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Wednesday 30 September 2009

Mercredi 30 septembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
AND SCHOOL BOARD
GOVERNANCE ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009
SUR LE RENDEMENT DES ÉLÈVES
ET LA GOUVERNANCE
DES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 16, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to student achievement, school board governance and certain other matters / *Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne le rendement des élèves, la gouvernance des conseils scolaires et d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? The honourable member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I recall, I had the floor when this was last being addressed. We've got Mr. Prue and Ms. DiNovo here to speak to it as well this morning, along with, I'm sure, some Conservatives.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I can't hear you, Peter.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Then listen; stop chatting with your neighbour if you can't hear me. Don't sit there reading your newspaper and writing love notes. And if push comes to shove, put your earpiece in.

You'll recall that I queried whether this was the Christine Nunziata bill: crazy Christine, buying lingerie on the taxpayers' tab as a school trustee—and sexy, mind you. God bless her, it was sexy lingerie.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, yes, she was on her honeymoon, you know.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Prue notes.

Buying sexy lingerie on the taxpayers' tab with her apparently school-board-issued credit card. However, it was Josh Matlow who had the audacity to criticize what he considered an ill-advised judgment by his board.

I've spoken to board trustees over the course of many, many years who have called me, even as a lawyer many years ago; good trustees, newly elected trustees, full of vim and vinegar, wanting to make a difference, who called me to say, "I was told by the director/superintendent/chair that I couldn't do (a), (b) or (c). They brought in the board solicitor, who read the riot act to me."

Hon. John Gerretsen: To you?

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, to that particular trustee. These trustees, mostly young novices to politics, said, "What can I do?" I said, "You can do anything you want, as long as it isn't illegal. Use your judgment. Use your conscience. If you think you have to do something in particular to advance the interests of a student or a school in your ward, in your bailiwick, or to address the concerns of a family about a particular problem in a particular school, you do what you think you should." "Well, what can they do to me?" "They can't do anything to you. It's the voters who will decide in three years' time," as it was then, "whether or not you did the right thing. You can't do anything illegal."

Obviously, after this legislation is passed you can't say that anymore, can you? The best-meaning trustee who offends his or her colleagues on the board can find themselves censured, gagged, forfeiting pay and excluded from meetings. I've got to go across the way and knock somebody out before I can be excluded from a meeting. You've got to effectively commit a criminal offence in this chamber before you can be excluded from the chamber. There are the powers of the Speaker to exclude somebody who doesn't comply with the orders, usually when it comes down to withdrawing a statement and being obstreperous in that regard, but that's for one day.

This is very frightening stuff. I've come across board trustee after board trustee who explains to me—I'm not talking about any particular board, and they tend to be smaller town boards. Understand that all the world isn't Toronto, where board politics have a reasonably high profile and there's media coverage of them. Down in small-town Ontario, they tend to be little cliques, as often as not—some backroom boying. If you tend to be the voice of dissent, they use every effort to shut you down. This government legislation will formalize that and legitimize it.

It will not only allow boards, rightly so, to be compelled to set up codes of conduct, but it provides powers for boards that are undemocratic and unacceptable in elected institutions, elected bodies. There's no recourse, as I read Bill 177, to appeal a code of conduct that is

overly restrictive. Again, these same small-town boards, I'm sorry to tell you, tend to be run by the director or the superintendent, who develops a close rapport, if you will, whether it's expensed or not, that's nurtured by more than a little bit of wining and dining from time to time with the chairman of the board. They like that control, and they exercise it. I've seen boards that restrict and even exclude public access: boards that will engage in the most acute pettifoggery to prevent a parent or group of parents from making a presentation to the board if it's around an issue that might embarrass the board, or if it's around an issue of a particular school about which there are particular concerns.

This government can't have it both ways. It either believes in local and community-based democracy and control or it doesn't. This is a very subtle way of effectively eliminating boards of education without going through the political strife of saying you are going to abolish boards of trustees. I've been a long-time advocate of elected hospital governors. LHINs? Oh, to heck with LHINs. Abolish them. They're useless; they're dangerous; they're government tools. How can a LHIN, that's government appointed, government hacks—Mr. Levac, maybe you want to tell us about your experience with that Niagara Hamilton LHIN.

0910

Mr. Dave Levac: Wonderful people.

Mr. Peter Kormos: They're a bunch of unelected, unaccountable people. The Niagara Hamilton LHIN covers Niagara, Haldimand, Hamilton and Brantford—am I correct, Mr. Levac? Lord thundering Jesus, how can that board purport to understand the unique needs—

Mr. Dave Levac: I have two members from my riding, Peter.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, Mr. Levac says he has two members from his riding. Whoop-de-do. A lot of good it does you.

Mr. Dave Levac: It does a lot of good.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Levac is suggesting that there's some political patronage going on here. And that there's payoff. Who was that Conservative candidate who just got bumped because he had the nerve to suggest that if you didn't elect a Tory you weren't going to get any grease? Now I understand. Liberal-appointed boards prefer Liberal communities. I'm talking LHINs.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's Mr. Levac's accusation; I didn't say it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, that underscores my point, doesn't it? That underscores my point. We don't need unelected bodies—and when we have elected bodies, we've got to give them the authority to do what they were designed to do. We've got to give individual members of those bodies the power to perform their individual roles.

Bill 177 turns boards of education, turns school board trustees into rubber-stampers. If you dare to speak out against the party line, you can be shut down with a code of conduct. And there's no terms of reference for what that code of conduct should consist of. There's no guidelines, there's no controls, there's no limits. In fact, the

legislation does say that a board member shall support the decision of a board once it's made. That's like telling John Yakabuski that once the government passes a particular bill, he has to support it.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Nonsense. That's not what democratically elected bodies are designed to do. That's what the politburo does.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's on the second floor, right in the corner.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski notes—and he's quite right. So we've got Soviet-style central democracy, democratic centralism—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Stalinism.

Mr. Peter Kormos:—Stalinism, as Ms. DiNovo notes, being imposed on boards of trustees, school boards, that have already been hammered. Look, the first attack on them was capping their salaries. Let's understand where things like Christine Nunziata's credit cards come from. My, dare I say, inference, is that when you have a board that isn't allowed to pay fair salaries, they compensate in other ways. They give their members credit cards. Is that reasonable? And wink-wink, nudge-nudge, they suggest to those members, "You might want to offset the discomfort of your substandard salary by, ahem, indulging from time to time."

New Democrats aren't happy with this legislation. We are not enthusiastic about it. We aren't committed to it in any way, shape or form. We think it does great damage to boards. We think it's the beginning of the end for elected boards of education—elected trustees. It's certainly far from the beginning of the end—a very major part of the process of the end—of local decision-making when it comes to designing education. Folks here in Toronto who think Ontario begins and ends at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor don't understand that communities in northern Ontario are far different from downtown Toronto and that communities in rural Niagara and rural southern Ontario are far different and that the isolated communities of the far, far north are far different from downtown Toronto. They're confirming that with this legislation.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I must preface my remarks by stating that I wish I had been here for the first eight minutes, because if the last 12 minutes of his speech were anything to go by, it was extremely entertaining.

Just a couple of points that my friend from Welland had talked about: He talked about the poor school trustee coming in to a meeting and being told that he or she could not act upon a certain thing, and then the lawyer comes in and reads the Riot Act. I remember that the Riot Act can only be read by a mayor or a reeve, because one of the things that the lawyer came and told me, upon my appointment as mayor in the borough of East York—he brought out a copy of the Riot Act and explained to me how a mayor can go to the front step and read the Riot Act, and everyone had to disperse.

Hon. John Gerretsen: How often did you do it, Mike?

Mr. Michael Prue: So the reading of the Riot Act became central to my job as mayor. Fortunately, I never had an opportunity to read it, and I wonder whether my colleague Mr. Gerretsen, as mayor of Kingston, ever had to read the Riot Act, particularly after a Queen's party some evening.

In any event, my colleague from Welland also talked about the voices of dissent and the fact that trustees will now be shut down, those who have the unmitigated gall, the temerity, to challenge the Minister of Education, to challenge the government, to challenge any kind of decision that may see schools shut down or be inadequately funded, to stand up and talk about that, and whether or not that dissent is going to continue.

I agree with my colleague from Welland when he said that this is the beginning of the end of school boards. When I get an opportunity to speak later today, I'm going to talk about the slow decline of the trustee, or the position of trustee, what they are allowed to do, what they are allowed to say, what they are allowed to influence, because I see this as one of the final nails in the coffin of that position.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I think everyone listened to the member from Welland and his humorous portrayal of some odd circumstance, whether it's addressing Bill 177 or other comments. But I have to say that if you look at the overall thrust of this thing, it's in response to some Toronto school boards' misuse of resources and their continual crying to the current minister about not having enough money, and yet even in the media today there are reports that say that things should be brought under better control.

I recall, in my time as a school trustee—I have to say it was some time ago. It was, I think, 1980 or 1982, somewhere in that time frame. When I was first elected as a school trustee, I felt very honoured because I had three children in the school system at that time. I was there as a parent-teacher association member and then as a school trustee. I felt it was an honour, but I didn't realize you even got paid for it. When I was first elected, I was surprised, because it was a bit of an honoured position, that they gave me a cheque for I think it was \$250 at that time, per month. I think when I left, it was about \$400 a month.

I think the issue here—the trustee's role has certainly come under the threatening glare of Minister Wynne trying to silence the trustees in this difficult time where she's insufficiently addressing the needs of the students in many cases. I am interested in the debate this morning. I know that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will be speaking, and at that time we'll certainly hear some of the real truth about what's happening on the street in education.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Let's be very clear about what this bill is. This bill is an attempt by this government to

muzzle and make irrelevant school trustees. That's the intent of this bill. It's interesting that, presumably, from the government's spin, it's about transparency and accountability. What's interesting is, we're talking about trustees who make about \$25,000 a year, when this is the government, let me remind you, that oversaw the eHealth scandal to \$1 billion, not to mention the salary of Ms. Wynne herself. I assume it's around \$160,000, something like that, with expenses. We don't go over her expenses with a fine-toothed comb except, of course, for the Integrity Commissioner. I assume she's not spending money over and above her salary on lingerie or trips to the Bahamas. But really, would she have to with that kind of income?

0920

We're talking about people, one of which, interestingly enough, Ms. Wynne used to be. She used to be one of the radical trustees who call the government into question. Now that she's in a position of power, wow: Power corrupts, blah, blah, blah. Now she's going to turn around and censure exactly those trustees who want to do what she used to do.

This is a Harris-esque bill. There's no question about it, and trustees know this. Trustees are elected bodies. They are there to represent the people who elect them, that is, the parents. They are not there to kowtow to a government. They're not there to answer to the government; they're there to answer to the electorate. This bill changes that fundamentally. This is, in its nature, an anti-democratic bill. We'll say more.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I might remind the members that questions and comments are intended not to debate the bill but to refer to the debate that the previous speaker had given to the House. Just keep that in mind.

The member for Welland has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I appreciate your direction with respect to what questions and comments should consist of, which is why I make every effort to be as free-wheeling and broad-based as I can when I make comments during a 20-minute period, so people have that much more leeway in their questions and comments.

I appreciate the people who had the patience to listen to the 15 or so minutes that I had here today. This is serious business. Out there with the public it may not have a lot of traction, as they say in the back rooms of political spinsters, spin doctors. But it's so horribly important. As it is now, school board trustees tend to be anonymous. Go to any number of communities and ask them who their own trustees are, if it's a ward system, and most people can't tell you. Most people, if they have a problem with the school, simply grin and bear it or simply suffer it. They don't know that you should call a trustee.

