The wounds that are created within the community last for a very, very long time.

Who compensates Innisfil for their financial losses in this? All municipalities are struggling. Innisfil is not a large community. It's a rural community, and now it will have its opportunity to expand into this area cut off.

Who is protecting the agricultural land? We're talking about annexing, or giving away, to Barrie agricultural land that will now be used to develop residential and industrial growth.

What happens to Simcoe county's official plan, which is somewhere in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval? They worked long and hard, communicating with their residents on how they would include their values and their characters in that official plan. All of a sudden, that's scooped with this boundary decision. Do they have to go back to square one and start their whole process again? It's expensive, it's cumbersome and it's unnecessary.

A lot of questions are left unanswered with this decision.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for York–Simcoe, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to respond to the members from Welland, Ajax–Pickering, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Burlington.

If I were to look at the concerns that they have raised, it's a common thread in terms of the kinds of challenges that we have, and that is the question of managing growth. It's the question of balancing the environment, rural life and the kind of urban growth that is recognized to be part of being in the 21st century. That's kind of the backdrop that people spoke to.

I think that they are correct in recognizing that the issue, as brought out by various speakers, is the fact that you also have to have something that's fair. So, while there are some inevitable elements to this, fairness should be one of those inevitable elements, and that's where the problem lies. When people look at this bill, they're not looking at something that speaks to that fairness. And it's encumbered by the fact that when you have people talking about the evils of sprawl and then grabbing almost 2,300 hectares, this doesn't look like the protection that is also espoused by this government.

I thank those who offered their comments in this debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you to all.

There are two clocks—and numerous watches, no doubt—in this Legislature, but my pocket watch always wins, and it's time that the House was adjourned until 9 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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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: Ted Arnott
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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