The problem is, once this bill passes, even if you do know who your trustee is, and even if you do know where you can contact him or her, and even if you do call him or her, the purpose of this bill is to eunuch that person, to neuter them, to render them impotent, to make it

impossible for them to do anything for you. All they're going to be able to do is cite the board's code of conduct, for instance, that says, "No board member shall"—effectively no board member shall not support a policy of the board. The poor board trustee who campaigned saying, "I want to represent you," is going to have to say, "Well, that's the policy of the board, and I can't speak against it." That's not very pretty, is it?

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I had to get ahead of the member for East York because I was courteously watching the government side of the House to see who was going to speak to this bill. I understand, if they're supporting the bill—it's a bill from their minister—that they would be anxious and eager to stand in support of not only that minister but of their government. But I do see some cracks in the armour, some weaknesses there. Probably the genesis of this bill is part of that.

I appreciate the comments of my friend from Welland. He's always insightful, and I can say that in two different ways: He's insightful and inciteful in the way that he goes about debate in this chamber. It's wonderful to be able to participate alongside him many times. He talked about the fact that this is painting the entire body of provincial school trustees with the same brush for the wrong reasons, and I'll get back to that a little later.

Let's talk about what I see as the reason that this government is bringing in the bill for second reading at this time: It's because they're under the gun. They are purporting this bill to be about accountability at the very time when the accountability of this government is being brought into question by people across the province of Ontario. Each day we find more reasons and more evidence of why people are asking those questions about the accountability of this government.

When you look at this bill, and it's being touted and sold as one that brings accountability to school boards across the province of Ontario, you do have to ask yourself, what is the true motivation of the government? Because this government has been masterful—masterful, I say—in their six years here at managing to change the channels at the appropriate time.

We have important issues going on in this province at this time, some of the most difficult economic circumstances that we've been in for some time. Yet today I see the Attorney General on the television, changing the channel once again because he doesn't want to talk about the Marshall situation. He's on the television this morning talking about suing Big Tobacco for \$50 billion in the province of Ontario for health care costs. We allow illegal tobacco to now account for almost 50% of the tobacco sold in this province, but they're going to have this lawsuit against Big Tobacco. When you ask him a question on the Marshall incident, "Well, I cannot speak to some of that." Or if you ask the finance minister with regard to issues surrounding the Windsor Energy Centre, "I cannot speak to that."

And I cannot speak to that either, by the looks of the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's correct. Let's stick to Bill 177.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes, back to Bill 177. That's what I like about you, Speaker, and I say that in the most cordial sense, the way that—from time to time I'm a bit of a wanderer, because I come from a rural riding. As you know, it's a big riding; it covers a whole lot of area. And sometimes when I'm actually going directly to an event—and I am working back to the bill—because of the vastness of my riding, it would be inappropriate for me to ignore the trip. So if I have to go to, let's say, Pembroke for some reason, it would be inappropriate for me to not stop in Golden Lake and say hello to a few people or something. So that's the kind of way that we've become accustomed to in my riding. But I am getting back—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I get the point of your lecture. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, yes. I'm getting back to it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Just keep speeding when you go through Peterborough.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I must respond to the member from Peterborough, of course, as we generally do in this House, because it's the courteous thing to do when a member from the other side says something. I often stop in Peterborough on my way home. And I say to the member that—

Mr. Jeff Leal: We had sightings of you shopping at Zellers.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I don't know if you would have had sightings of me—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Peterborough.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not going to pick on one particular business or another. But I do stop in Peterborough from time to time for a bite to eat because it's kind of halfway between my residence in Barry's Bay and the Legislature here. So from time to time I do stop there.

But let's get back to the bill, because I know what he's trying to do: He's trying to take me off my intention, which is always to speak directly to the matter before the House. And the matter before the House this morning, as you know—and I know it's not a prop when you hold up a bill—is Bill 177.

The concern I have—I share so many of those concerns with the member from Welland about the real intention of this bill. We had a significant problem in Toronto. Is it always that the world revolves around Toronto and that trustees in my riding, or the ridings of my friends from Durham or Parry Sound–Muskoka, are going to be sort of painted with the same brush by this bill? There's an accountability issue, and there has—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I look around this chamber and I see very few government members here. I'd like to have a quorum call.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is there a quorum?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): A quorum is present. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the floor is yours.

0930

Mr. John Yakabuski: I too was wondering about those numbers, but they did seem to appear very quickly when a quorum was called. The member from Parkdale–High Park certainly has that effect on the government side of the House: They're in, they're out, they're in sort of thing. Anyway, where was I?

Trustees throughout the province are feeling like they are being somewhat attacked or their integrity is being attacked somewhat as a result of this bill and the fact that the government is advancing it at this time. We all read numerous news clippings back in 2008, I guess it was, with respect to the egregious lack of accountability back in the first part of 2008 where trustees in Toronto were clearly abusing the trust that was placed in them regarding legitimate or illegitimate expenses. My colleague from Welland articulated very well when he said it almost appeared like there was an encouragement for the fact that, you know, these trustees complained that they don't get paid enough—although they should perhaps work under the remuneration conditions that trustees in my riding would get—but because of the fact that they weren't happy with the pay scale, it was almost like, "Well, here. It's very important that you, as a trustee, have a credit card."

Now, I don't quite understand that. We all have the right to apply to be compensated or reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses on behalf of our employer. As members of the Legislature, if we go on an assembly trip, we pay for that and then we apply—when I say a trip, if we have to go to another riding for meetings or another part of the province for meetings and we have to spend the night in a hotel room or whatever, we pay for that out of our pocket and then we apply for reimbursement, and that's the best way that the assembly itself can see the accountability for those expenditures. They see that they are legitimate; they can be assured that the member was, in fact, there and it was on assembly business. But they don't give us credit cards where you just swipe, and there goes the statement at the end of the month. That's probably partially what led to the fact that these things were going on. It's far less likely that someone is going to be checking things closely, because there's simply a bill that comes in to the board, paid by someone on staff, as opposed to a claim from an individual trustee who says, "Okay, I'm out this money. My family has the right to receive that money back as quickly as possible." So the accounting people would look at it and legitimize it and reimburse the individual trustee.

But when you give somebody that credit card, boy—we do it with our own credit cards sometimes, where you just don't think sometimes and don't realize how fast that balance can creep up. I don't think it's a very good way of allowing people to run up expenditures when there is a better way, which is reimbursement.

At the same time, there were a lot of wrong things—illegitimate, illegal, possibly illegal; I'm not the lawyer in the House here. But when those things were going on, of course, they drew a lot of attention to that issue in the Toronto Sun, the Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail, the National Post. All the papers printed here out of Toronto paid very close attention. And some of the things were, like the member said, lingerie. What in the Sam Hill has lingerie got to do with doing your job as a trustee for the Toronto school board? I don't know. I want to get an invitation to some of those meetings, though. They must be exciting: lingerie and Caribbean vacations. I guess it's very important—perhaps you think better under the warm climate of St. Maarten or the Virgin Islands or something; I don't know. Perhaps there's a better thought process or you come up with better ideas. Maybe, when you put all of those things together—a Caribbean vacation and wearing lingerie—you're bound to come up with the best possible solution for Toronto's school boards.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It would be a little chilly in our parts.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, it is sometimes chilly. Some of the responses I get from the other side of the House are rather chilly too sometimes, but I try to warm them up from time to time.

What I don't like about this is the fact that it paints all the hard-working, very minimally remunerated trustees from ridings like my own—the Renfrew County District School Board or the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. If we keep telling these people, "You're not trustworthy; we have to keep the hammer down on you because of what happened somewhere else"—you look at this bill and it takes away really the autonomy of those people—sooner or later, people are going to ask themselves, "Am I relevant at all as a school board trustee?" Or is the trustee of the past and the minister of the present—she wanted to run the education system when she was a trustee, and now she really wants to run it as the minister. She thought the trustees were the key to the system when she was a trustee. Now she's the minister, and she wants to render those trustees irrelevant and take over the whole ministry herself.

They must be asking themselves, quite frankly, "Wasn't she one of us at one time? Wow, how power seems to change people." But those people are going to start asking, "If I've been rendered irrelevant, why do we even take these jobs?" You know, in small communities and—

Mr. Michael Prue: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wonder whether a quorum is present to hear this wonderful speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): A quorum is present. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the floor is yours.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much.

I really have to speak to this quorum issue for a moment. I appreciate the fact that my friend from Beaches–East York was counting the numbers and determined that there were not sufficient members in this House to form a quorum. I'm kind of disappointed, in a way, that he drew attention to that, because it says something about—I'm concerned, and I'm probably going to go back to my office a little later and do a little practising, because I used to be able to draw a reasonable crowd in this chamber. This is the first time that quorum has ever been called while I've been speaking, and I'm really, really disappointed in that. It's funny, because when I get really, really worked up, the Liberals seem to pay attention. Maybe I haven't been clear enough about what I see as some of the problems in this bill.

0940

Mr. Dave Levac: Loud enough.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Loud enough. Okay. Well, you know, sometimes you just have to save that throat a little bit, too. You may have an engagement of another kind—

Hon. James J. Bradley: For question period.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, for later in the day.

My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo, Liz Witmer, is the critic for education and a former trustee herself, so she understands the—

Mr. John O'Toole: She's a former high school teacher.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She was a high school teacher as well. She has seen the education system from all directions and all angles and understands it very well. She was the Minister of Education, as well, in our government. So there's probably not a more knowledgeable person in this House when it comes to the education system in the province of Ontario, with her background, and she too has raised serious concerns with respect to the autonomy of local school boards.

Again, I'd go back to my original point, just briefly, about how we understand why the government brought in this bill at this time: because they're under the gun. They're under the gun for the lack of accountability that they have shown here in the province of Ontario, in education as well. It took the minister forever and a day to react to what she knew was going on within the Toronto Catholic District School Board and she kind of turned a blind eye to it for quite a while. It's symptomatic of the way that they go about accountability issues: First they try to deny them, then they try to do nothing to see if they'll go away, and then they come in with a response that is either inadequate or misdirected. In this case, it actually fills both categories: inadequate and misdirected—certainly, misdirected from the point of view that it tars all of those well-meaning trustees with the same brush.

My colleague from Welland brought in a very interesting dimension to it, with respect to the code of conduct and what you must adhere to and how you could be

frozen out as a trustee by your colleagues. We don't have the regs. The devil is always in the details. Presumably it could be that you don't sit on the same side of an issue as your colleagues and you could be censured. He likened that to the politburo in the Soviet Union. Sometimes I wonder if it doesn't actually operate in a similar fashion here, because I can tell by some of the things that are said in this House, some of the questions that are asked, some of the statements that are made by members of the government, that there's clearly a concern on the part of members of that party that if you're not doing as you're told, you could find yourself on the gulag.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Oh, come on.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I know that upsets people over there. But if you look at the pattern here, even the Speaker—not you, Mr. Speaker, but the Honourable Mr. Peters—has cautioned the government recently about this practice of having its members just get up and make statements on behalf of the minister so that the minister can respond on behalf of the minister again. So you really have to wonder if that's the kind of thing they're thinking of here. Are we going to have school boards saying, “Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full”—or you could be sitting on the outside looking in.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to this speech because, as always, my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke speaks passionately but he speaks with a lot of humour and it is a pleasure to hear him. So when I stood on a point of order to question whether or not there was a quorum, it was not to stop him, but because I believe that there should be more people in this chamber to hear such eloquence, to hear the entertaining value. I want to assure him, because I think he felt a little bit taken aback that there weren't more people present, and this is the first time it has ever happened to him. I want to say that I meant no umbrage; I just really, really believe that more people who were sitting outside, who were in close proximity, should be brought in to hear the speech.

He spoke with some eloquence. He talked about the problems inherent in some of the school boards, particularly the Toronto Catholic District School Board, and the reason that the public is expecting far more from boards. But he also said, I think quite correctly, that this is a bit of a sledgehammer, this bill. It's a bit of a sledgehammer that will take away the rights of duly, democratically elected people, and I would surmise from what he had to say that he will be in opposition to this bill when it is called for second reading, because I believe that's—

Mr. Dave Levac: He's had an epiphany.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, I think perhaps he has had an epiphany on this entire issue. I trust that's where he's coming from.

I would just like to again commend him for what he had to say and for, as always, providing good entertainment value while he discussed a very serious issue.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: As has been said, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke did take us on a long kind of journey around his riding. He also made some very good points that I think were most relevant. He was talking about his riding, which is to a large extent a very large riding, primarily rural but made up of very tight, small communities. I'm concerned about the same thing in my riding: Small, rural schools are being threatened. This is part of the governance issue within this, with the ministers—the whole government, for that matter—centralizing everything, whether it's in health care or education. Small, rural schools are threatened.

I just want to put on the record that his remarks are similar to the remarks that I might make, if I have a chance. The trustees themselves are generally highly regarded citizens of the riding or the community that they represent. They're very strong defenders of their rural schools, the small schools that maybe don't have swimming pools and gymnasiums and all the resources. But they have dedicated staff and the trustees try to work with them to make sure they can free up all the resources that are available.

But this bill really does quite the opposite. In fact, if you look at the online public website—this is an article by the OSSTF, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. It says here: "OSSTF does not support Bill 177, in its current form, as this is clearly not the case. OSSTF calls upon the government to delay final reading of Bill 177 and move to real public consultation on the legislation and its impact upon school board governance, student achievement and credit integrity." I'd say that that pretty well sums up our position on this, which is that the minister, from her office, will be running the whole education system in the province of Ontario, and I'm concerned about small, rural schools in Ontario not getting the resources they need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I second what my colleagues have said about the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He's always entertaining. Certainly, I know from sitting in the Chair that he always keeps me awake, which is a good thing.

He touched on what is important about this bill, and that is that really it is a kind of muzzle bill on trustees' actions. Ostensibly, it is to correct egregious spending, but it really goes way beyond that. We know it goes way beyond that because we're not talking about an overpaid group of bureaucrats like those who maybe exist at eHealth or the OLG; we're talking about people who are paid \$25,000 a year to do a really important elected job. They are directly responsible to parents, and we want to keep them directly responsible to parents, but what this bill does is shift that to make them directly responsible to the Minister of Education. That we simply can't buy. That really is a strike at democracy.

I appreciated his comments about the politburo being located on the second floor of this building and references to the gulag etc. Clearly, perhaps a little exagger-

ated, but then again it's a slippery slope, and when we're talking about representative democracy, we're talking about the institution of parliamentary democracy and those who are elected to elected positions representing their constituency. It's always a sad day when the government steps in and really cuts that off at the knees, which is what this bill would do for trustees across the province.

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We all know that trustees have played a gadfly role, a significant one, even in the days of the so-called education Premier. Think about the school pools issue, the role that trustees played on the front lawn of this building to force the Minister of Education to look at that issue again. We want that kind of role to be continued. It won't be continued with this bill.

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

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from my friends from Beaches–East York, Durham and Parkdale–High Park on my short speech.

I'm disappointed that members of the government side, particularly, I believe, the member from Brant, who has a career background in education, would not have commented on my speech as well.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But, you know, again, orders from headquarters.

One thing I didn't have the chance to speak on—I don't get more time after this, do I?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Another part that they've rolled into this bill, along with the accountability, is also the governance side of things. One of the concerns I really have is that they're telling boards that they have to achieve standards, but they are not giving them the financial tools in order to reach those standards. My boards are being forced to rob Peter to pay Paul continuously within their budgets. We have tremendous challenges in transportation. We're being forced to go to staggered bell systems in a vast rural riding that simply is going to cause tremendous problems for teachers, parents, students and families in my riding.

The ministry continues to want to set the standards, dictate that the boards must adhere to them, but allow no autonomy for the boards to actually make decisions that would be in the best interest of the people in their riding. You cannot take the cookie-cutter approach where you say, "Well, this is what we're doing in Toronto." I know it always sounds like I'm harping on Toronto and that's not the case; it's just the best comparison. You just can't say that because something is workable or functional in Toronto it's going to work in rural Ontario. It doesn't, Mr. Speaker. You know that and everybody here knows that.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: In preparation for the debate, of course, you have to start to read the legislation; you have to look at it. As I was reading it, looking at it, studying it, the thing that first came to my mind were the immortal words of John Donne. I'm going to paraphrase because I have to add one extra word. He is one of the greatest reformist poets in the 17th or 18th century. He wrote brilliant poems. Two of his most famous lines, paraphrased by me: "Never seek to know for whom the school bell tolls; it tolls for thee." I think any trustee who is looking at this knows that this bell is tolling. It's about to announce the death of the school boards. It's about to announce the death of those positions and it's about to put an end to more than 100 years of active school boards in the province of Ontario. I'm not trying to speak with hyperbole or anything else, because the key section of this bill, Bill 177, will allow the provincial government to "make regulations governing the roles, responsibilities, powers and duties of boards, directors of education and board members, including chairs of boards."

Here it is in a nutshell. This is what the province is planning to do with the boards of education across the length and breadth of this province—not just the public boards but the Catholic boards; not just the English-speaking boards but the French boards. All of them will now be covered under the ambit, and the government may make any regulations governing the roles, responsibilities, powers and duties of elected members, as well as those who are hired by the boards.

I think back over the years about the school boards across this province and the brave stance that they have taken against governments. I think back to my friend and colleague Gail Nyberg, who was the chair of the Toronto school board during much of the Harris years, in which the monies were cut, where school board trustees earned \$5,000 a year. She kept that job. She kept working and fighting for the students and the families in Toronto against huge school cutbacks. I think with some admiration of what she did and how hard she worked in order to try to maintain the education system within the Toronto board and I guess throughout the province of Ontario. I think how little remuneration she got and of how many times governments, especially that government of that day, wanted to shut her down but didn't do so—did not take the opportunity and did not even, in the deepest and darkest days of Mike Harris, act on school boards the same way that is being acted on here today.

I think about my friend and colleague in Beaches–East York, Sheila Cary–Meagher, who is the trustee for the combined ward 31 and ward 32 of Beaches–East York, in the city of Toronto, and the very difficult job she has—how she maintained and continued to go to work at \$5,000 a year, later \$10,000 a year and now all the way up to \$25,000, and how she fights and does the best she can for the students of our ward; when I go around to the schools and I see her talking to parents and advocating on behalf of education, the amazing job that she does, and how she is willing to stick her neck out and take a lot of public flak. Whether you agree or disagree with her, she

was one of the key voices that talked about Africentric schools. She was one of the key voices that came out and said, "We need to do something to ensure that young black children do not drop out of school." She put her neck on the line during that time, and I know it was a difficult time for her and for others in the school board who advocated for that move. Again, whether you agree with it or disagree with it, it showed the kind of leadership she was willing to give and that she gives. I can see this bill trying to muzzle that kind of leadership. I can see that the roles and responsibilities that duly elected caring people took on is perhaps a thing of the past.

I look over into the next ward at a relatively new member of the Toronto school board, Cathy Dandy, and I've known her for some years. She came here to the Legislature many, many times on education bills to speak in committee and to voice the concern of parents and educators and people who were worried about what was happening to the school system in Toronto. I have followed with some interest what she has said as a new school trustee for the last two and a half years or so and the amazing job she is doing at the Toronto school board.

We cannot forget Irene Atkinson. There is a woman who has spent her entire life advocating for parents and children in the school board. Is she to be silenced too? I know what this is all about—and I ought not to forget my colleague and friend from the Catholic school board, Angela Kennedy. She has a very difficult job, and it has been made impossible because that board has been taken over by the education ministry, and it does not appear likely that in the entire term it will be allowed to meet again. It's a very difficult job that she has. She is a caring person who believes very strongly in Catholic education and has done her utmost in order to try to deliver that kind of education for the children in the east end of the city of Toronto, and I think throughout the entire area of Toronto. She has twice put her name forward to run as an MPP and, although not successful, she did run credible campaigns. She was for the Conservatives. I don't want you to think I'm speaking about New Democrats, totally and alone. She is a voice that should be listened to, but unfortunately she is not being listened to, nor are any of the Catholic school board trustees at this time.

Here we have a circumstance where the school boards in the province of Ontario are increasingly becoming irrelevant, not because they don't want to do a good job, not because they don't have good people who are doing the job, not because these people fail to listen to the parents or the students or to act in the best needs of the community, but because this government—as did the previous government—sees ways of cutting down the influence of the school boards so that the entire decision-making process now takes place here at Queen's Park.

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And we've seen boards across the province taken over because they have refused to kowtow—which is a good Chinese word—to the government. They refuse to bend down, they refuse to back up and back off, and we're seeing this. We're seeing what is happening to school

boards which once had the power to tax. They no longer have the power to tax. That has all been taken away in the last number of years. The boards across Ontario once had the power to set curriculum; they no longer have that power. They once had the power to set testing, to make sure that teachers, principals and superintendents were doing a good job. That power has all been taken away and now rests with Queen's Park. They had the power of the community to make changes in terms of the structure of the boards. And all of that does not happen. The only thing they're going to be left with is the power to shut down schools. They're going to have the authority to shut down schools in order to make their budgets match. That's a power I don't think they want. That's a power that the government gladly should be taking over.

But the government, though, is very smart, because they know that if they came in and shut down the school, they would be answerable to the electors, the parents and the angry citizens of whatever locale in which the school was shut down. So they're leaving that power with the school board. The poor school board trustees are going to have to take all of the flack. And we know what's happening with declining enrolment. We know what's happening with EQAO. We know what's happening with the inability of the schools to manage the funds, because the funding formula is so badly broken. We know that this minister came to power and talked about the broken funding formula. I remember this minister when she was a school board trustee. I remember the firebrand that she was in those days. I remember her standing up to a broken funding formula and arguing with huge passion about how that funding formula needed to be reversed and how it had to be made to work for the students, and then I watched this minister leaving the funding formula in place, a funding formula that is strangling the school boards—and now legislation which will make them largely redundant.

Mr. Dave Levac: No changes, Mike?

Mr. Michael Prue: No changes.

Mr. Dave Levac: Oh, come on.

Mr. Michael Prue: My friend over there thinks there's been some great changes to the funding formula. I would invite him, if he thinks there are great changes to the funding formula and as a former principal, to stand up and speak to the issue, because I haven't heard any Liberals speak to this issue in days.

Mr. Dave Levac: We're just listening—

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, they're just listening. If they have something to say, I think they should stand up and say it, because it is disappointing to me to have only opposition members stand up and speak to this bill today.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Be factual.

Mr. Michael Prue: Be factual? I am being factual. I'm being absolutely factual, and if the government has any other facts I invite them to stand up and speak, because this Legislature is supposed to be a forum for debate, and the debate cannot be one-sided and the debate ought not to be one-sided. I will gladly be persuaded. To quote Socrates, I would gladly be persuaded by you, sir,

but not against my better judgment and certainly not in the absence of anything that you have to say, because you're not saying anything at all. You can taunt as best you want. The member can taunt as best he wants, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for drawing attention to the fact that I should be speaking to you, but in the absence of him having the guts to stand up and actually say something on his own, then I think what he is taunting largely remains irrelevant.

We know what is happening in Ontario and what is likely to happen in the months and years ahead. The first thing is the whole concept and the whole reality of declining enrolment. Closing schools offers a tempting, unimaginative, short-term approach to declining enrolment which will provide immediate, limited cost savings and nothing more. I think that's what the government is looking at here: the ability to muzzle those who have stood up in the past against the closing of schools—the trustees—to try to muzzle them and put them in line as best they can. A trustee who opposes the closing of a school will now, after the decision is made to close it, have to shut up and support the board. That's what the bill says.

I have to agree with my colleague from Welland: This is a very strange thing to ask of a democratically elected body. I cannot stand up and support every government bill. I do support some from time to time because I think they're right. When I think they are wrong, I oppose them. Even when they pass in this House, I do tell people why I did not vote for it, why I think it's wrong and why I think it needs to be changed.

I wonder whether trustees are going to be allowed to do this anymore. I would welcome any member across there to stand up and assuage my fears, assuage them as to whether the bill doesn't do that, because it says it does. It says it does.

I question all of the schools that are potentially going to be shut down. I know that enrolment is declining in Toronto. It's declining not as much in the GTA, but it's declining in small-town Ontario and it's declining in northern Ontario. There is perhaps an overabundant use of space for schools in many communities. But we have to question what is going to happen to those schools, because this is all cyclical. Depending on birth rates, depending on immigration, depending on the flow of jobs from one area to another, families are forced to move, and the schools have to be available. They have to be available sometimes on fairly short notice and sometimes for longer periods of time to look. I'm questioning whether or not these schools should be shut down. I'm questioning whether or not the trustees may be empowered to find imaginative uses, whether they be day-care centres, whether they be homes for the aged or whether some of them may be allowed to be parkland or be used for community use. There is a whole bunch of things that trustees could and should be involved in, and I'm not sure that their role will allow that any more.

Mr. Dave Levac: Did you read my report?

Mr. Michael Prue: Perhaps the member from Brant over there, if he wishes to speak—I would invite you.

You can use some of my time if you want it. I don't know, Mr. Speaker. All I get is catcalls over there from a man who hasn't got the bravery to stand up and speak himself.

Laughter.

Mr. Michael Prue: There it is. But he knows how to laugh. Okay.

We are concerned that the report of the governance review—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Brant, come to order.

Mr. Michael Prue: The report of the governance review committee on Bill 177 does not fully acknowledge the duties of trustees as elected representatives. I think, first and foremost, that's what has to happen. The bill has to acknowledge that they are duly elected, they have constituencies, they have the right to speak out on behalf of those constituents, and they have the right to make the decisions that are necessary. The report makes them sound like they are ministry employees. Quite frankly, I think that is the attempt that is being made here: to muzzle them and to treat them like ministry employees. Like so many bureaucrats, they are told what to do, what to think and what to say. In the end, they are told that they have to support whatever decision is being made.

But I have to question, do they not have, and should they not have in the future, a duty to the parents who elected them? That's what the parents expect. They expect that when something is going wrong at the school, they can pick up the phone, call the trustee and have a resolution to their grievance. Certainly, every year around the first of September, I get many phone calls in my office asking what they can do to move a child from one school to another because of the areas and the artificial lines that are drawn to say students in this catchment area can go to this school, and children outside that catchment area must go to another school, save and except if there is room in the original school that the parents want. I get a lot of calls about that. I refer them to the trustees because, in fact, that has been and is their job: to consult with the parents and to do the right thing.

I'm wondering whether or not that is going to continue in the future and whether they're going to have that authority to set those lines and to deviate from those lines. I have to question, do the trustees have a right to represent the communities which elected them in the face of inadequate government funding? Will trustees have the right to stand up in public fora and talk about the funding formula? Will they have a right to talk about the inadequacy of the funds they have for the programs that they need to meet? Or are they simply going to be told by the ministry what they have to cut, where they have to cut and how they have to cut it?

I'm very worried about that. I think the members opposite should be worried about that, too, because if that is the eventual intent, then the government should just stand up and tell the people of Ontario that there is no longer a role for trustees. There is no longer a role for democratically elected people to manage the school boards, be

they public, Catholic, French public or French Catholic boards. We need to hear that because to do this by subterfuge, I would suggest, is not correct.

The trustees need and welcome guidance in fiscal matters, but they are not part of a master-servant relationship. I would be the first to acknowledge the egregious actions of certain members of the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the funding and the expenditures that they made which were improper. They were improper, and they have been duly chastised. That board has, for all intents and purposes, ceased to exist. Even though the members want to hold meetings and discuss with parents some of the aspects of Catholic education in Toronto, they are forbidden by the supervisor to do so. They have, for all intents and purposes, become irrelevant, and there is no movement by this government or by this minister to reinstate powers to those trustees. I understand the chastising was necessary, and I understand that a certain period of time had to take place for the supervisor to get it in order, but it appears now unlikely that that board will meet again until after the next election—if, in fact, the elections are allowed to proceed at all.

I think that any legislation must leave the boards free to ask questions for the voters who elected them, in all cases, exactly the same voters who elect us. They're exactly the same. I do acknowledge that 45% or so vote in provincial elections, and only 30% or 35% or so vote in municipal and school board elections, but they are, by and large, exactly the same voters. The voters have to be, and in all likelihood are, perplexed why this government and this bill are changing the relationship that they have had for 140 years with elected school boards across the province of Ontario.

I am asking the government to think long and hard about what they are doing. If you truly believe in democracy at the school board level, then let it exist. If you truly believe that it ought not to exist, do not hide away by simply limiting the powers as it shrivels, but come out and tell the people and run on that issue in the next election.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR ST. PAUL'S

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table a certificate of a by-election in the electoral district of St. Paul's.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): I received a letter addressed as follows:

"Mrs. Deborah Deller

"Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

"Room 104

"Legislative Building

"Queen's Park

"Toronto, Ontario

"M7A 1A2

"Dear Mrs. Deller:

"A writ of election dated the 19th day of August 2009 was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Lynn Morrow, returning officer for the electoral district of St. Paul's, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of St. Paul's in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Michael Bryant who, since his election as a representative of the said electoral district of St. Paul's, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in St. Paul's on the 17th day of September 2009, Eric Hoskins has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 25th day of September 2009, which is now lodged of record in my office.

"Greg Essensa

"Chief Electoral Officer

"Toronto, September 28, 2009."

Mr. Hoskins was escorted into the chamber by Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Duguid.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Eric Hoskins, member-elect for the electoral district of St. Paul's, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Let the honourable member take his seat.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Kormos: Frank Klees and I want to welcome a visitor to this chamber: Greg Sorbara, the member from Vaughan.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce some constituents from my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham: Sue Sherban, the former mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville, and Miranda Hussey. Also, in the public galleries, a number of grade 10 students from St. Augustine Catholic High School in Markham.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to welcome today Shirley Connor, the mother of our page Connor, who is here to witness her son at proceedings today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introductions?

I would like to just remind all the honourable guests who are joining us today that we welcome your observance of the proceedings, but ask that you not participate in any way.

And to the honourable member from Vaughan: That was not out of order because he didn't make reference to somebody being absent.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AGENCY SPENDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for Premier: Why did the Premier pick Minister Takhar to serve as his

integrity czar by making him responsible for the Public Sector Expenses Review Act?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I look forward to more specifics in the supplementaries, but I can say I have every confidence in Minister Takhar to not only duly and responsibly carry out his responsibilities as minister, but also to, every single day, together with every member of our government, do everything we can to uphold the interests of taxpayers. Ontarians work hard for their money and we have a special responsibility, those of us who are privileged to serve them in government, to respect their tax dollars, to use them wisely and prudently.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again to the Premier. I will be more specific: Minister Takhar is the only minister in Ontario's history to be found in breach of the Members' Integrity Act by the Integrity Commissioner. The Premier could have chosen from 25 other cabinet ministers who didn't have their integrity censured by the Integrity Commissioner. So why, Premier, did you pick a minister whose integrity has been found to be lacking to be responsible for this important process?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Integrity Commissioner did make some findings with respect to Minister Takhar in the past. That is a matter that has been dealt with, and anything that flowed from that that needed to be done was done. I have every confidence in Minister Takhar and in his capacity to carry out his responsibilities.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Dealt with, but far from satisfactorily. At the end of the summer of scandal, the Premier lost confidence in his ministers to oversee the conduct of agencies in their portfolios. At a hastily arranged press conference, he said, "You must lead by example," before dumping accountability for expenses onto the Integrity Commissioner.

Integrity czar Takhar has certainly set an example. Is Minister Takhar truly the best minister you could have found for this position, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, this was a matter that was addressed by the Integrity Commissioner. There were, as I recall—I'm reaching back now—some specific recommendations made by the Integrity Commissioner. Those have been put in place; they've been adopted and they're certainly being followed by Minister Takhar. I think that was the right thing to do in the circumstances on everybody's part and I continue to have complete confidence in Minister Takhar.

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ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier as well. A troubling pattern is developing. The opposition files a freedom-of-information request, and you obstruct it, and then you try to manipulate the information in order to perform pre-emptive damage control.

On June 9, the Progressive Conservative caucus submitted an FOI on untendered contracts between eHealth and IBM. We were promised an answer within 30 days. It has now been 113 days; we're being told we have to wait 30 more. Premier, who are you trying to protect?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would argue that on our watch we've come a long way when it comes to enhancing transparency and increasing accountability, and I'll just list a few examples of that. One of the first things that we did was to increase the ambit of the freedom-of-information legislation to bring back in OPG and Hydro One, companies that had been excluded by the Conservative government. We then provided new authority to the auditor to take a look at, for the first time, universities, schools and hospitals. We then gave new authority to the auditor—in fact, a mandate—to review government expenditures before we go into an election so there are no surprise deficits that come out on the other side of an election. Beyond that, we've also taken additional steps, and I'll be pleased to speak to those in the supplementaries.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Management decisions at eHealth weren't as arm's length as the Premier would have us believe. Today there are media reports confirming that not only did eHealth hand out a \$30-million untendered contract to IBM, but that this contract was also approved by the cabinet ministers serving on Management Board of Cabinet.

Premier, were Dwight Duncan, Gerry Phillips, George Smitherman, Michael Chan, Monique Smith, Ted McMeekin and Harinder Takhar at the table when this \$30-million untendered contract was approved?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There are maybe three things I'd like to say in this regard. Number one, I think we owe the auditor the courtesy of allowing him to complete his work. We invited him to do that. I think we owe him the courtesy to give him the time to complete it and present it to the people of Ontario all at once. So I won't speculate on what's in or outside of a report when we haven't seen it yet.

Secondly, I think it's important that we recollect now that we put in place a new rule. There was an old rule that was in place under the Conservative government, the NDP government and a previous Liberal government, and we've changed that now. We've changed that to prohibit the letting of untendered contracts. We are now saying there has to be a competitive bidding process. We think that's appropriate, we think that's in keeping with taxpayer expectations, and that's why we took that step and changed a process that had been in place for decades.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Maybe this explains why the Premier is protecting his Minister of Health, Mr. Caplan. Maybe it's because almost half his cabinet is implicated in the rot at eHealth.

In the past, the Premier told us, "The buck stops with me." That's his quote. Certainly, major cabinet decisions do stop with him.

Premier, this IBM contract was considered at your cabinet committee table before your ministers approved it. Premier, did you know about the untendered IBM contract before it was approved?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think the appropriate thing to do is to wait for the auditor's report.

The step that we took—and I gather I have the support of my honourable colleague in this regard—is to change a practice that had been in place under the Conservative government and the NDP government, which prohibits the letting of untendered contracts now to consultants. As I said, that had been a practice that had been in place for decades. We think it's no longer in keeping with modern-day taxpayer expectations, so we have changed that, and we now require that there be a competitive bidding process. We think that's a step in the right direction.

If there are more steps that we need to take that flow from the auditor's report, then we look forward to receiving those recommendations and we will take those steps.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The McGuinty Liberals said that they were cleaning up the previous government's eHealth mess. A new story today, however, based on leaked information from the upcoming Auditor General's report, says that, in fact, that is untrue. It turns out that the McGuinty Liberals helped flush a startling \$1 billion down the drain on two electronic health system programs with very little to show for it.

How can Ontarians possibly believe the Premier's promise to fix eHealth when those very promises were made while a billion precious health care dollars were being squandered?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can only offer the same response to my honourable colleague the leader of the NDP that I offered to the representative from the official opposition, which is that I think we owe it to the auditor to give him the chance to complete his work and to present that to the people of Ontario all at once.

I want to remind my honourable colleague that it was our government that invited the auditor to take a look at eHealth. We placed no limits whatsoever; there was no circumscription of the mandate that we gave to the auditor. We said, "Take a look at whatever you want. We assure you of our wholehearted co-operation. Please come forward with your findings, be as candid as possible, and come up with recommendations. We look forward to receiving those." That's where we find ourselves at this point in time. I know there's impatience on the part of many, including ourselves, to have that report produced. When it's produced, it will be given to all of us at the same time, and we will respond accordingly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: One billion dollars lost into the abyss of mismanagement, and Ontario still doesn't have an eHealth system. Meanwhile, 1,200 nursing positions have been axed, local emergency wards have

closed, children's aid society budgets are being slashed, and the Premier says even more cuts are on the way.

Why should Ontarians believe the Premier's pledge to fix eHealth when he has wasted millions upon millions of health care dollars while cutting services for people?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Actually, we've made some pretty dramatic new investments in health care, and we've seen some pretty dramatic positive results as a result of those investments, whether you're talking about the reduction of health care wait times, whether you're talking about the thousands of new nurses who are on the job or whether you're talking about getting access to doctors. Eight hundred thousand more Ontarians now have a family doctor or are associated with family health care. We have 14 new MRI machines, increased medical school spaces and the like. There have been dramatic new levels of investment in health care and dramatically new and better levels of service for Ontarians.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The health minister stood up in this House in the spring and lectured the Conservative health critic, saying "I'll take no such lectures from the member, given such a sorry track record as we've seen in the past. Our record on electronic health in fact is to correct her errors." The McGuinty Liberals didn't correct her errors; they just picked up where the previous government left off: wasting precious health care dollars. The McGuinty Liberals inherited a mess, there's no doubt about it. They scrapped an old agency and replaced it with one that only made things worse.

Why should Ontarians believe the Premier's claim that he'll make things better when his record so clearly suggests otherwise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would ask Ontarians to take some of the following into consideration as they pass judgment, as they have every right to do every day, on their government. We encountered some problems at eHealth. We have acted on those. We have put in place new measures, including, for the first time in decades, bringing an end to a practice which allowed for the letting of untendered contracts; there now must be a competitive bidding process.

It was our government that invited the auditor to take a look at eHealth to tell us specifically what he thinks is worthy of being brought to light and to put forward recommendations so we can build on the changes we have put in place. That's what I would ask Ontarians to take into consideration as they consider the effectiveness of the activities of their government.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question, again, is to the Premier. The Minister of Health was quite proud of himself last spring. On April 2 he said, "It was the actions of myself and this government which have eliminated or quashed Smart Systems for Health and formed eHealth Ontario.... That's why I came along, along with my pre-

decessor, to be able to re-form this agency, eHealth Ontario." Nothing more than empty words, it turns out. Given how miserably the minister has failed, why does the Premier keep him around?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think if you take a look at what has happened to health care in Ontario during the course of the past six years, and the combined efforts and the cumulative impact of those efforts for Ontarians, the efforts made by Minister Smitherman and Minister Caplan, I would argue that they have been the two most successful ministers of health who have worked together, hand in hand, to improve the quality of health care for Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A senior health bureaucrat involved in both Smart Systems and eHealth is quoted in the news report questioning the McGuinty Liberals' underlying argument that eHealth was brought in to replace Smart Systems. She said that they were completely different programs, with separate roles. The Premier said he brought in eHealth to replace Smart Systems. My question is simple: Who is telling the truth?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There has been an effort, and it's been an effort that has been engaged in by our government and the previous government as well. It's based on a pretty profound understanding that we've got to find a way to move toward electronic health records in the province of Ontario. We also understand that getting there is not easy. It takes time. There are costs associated with that. We have made some significant progress, but we're not satisfied with the progress that we have made to date and we're going to keep moving forward. I know that Ontarians have seen changes when it comes to their health care wait times. They can see changes in the new hospitals that we are building, they can see changes in the number of doctors they now have access to, and they also know that they continue to have a healthy appetite for more progress when it comes to electronic health records. We will not rest until we have a good system in place, a good, affordable and effective system for Ontarians.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While the Premier pats his health ministers on the back, the people of this province who desperately want health investment look at his government and see a big, ugly mess. The minister said he'd fix the Smart Systems disaster; instead, he made it worse. The minister said he had a plan but bureaucrats contradict him. Is anyone on that side of the House actually responsible for anything at any time, or does the Premier think his job is simply to lurch from crisis to crisis?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I always appreciate the—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's not possible. I always appreciate these creative interventions. They are nothing if not invigorating. I know that my honourable colleague and the opposition generally have brought a great deal of attention to bear on the matter of eHealth, and I would

argue that is in part their responsibility. But we will continue to do more than just do right by Ontarians and their eHealth system. We are also going to continue to work hard to get wait times down. We not only have done that when it comes to cancer surgeries, angiographies, angioplasties, hip replacements, knee replacements, cataracts and pediatric surgeries, but we are now moving forward, when it comes to wait times, in our emergency rooms. That's not the kind of thing the opposition is interested in, but I can tell you our families are—

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

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. Through Bill 201, the Premier appointed a minister who has been found in breach of the integrity act as the new integrity czar, and this just after we learned that no fewer than six of his own cabinet ministers, including the current Minister of Health, had a hand in untendered contracts at eHealth. If the pattern of accountability that we've already seen continues it will be bureaucrats, not ministers, whose heads will roll when his Liberal government fails, and that's not good enough. A minister has to be held accountable for his or her actions and that's their responsibility to Ontario's taxpayers. Will the Premier lead by example and fire minister Caplan and any other minister who fails to take their responsibility seriously?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Reference has been made to Minister Takhar. I didn't have the necessary paperwork at hand at the time. That's just the way it works in question period and I understand that; and I took advantage of that when I was on that side of the House. But I do have some paper here now.

I think it's important to remind Ontarians about the Integrity Commissioner's findings at the time because Minister Takhar's reputation has been brought into question by the opposition. Here are the findings, the last page of the report: "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 ... was compromised, he would have taken steps through this office to straighten things up.... I think it would be unfair to sanction the minister beyond issuing a reprimand...."

I think it's important to set the record straight and I think it's incumbent upon my honourable colleagues to do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I have some facts of my own: \$25,000 for a speech is unacceptable, and the waste and mismanagement at eHealth and OLG are unacceptable. In the case of Minister Caplan, he ought to be held accountable. The fact that Minister Takhar is your integrity czar and Minister Caplan is still in charge at eHealth—you are making a mockery out of every single promise you have ever made about accountability to the people of this province.

Premier, will you fire Minister Caplan and make ministerial accountability something that we can say is worth something again?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague about some of the steps that we have taken to improve the quality of government. These are steps that were taken beyond those ever put in place by previous governments. As I've said a number of times already today, we have banned sole-source contracts for consultants in Ontario through our government. We've introduced a bill in this Legislature that will have the Integrity Commissioner review the expenses of our 22 biggest agencies, boards and commissions. We've put in place mandatory training when it comes to the matter of expense claims for people who work in the government in our agencies. We're also going to mandate for the very first time—I think we're the first province to do this—the posting online of expenses for the senior OPS, for the biggest agencies, boards and commissions, and for cabinet. I think that is progress.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The McGuinty government is refusing to help thousands of Hamilton homeowners whose basements were severely damaged during an extremely intense rainstorm in July. The city of Hamilton estimated that homeowners are facing uninsured damages totalling \$20 million to \$40 million.

The Ontario disaster relief program is designed precisely for this: to help residents pay for uninsured damages arising from catastrophic events. It has helped residents in dozens of communities across Ontario. Will this minister explain to the people of Hamilton and the homeowners why they are being left out of this program?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me begin by thanking the officials in the city of Hamilton for the work they have done and for neighbour helping neighbour. I know this is a very difficult time for the residents who had their basements flooded, and we've seen that in other jurisdictions across the province of Ontario.

ODRAP, the Ontario disaster relief assistance program, which has been in effect for many, many years, has a formula that we have to follow. It requires us to look at the ability of the particular municipality to pay and help with a particular natural disaster. In the case of Hamilton, the financial information returns that the city is in good financial health with its own-purpose taxation of \$636 million in 2008. Therefore, regrettably, the program would not apply to the city of Hamilton, and that was why we were in contact with Mayor Eisenberger just a short time ago, to let him know that.

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't know what city he's talking about; it sure isn't mine.

The minister is quoted in today's Hamilton Spectator as saying that the uninsured claims are not of a sufficient magnitude to warrant support. We're talking about tens of millions of dollars here. We're talking about families

who are struggling to meet mortgage payments and can't even put food on the table. Twenty per cent of the people in my riding are living below the poverty level. There is no other program that these people can turn to. Why is this minister intent on hanging Hamilton's flooding victims out to dry?

1100

Hon. Jim Watson: It's regrettable the honourable member is using that language. We're doing nothing of the sort. This government has been a good friend of the city and the people of Hamilton since we had the honour of forming government in 2003.

Let me just tell you some of the funds that have flowed to Hamilton as a result of this government's investment: the Investing in Ontario Act, \$48 million; the MIII program, \$14 million; infrastructure stimulus funds for things like sewers and water pipes, \$61 million; and roads and bridges since 2003, \$136 million. The city also received significant grant funding in the amount of \$53 million in unconditional grants that the city is able to use on sewers, preventive measures and the like.

Our caucus members from Hamilton—Hamilton Mountain and the Minister of Consumer Services—are always there to stand up for Hamilton. We have delivered for that city and will continue to do so.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Eric Hoskins: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, in my riding of St. Paul's I've had the opportunity to speak with hundreds of renters who are concerned about the cost of living. With rising gas prices and a challenging economic outlook, they want to know that they will be protected.

According to the most recent Statistics Canada data, nearly half of households in the city of Toronto are renters, many of whom live and work in St. Paul's. My constituents are working hard and playing by the rules. They want their government to be working hard for them.

Minister, under the previous government, the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal was known as an eviction machine that had no concern for tenants. I know this government passed the Residential Tenancies Act in 2006, but rents are still going up. Would the minister tell us how the Residential Tenancies Act has helped tenants? In addition, will the new HST coming into effect next July apply to rents?

Hon. Jim Watson: It's a real honour to receive the inaugural question from the honourable member. I congratulate him and welcome him to this Legislature. I know he's going to have a long and very productive future in Ontario politics.

The new Residential Tenancies Act offers fair and balanced protection between the rights of tenants and landlords. It's been in effect for over two years and I'm pleased to report that there is no backlog of cases. Every tenant facing an eviction now is afforded the benefit of a hearing, which is something new. Landlords can evict problem tenants with more ease, and tenants in buildings

with serious maintenance problems may apply for a freeze on rent increases. Also, municipalities such as the city of Toronto do have the power to licence landlords.

I also want to note that the HST will not apply to rent. Despite misinformation that we heard in the member's by-election, the HST will not apply to rent. We're proud of the—

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

Mr. Eric Hoskins: These changes will no doubt benefit renters in my riding, but the reality is that the majority of tenants and landlords never have to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Most tenants pay their rent and most landlords take care of their properties.

My concern is that rent continues to go up. I've been talking with young families and students who live on tight budgets. They rely on predictable expenses from year to year so that they can maintain their standard of living. With the price of gas and home heating fuels on the rise, my constituents are paying more attention than ever to their bottom line. The NDP wants to cap rent for two years to ensure that rent remains affordable.

I want to know what the Residential Tenancies Act does to ensure rent does not skyrocket. Is a rent cap the best way to ensure affordable rents?

Hon. Jim Watson: Clearly a rent cap would have a negative impact on the supply of rental properties. Individuals who want to build rental properties would be discouraged to do so.

We have brought a much more balanced approach, which so far has kept rent increases low and vacancy rates healthy. The annual rent increase is now tied to the consumer price index. It's fair, it's transparent, and the 2010 guideline of 2.1% protects tenants from rent increases above the rate of inflation while allowing landlords to recover increasing costs.

Let's take a look at the record and go back in history: under the NDP, when they were in office, a 27% increase in rents; under the Conservatives, 23.9%; under the McGuinty Liberal government, 14.4%.

We will continue to take a balanced, practical approach to landlord and tenant relations. I know we have a great new defender of tenants in the honourable member from St. Paul's, and we welcome him to this House.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Despite the efforts of the Minister of Finance, we have finally learned that the Windsor Energy Centre has cost Ontario taxpayers \$80 million. We have yet to hear why this power plant was needed or a reason why the lottery corporation is in the electricity business in the first place. The coffers of the province of Ontario are not for the private use of government ministers. The Minister of Finance must stop hiding behind lawsuits and explain why he approved this ridiculous use of taxpayer dollars.

Minister, why exactly is it necessary for the OLG to own a power plant and why are taxpayers on the hook for it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think the member asks some very valid questions, and we have put in place a new board. We have put in an acting CEO to look at this matter, among others. I do think those are very legitimate questions. We will continue to pursue this. As I've indicated to the member opposite, those are very good questions. They're precisely the kinds of questions that we are looking at at the moment.

I remind the member, with respect to the lawsuit that's outstanding, that there's a further dispute with respect to ownership. That makes it difficult to respond, but, indeed, these are among the questions that we have asked and at the appropriate time we'll be able to respond.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Not for the first time we find ourselves disappointed with the minister's answers. We now know that the power plant was essential to the casino expansion, and no one had figured out that that was the case until well into the construction of the casino. That's right: These geniuses didn't know that the Windsor grid couldn't handle the casino.

Minister, you're a former Minister of Energy, you are the current Minister of Finance and you are the local MPP. It's your mess. Please tell the House how many millions of taxpayer dollars you had sunk into your brand-spanking-new, over-budget, half-billion-dollar casino before you figured out you lacked the electricity to turn on the lights?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, that investment, which is helping tourism and employing 2,000 people in Windsor today—the community with the highest unemployment rate in the country—was in fact an appropriate investment and the right investment at the time. The Windsor Energy Centre that the member has referenced was in fact a separate project, as he's looked at the public accounts. He's right—it is unacceptable that a budget item of that magnitude goes from \$40 million to \$80 million. We have taken steps to address that in the context of the lawsuit that the operator has filed against the former board and the former chair. We will continue to take appropriate steps in that context, but I want to stress that this—

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

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, today in the audience are representatives of 2 Secord Avenue. You will remember that apartment building—an explosion where the tenants were forced out of their homes for months. Today they are here because their landlord and the sub-metering companies are taking action against them, and the government is turning a blind eye while some landlords, including this one, are trying to offload the cost of hydro on these vulnerable tenants.

The Ontario Energy Board has issued a strong indictment on this government's inaction, ruling the spread of sub-metering was unlawful, required some basic protect-

tion for tenants and asked that the government act. Since the two ministers responsible for tenant protection and electricity have failed to do their job, will the Premier commit today to take action to protect tenants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I want to say to the honourable member, to the tenants here and to tenants generally, that with respect to sub-metering, if the Ontario Energy Board has been involved in anything, it's a recognition that this government seeks to ensure that tenants are well-protected even as we support the implementation of sub-metering. We think it's a good policy, but that it needs to be done in a fashion that is very conscious of the necessity of protecting tenants.

What I would like to tell the honourable member is that, through the auspices of your office, I would be very much interested in sitting down with these tenants and trying to work through the issues particular to 2 Secord and to get any assistance from the honourable member, generally, on the matter related to sub-metering of multi-unit residential.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the minister for that commitment. The truth of the matter, though, is that the inaction of this government to date has lined the pockets of landlords at the expense of tenants. Tenants such as those at 2 Secord and hundreds and thousands of others are out thousands of dollars paying for inefficient appliances, electric heat and poorly insulated buildings. Saving the landlords money and forcing tenants to pay huge bills is not my idea of an energy conservation plan. If this government really wants to stand up for tenants, you shouldn't be making them fight for their money back in the courts or the Landlord and Tenant Board. Stand up for them now and tell them that they're going to get their money back.

What will this government do to ensure that landlords who profited by this illegal scheme pay back every nickel they took from the tenants?

Hon. George Smitherman: I've already told the honourable member that I'd be happy to sit with him and a group from this particular building that he speaks of. His broad characterizations of sub-metering miss the mark substantially, on two points, essentially. Firstly, the number of units that have moved forward with respect to sub-metering is a very, very small number of units. Of those, the majority had sign-off by tenants. So the member's characterization is somewhat off the mark, but with respect to Secord, I would be very, very happy to sit with the member and a representative group of the tenants and see what we might be able to do to work through this important matter.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm sharing this question with the member from Willowdale. The question is to the Minister of Transportation. In 2006, I introduced a pri-

vate member's bill that looked at distracted driving and novice drivers. I was pleased to see the minister introduce legislation that has taken this concept one step further, addressing hand-held electronic devices for all Ontario drivers. The Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act passed with all-party support earlier this spring.

Since then, my office has received a lot of correspondence on the issue. My constituents are pleased to see us moving in this direction, but a number still have questions. When will the law come into place? How will it be enforced? What exactly will be allowed? I've seen a lot of media outlets reporting on it as well. I'm hoping the minister today will be able to share with this House what his announcement meant for drivers across this province.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's a very good question. The member for Oakville is correct. Today we announced that Ontario's ban on use of cellphones and other hand-held devices while driving will take place on October 26—next month. This is about keeping our roads safe. Drivers need to focus on the task at hand: Keep your eyes on the road, hands on the wheel—it reminds me of a song.

What we will see prohibited while driving includes the use of hand-held cellphones, BlackBerrys, text messaging and e-mailing. What will still be allowed includes hands-free wireless devices such as an earpiece or a Bluetooth device. There will be a warning period for three months, until February 1, 2010, at which point tickets will begin to be handed out.

The member for Oakville along with the member from Durham have been advocates on this issue, and the work they did in the private member's bills helped to contribute to this legislation which is a product of this entire—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: I applaud the minister for Bill 118 and its commitment to safe driving in Ontario. Minister, some of the correspondence that I've received from my constituents includes several questions surrounding the compliance with and enforcement of this legislation. I would like to raise a concern on behalf of my constituents about how the ban will be enforced. Minister, as I understand it, there were extensive consultations with various law enforcement agencies, and all of those agencies are on board in support of the legislation.

But I also understand that demerit points will not be applied to convictions under this bill and for these offences. Minister, without the application of demerit points for this offence, can you tell this House how the new law will be enforced? Secondly, Minister, can you share with us how the—

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to tell the member, first of all, that we're not leading in this case. We're following Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec and Nova Scotia. Similar legislation in Manitoba is expected to be

proclaimed soon, and legislation is expected in Saskatchewan this fall.

Drivers who text, type, e-mail, dial or chat using a hand-held device will face a fine of up to \$500 upon conviction. It's important to remember that anyone who chooses to put others at risk by driving while distracted can also be charged with careless driving or dangerous driving, both of which carry severe fines and could lead to jail time and demerit point penalties.

I want to say this bill is a product of the work of all members of this House, both in committee and the House, and I would like to lead in the applause of all those members—

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

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, the public accounts were released last week, as you're aware, and the accounts reveal that in 2009 your ministry spent a total of \$864,000 in hotel and conference expenses. That's an increase of 45% in one year.

Minister, in view of the scandals at eHealth and OLG, Ontario has every right to be concerned over just how far your government is going in misspending government money.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Our government understands the importance of using hard-earned taxpayer dollars wisely. Let me just say that my ministry is responsible for all bargaining that happens in this province, and out of this, roughly half a million dollars is used to support labour negotiations and several public sector bargaining agents. It is a common practice to use neutral locations to conduct labour negotiations and for the employer to pay for the facilities. That was the major part of the expenses that the member is referring to.

It is important that we hold these negotiations, and we have signed almost all labour agreements last year, which is about eight or nine of them. Those negotiations have been done outside in a neutral place.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, that doesn't explain a 45% increase. We all know that the government already has meeting rooms and conference space available free of charge, paid for by the taxpayers.

Minister, this House knows that the McGuinty government is expecting a deficit of \$18.5 billion in this fiscal year. This follows a shortfall which now stands at \$6.4 billion for 2008-09. In fact, every hour, your government is spending \$2.1 million more than it receives in revenue. With your government's proposed increase in the provincial goods and services tax, citizens expect to pay much more and they're not happy.

Minister, to ensure you are being accountable, as you propose you are, to the taxpayers, I would ask you to provide a detailed explanation of how much your ministry spent on hotels and conference space in this past fiscal

year and make that available to members of the Legislature.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm sure the member knows that, first of all, we make every attempt to use government facilities. In general, we only use hotels when the government facilities are not available or when we are doing bargaining and need to use a neutral place. We have actually decreased these expenses over the last several years, and we make every attempt to make sure that taxpayer dollars are used effectively. We use these facilities only when they are absolutely necessary to conduct government business.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. My constituent Maryna Bunda is on day 55 of her protest here at Queen's Park over the McGuinty government's denial of autism therapy to her 6-year-old son, Sebastian, who was diagnosed with severe autism when he was two years old. Sebastian was on a two-year waiting list but eventually received some ABA therapy, and he was making good progress. Now the government is terminating Sebastian's therapy and forcing him into a school setting for which he is completely unprepared.

Will the minister commit to reviewing this callous decision and making sure, in the meanwhile, that Sebastian gets the ABA that he needs?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm sure you understand I cannot speak to this specific case, other than to say I have spoken with the mother who has been outside the Legislature. What I can tell you, though, is that when it comes to autism and services for kids with autism, we are moving ahead with providing better supports for kids with autism in schools. The Minister of Education and I are working very closely together to really support families as they make what is clearly a difficult transition from IBI therapy into the school system. This is the direction that we're committed to going in.

I will refer the supplementary to the Minister of Education, because she and I are very much working on this important initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Across the province, families like Maryna's are languishing and frustrated over the government's autism crisis. The number of children with autism is growing in this province. The waiting period for autism therapy has doubled from two years to four years. When the therapy is denied, children like Sebastian are being denied an opportunity to reach their full potential. Both of these ministers know that very clearly.

Will the minister order an independent review of Sebastian's case to ensure that his ABA therapy in fact continues?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that I'm not going to comment on a specific

student's needs. But what I do want to say is to reinforce what the Minister of Children and Youth Services said. It is extremely important for our two ministries to be working together because the reality is that parents want their children to be in school, in a social setting, with the services that they need. That's why we've put \$24 million into training. We've trained more than 13,000 educators in applied behaviour analysis because we know that in the school setting we have to have adults who understand how to meet the needs of kids.

This fall, there are 16 boards out of the 72 that have a program in place called Connections. It's a coordination of services so that students who are in need of service when they come into the school system have people in the school system who are working with folks in the community who have been delivering therapy to—

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

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. There's no doubt our economy is transitioning toward jobs that emphasize analytical skills and innovative thinking. These are the sort of skills you develop when kids stay in school, when people reach higher through apprenticeships and co-op training right through to post-secondary education. We know that this new knowledge leads to new products, new companies and new jobs. Governments must continue to invest strategically in high-growth industries where Ontario companies can compete and win. Investing today in the jobs of the future is what will create and keep high-paying, highly skilled jobs here in Ontario and accelerate our economic recovery.

Can the minister tell us how the Ministry of Research and Innovation is going to move our province forward and accelerate our economic recovery?

Hon. John Milloy: The member raises a very good point. As we go through this economic turmoil, we have to have an eye on the future and how we're going to be dealing with new technologies, approaches and innovations, and ensuring that they create the jobs of tomorrow.

I'd like to share with members of the Legislature one example from the member's hometown. Through the Ontario investment accelerator fund, we invested \$500,000 in a company called C2C Link in Hamilton. C2C Link has developed the only cost-effective way to create optical crystal chips that can efficiently convert laser light from one colour to another. Two hundred and forty three million TVs are expected to ship worldwide in 2011. C2C's chips will become the driving engine for a new generation of laser-based displays that are expected to dominate the display industry, just one example—

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

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: In my community, researchers at McMaster University and Mohawk College are

leading the way with some exciting new discoveries. For instance, Dr. Duncan O'Dell is using quantum mechanics to revolutionize computing and communication technologies.

Research in Hamilton is also helping to save lives. Dr. Sarah Elizabeth Dickson's research will provide government regulators with better science to guide water protection legislation. This will ultimately protect the public health of Ontarians who rely on groundwater for their drinking supply.

All of this exciting work and more is happening in Hamilton, and while it is great news for my community, it's also great news for Ontario. Harnessing the research at our universities develops businesses and creates jobs.

Minister, can you tell us how your ministry is helping to turn ideas and knowledge into jobs?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question, and she's right: There's a lot of outstanding work and research going on in Hamilton that I've had a chance to witness first-hand.

When it comes to the Ministry of Research and Innovation, our goal is to first of all develop the research, develop the talented people and see them transform into companies and then encourage the growth of those companies.

If I can share with members just one other company, Sentinelle Medical, MRI invested \$200,000 in the company through the 2008 Premier's Catalyst Award and another \$1,000 in August of 2009. Sentinelle has developed the world's first MRI coil specifically designed to image women who have had a mastectomy. Starting with four employees, Sentinelle now has 110 employees, and over 100 of North America's leading breast cancer and imaging centres actively use Sentinelle's technology. Good—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I'd just ask the honourable member from Welland to please take his seat.

New question.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Attorney General, and again it pertains to the Marshall family situation.

Your apparent insistence that the crown acted correctly when they withdrew the charge of criminal harassment against the young man who was caught masturbating while looking in the neighbour's window is not acceptable—not to the Marshall family and not to the people of Ontario.

You have said "I understand" the Marshall family situation but, with respect, your response indicates that you don't understand. The Marshall family feels abandoned by you, by the ministry and by the justice system. But, Attorney General, you do have a way to truly help this family. Will you relay this charge to ensure that the Marshall family receives the protection of our justice system that all Ontarians deserve?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I do appreciate the question, and we're all very concerned about the safety and security of any family, and the Marshall family in particular.

I indicated before, and I do repeat, that the crown is very sorry for the fact that they were not contacted before the matter was concluded. He did review it extensively. He did review the elements of the charge that had been laid and what could be proven.

Now, we want to make sure—we all do—that the Marshall family has the protection that they deserve and need, and I know the police will be working with the family and with others to make sure that happens.

As my friend would know and should know, I have no power to relay a charge that has already been dealt with in court.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Why does the Attorney General continue to defend the indefensible? There are options available to this Attorney General, and working with the police is simply not necessary. This is a matter of significant public interest, not to mention the grief and hardship it's causing to this family.

I would respectfully suggest that the Attorney General does have an option to relay the charge in this situation. Again I'm asking you, on behalf of the Marshall family, will you commit to working with this family and relaying this charge so that justice can be done?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: If I heard the phrase "Don't work with the police"—that's just not an option. In fact, the safety and security—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to be able to hear the answer, and when members are interjecting, it makes it difficult to hear the answer and sometimes for ministers to hear what is being said. Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're all concerned about the safety and security of—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Cambridge, please come to order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —very concerned about the safety and security of the family. The police are very concerned. They are on the ground. I encourage the family to work with the police.

The member is not correct. Once the charge has been disposed of in court, I do not have the power to relay it.

Interjections.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I do not have the power to relay it. Thank you.

1130

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY SECTOR JOBS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Yesterday my leader, Andrea Horwath, asked you a question in regard to the situation in Smooth Rock Falls. As you know, they raised \$55 million, ready to go for an investment to get a new plant in

that community. What was lacking was a directive by the ministry in order to give a wood allocation to that project so they can go forward.

You said in the House yesterday, and I quote from Hansard, “Timber allocation was not an issue, from my understanding, as we worked with them, as we moved forward. Smooth Rock Falls, in fact, determined that they themselves would withdraw from the project.”

Mayor Kevin Somer is so upset, he has driven down from Smooth Rock Falls. He’s in the galleries. He calls that a falsehood. Are you prepared to recant what you said yesterday and give them that allocation?

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Withdrawn.

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

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I’m pleased to be able to respond to the member. As I indicated, in fact we had been working with the Smooth Rock Falls folks, along with the mayor and council members. We met with them. Tembec has had some negotiations with them.

We were very clear: If they would put a proposal in front of us, wood allocation would not be a problem. We have not had that proposal in front of us.

Members from the Ministry of Natural Resources were attending the meeting. The regional director indicated at the same time that if there was a proposal put in front of the ministry, then wood allocation would not be a problem.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The question then becomes, why is it not done? The mayor tells me, Robert Manseau tells me, the CDC tells me, Rick Isaacson tells me, everybody who is involved has been saying they put a proposal before you, they’ve been asking for wood allocation, they’re ready to go. Now, because you have not given the allocation, and made it very clear that you would not do so at that meeting in Sault Ste. Marie, the investors have walked away and taken the money off the table. So who tells the truth, you or the community?

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, please clarify who—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I did withdraw. I withdraw again.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: If we have a proposal in front of us—I now know that this goes to Minister Gravelle. We’d be more than pleased to work with Smooth Rock Falls if there was a proposal in front of us. The regional manager for the northeast has indicated this, and we’re more than pleased to do that.

I realize and understand that there were negotiations that were going on between Smooth Rock Falls and Tembec, and that rests between those two jurisdictions. But when it comes to the issue around a proposal being placed in front of us—now it would go to Minister

Gravelle—we’d be more than pleased to review that proposal and look at those wood allocations.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Climate change is a huge issue facing both Ontarians and the world as a whole. Many people suspect that global warming causes extreme weather conditions.

In Ontario we had one of the wettest summers on record; in British Columbia they had one of the driest. This led to the worst forest fire season ever in that province’s history.

I understand that the MNR contributes to efforts to combat those raging fires. Minister, can you state exactly what resources the MNR provided for our friends and neighbours in the great province of British Columbia?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I’m more than pleased to speak to how we were able to be of support to the government in British Columbia.

We’re very fortunate to have, without a doubt, the finest fire crews in North America. Working with the BC crews that were fighting along with other jurisdictions from as far away as New Zealand, some thousand personnel from Ontario from our aviation and forest fire management were sent to work with the BC government to help them deal with their very extraordinary year of forest fires. This year, we had very few forest fires due to the very wet conditions, but what we were able to do was to take our expertise and share it.

We have received recommendations and commendations for the work that our folks have been doing in British Columbia. On behalf of everyone in this House, I’d like to say thank you to each and every one of them who took time out of their lives to go and help someone else in need.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Minister, thank you very much for that detailed response. We certainly welcome your leadership and the leadership of MNR employees. We have one of their offices in Peterborough and many of them are friends of mine.

I’m proud to hear that Ontario steps up whenever Canadians are in need. Many communities in British Columbia’s interior are extremely remote. Sometimes it’s called cowboy country; the area is populated by ranches that are separated by thousands of kilometres but still need other provinces to help them when they have extreme problems.

How did the fire crews manage to keep BC residents safe in spite of the challenges that the remoteness of the location posed, and how did your MNR staff respond, in great detail?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Many of the MNR fire crews and support staff were actually deployed to the Lava Canyon. This is a 66,000-hectare fire.

It’s an interesting area. There is no cell coverage, so the MNR folks actually drove from home to home to

work with those communities in terms of the fire attention. Several communities were kept on evacuation alert and many of them were informed by regular community meetings.

It's an example of how our firefighters worked with the BC firefighters in a remote region to help them in this very difficult time. Those in the BC forest fire support effort made a tremendous impact. That's part of working together. When we're in need, they come and work with us; when they're in need, we go and work with them. It's a tribute to the firefighters in the Ministry of Natural Resources and the work they're prepared to do to help anyone who is in need.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Premier. Contraband cigarettes are killing small businesses and threatening the livelihood of thousands of convenience store owners. These contraband cigarettes, which are being smuggled throughout Canada in record numbers, now represent one out of every three cigarettes purchased.

How does this fit in with your overall plan for economic growth and jobs in Ontario? You say you are concerned, but why won't you take action on illegal tobacco?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It's a very important question. It's a very timely question. Listen, the federal government and the RCMP will tell you that 90% of illegal cigarettes are contraband cigarettes that come from across the border. So, as the member suggested in her question, it is very important that we come together, the different police services, to ensure that we are very aggressive at not only finding that contraband but prosecuting that contraband. That has to be done on an ongoing basis. But I have to tell you: I await the federal government's plan with regard to contraband tobacco.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion 138 on allocation of time on Bill 201, An Act to provide for the review of expenses in the public sector.

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

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

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

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret

Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric

Mitchell, Carol
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz

Bradley, James J.
Brotzen, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona

Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John

Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Elliott, Christine
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Klees, Frank

Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 23.

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

Motion agreed to.

APOLOGY

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It appears I caused some offence to some people when I displayed my friendship with the member for Hamilton Mountain, who comes from the same community I come from, whose parents I know well and whom I've known as a friend for many, many years. I gave her a friendly embrace. I want to say that I cause no offence to anybody. I have embraced Liberals; I've embraced New Democrats; I've embraced Conservatives. In fact, one of the last Conservatives I embraced was Billy Murdoch. So if I caused offence to anybody, I sincerely apologize.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislative Assembly a student who has been working with us in the office in Mississauga for the past four years. Please welcome Bibi Khan in the members' east gallery.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Robert Bailey: My constituency office has been flooded with calls from people who are on employment insurance and are trying to get retraining through the

Second Career program that is being mismanaged by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

In my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, I have one constituent who is a single father. He was told he was to start training on Monday and when he got there he was told his funding hadn't come through and he will have to wait until November. In the meantime, his employment insurance is running out and will force him onto welfare. This is someone who wants to work. He wants to be retrained, but the government cannot get its act together to help him. No one should be forced onto welfare because of this bureaucracy.

This is a complete disaster for this government, which talks a good game about retraining, but when push comes to shove, they let people who they claim they want to help linger in some purgatory, waiting for their application to be processed. This government needs to come clean with the people waiting for their application under the Second Career program to be processed. They need to approve the required training and then sort out the paperwork.

Does the minister realize that these bureaucratic delays are forcing people out of their homes and in some cases onto welfare?

EVENTS IN OAK RIDGES–MARKHAM

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Over the summer I attended several special events hosted by the Arts Society King in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. The Arts Society King, under the leadership of president Lynda Rogers, is a non-profit organization which fosters inspiration, understanding and appreciation for the arts, heritage and nature within my constituency.

I was delighted that the Ontario Trillium Foundation granted Arts Society King \$171,600 to strengthen the capacity of the organization. A key initiative is the King arts festival, founded by Judy Craig in 2004. With her co-chair, Cathy Webster, Judy organized the King Soiree, an annual outdoor celebration of the arts, heritage and nature in King township.

Another festival event I attended was the Raspberry Social evening at Laskay Hall, which celebrated its 150th anniversary by featuring live music, fresh raspberry pies and delicious shortcake.

This last weekend I was delighted to attend the Schomberg Village Street Gallery, an outdoor juried art show and sale organized by chair Greg Locke. I accompanied a group on a heritage walking tour, led by Bill Foran, whose family has lived in Schomberg for generations, to learn more about the wonderful community I represent.

Thank you to all the volunteers who make the Arts Society King the amazing, vibrant group that contributes so much to the quality of life in our community.

FOOD BANKS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: The Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank will kick off their Thanksgiving food drive at

the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce on October 2, 2009. Our food bank is fortunate to have such a great group of dedicated directors, staff and volunteers, led by Pat Singleton.

Food collected during the drive will help the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank's 35 community organizations and various meal programs, as well as providing food to approximately 1,600 families each month. Since June 2008, their emergency food hamper program has seen an increase in usage of 62%. Many food banks across the province are experiencing similar or worse increases.

As we enter the Thanksgiving holidays with gratitude, we cannot forget those who are less fortunate. Many people who live in poverty will continue to feel the effects of Ontario's economic turmoil and will need assistance for an extended period of time.

There are hundreds of food banks across Ontario hosting food bank drives over the next few weeks. I would encourage us, as leaders, to do what we can to support our local food banks.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Reza Moridi: It gives me great pleasure to rise today to acknowledge another important initiative of the McGuinty government to provide more employment opportunities for Ontario's youth. Young entrepreneurs are the leaders of tomorrow. Assisting young newcomers in pursuing their independence by owning their own business is a priority for the McGuinty government. This government recognizes that we must promote and retain the talents and skills of newcomers who arrive in Ontario every day. We also recognize that in this global economy, when our newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

Ontario is investing \$73,000 in the Heritage Skills Development Centre, which will assist 40 newcomer youths in achieving their dreams of business ownership. This program will do more than simply promote entrepreneurship. It also assists in the areas of work readiness, employability, civic engagement and interpersonal skills for youth between the ages of 12 and 29.

The Heritage Skills Development Centre is one of 19 projects funded by the government. Since launching in 2006, it has provided opportunities for the youth group across Ontario, particularly youth who are underserved and outside the mainstream educational system and/or living in rural and remote communities.

These investments underscore the McGuinty government's—

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

GANARASKA FOREST CENTRE

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to congratulate Ganaraska Conservation on their new Ganaraska Forest Centre. The official opening was held this month, at the gala celebration last week, on September 26. I'd like to say that the Minister of Natural Resources, Donna

Cansfield, was there, and I have the greatest respect for her taking the effort to show respect for that organization.

The Ganaraska Forest Centre has been a unique hands-on outdoor education experience for local students—including my own children—and youth over the last 30 years. The forest centre began with the planting of the first trees for reforestation in 1947. Restoration of over 10,000 acres of forest halted erosion from settlement and land clearing in the 19th century. It resulted in the largest block of continuous forest in southern Ontario.

With the completion of the new eco-friendly building, the forest centre will continue its outstanding record of stewardship and education into the 21st century. The centre has unlimited potential for eco-tourism, corporate retreats, banquets, training and planning sessions.

Congratulations to the CAO, Linda Laliberté, and to the chair, Brian Fallis, who unfortunately was not able to attend, for their leadership of the Ganaraska forest conservation area. Congratulations also to Paul Quantrill, a former professional baseball player, who is the leader and volunteer in the \$4-million Build for Change campaign.

Co-operation amongst individuals, community organization, corporate sponsors and all levels of government has turned this dream into a reality.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: In June the Ombudsman reported that the patchwork of access to PET scans was unfair, and the government was forced to act. They made PET scanning a publicly insured health service in Ontario—everywhere in Ontario except in the northeast, which was glaringly omitted.

At first the Minister of Health said people from the northeast could go to Toronto. Well, thanks to the people who supported me, he quickly bowed to public pressure and came up with excuse number two: that Sudbury Regional Hospital could have one if Sudbury paid for it. Sudbury Regional Hospital has a \$5-million deficit—not a workable solution. I expect excuse number three will be, “Go to your LHIN.”

The truth is that this is an issue of equity of access. Once a service is covered by OHIP, it is the government’s responsibility to make sure to provide equitable access to all Ontarians.

The issue has galvanized the people of the northeast. Thousands of people have signed my petition calling for PET scans for the people of the northeast. Six municipalities have written letters to the ministry, and many more will be sending letters. I’m overwhelmed by the support for equity of access for people of the northeast. On Friday I will be at Laurentian University, where students will be signing the petition.

I want the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to realize that it is his responsibility and nobody else’s to ensure that residents of the northeast have equitable access to this technology.

1510

STUDENT LITERACY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: In this competitive global economy, literacy skills are crucial for success. That’s why it gives me great pleasure to be part of a government that has committed to ensuring each child reaches their full potential.

The McGuinty government understands that developing early reading skills will aid in future academic success. We also know that readily available and accessible books are key to aiding Ontario students in their quest for economic excellence. The McGuinty government delivered one million books over the summer, ensuring that school libraries across the province have the most updated collections. We expect the schools to have an additional 700,000 more books by the end of this school year.

Last January, the government of Ontario selected 72 Ontario-based vendors and negotiated discounts of up to 50% for school boards. This saved the boards about \$3 million, allowing them to purchase 175,000 more books, ensuring students have the resources they need to succeed.

Class sizes are going down, graduation rates are going up and more kids have the books they want to improve the literacy skills they need. While there is more to do, we are proud of what we have accomplished and will continue to work with school boards to ensure public education in Ontario is the best it can be.

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Each summer I visit community and business groups in western Mississauga to discuss the topics that interest them most. This year, tax reform was on everybody’s agenda, and people say that the Conservatives are only telling half the story.

I visited every Rotary Club, most of our seniors’ groups, some of our religious communities, and others as well. Ontarians know that we need to come out of this economic downturn stronger than we were when we went in. When they hear that their taxes are going down permanently, that their tax credits are going up permanently and that the embedded sales tax in the products that they buy will bring those prices down permanently, they ask why the other parties are not telling the whole story.

Seniors especially like the doubling of their senior homeowners’ property tax credit and the introduction of the new Ontario sales tax credit, as well as the permanent cut in their income taxes.

Ontario is better able to attract and grow the kind of companies and jobs that seniors want to employ their children and their grandchildren. That’s why Ontario’s tax reform will drive our province’s prosperity, and that’s why Ontario will continue to reject the half-the-story Tories.

PATRICK LORMAND

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I rise in the House today in honour of Patrick Lormand, a native of the small village of Chute-à-Blondeau in my riding.

Patrick Lormand died tragically while on patrol in Afghanistan on September 13, at the young age of 21. It was with sadness that last Friday I attended Patrick's funeral service with his family and friends from the community.

Patrick was a member of the Second Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment, with the Canadian Forces.

Le soldat Patrick Lormand était l'aîné de la famille de Sylvie et Jacques Lormand. Outre ses parents, il laisse dans le deuil son frère, André, et son amie de cœur, Danicka.

Patrick was an active young man who loved sports. He grew up on a farm that has been in his family for generations. Patrick attended Hawkesbury District High School and was also a member of the 33 Combat Engineer Regiment, an army reserve unit located in Ottawa.

No words can adequately express the loss of this young man. It is with great sorrow that I request a moment of silence for Patrick Lormand, a young man who will always be in our hearts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask all members and all guests to join us in a moment of silence in recognition of this fine individual.

The House observed a moment's silence.

REPORT, OMBUDSMAN OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table a report of the Ombudsman of Ontario respecting the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's decision-making concerning the funding of Avastin for colorectal cancer patients.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Brad Duguid: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding a committee membership change

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move that the following amendment be made to the membership of certain committees: The member from St. Paul's replaces the member from Kitchener-Conestoga on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Motions? Statements by ministries? The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, this isn't a statement by ministry, but it's a unanimous consent statement. I believe we have unanimous consent for a member from each party to speak for up to five minutes regarding Take Back the Night.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I stand to acknowledge the outstanding efforts taken by communities across Ontario to organize Take Back the Night events throughout our province during the month of September. Ontario joined the rest of Canada and countries around the world in using Take Back the Night marches to shine a light on a dark reality faced by women and girls in Ontario.

Let me share a story about one night in the life of a young Toronto woman who never dreamed it would be her last. She had just been called to the bar and was celebrating her success with two fellow lawyers. Together, they were planning to start a clinic for women who were victims of violence, an admirable goal but one they would never have the opportunity to achieve. This evening of celebration would turn to tragedy for this woman, whom many of you will remember. Her name was Barbra Schlifer. On her way home, she was brutally sexually assaulted and murdered. Unlike most women who know their attacker, she died at the hands of a predator who, in the dark of the night, in the stairwell of her apartment building, killed her. Her family lost a daughter, her friends lost a companion and her community lost a woman who wanted to give back. As her murder made headline news, we all grappled with the reality of a life cut short by sexual violence.

When one woman is raped, the lives of those around her change forever. Her family, her friends and co-workers feel the effect. The dynamics of her community change. Sexual violence affects us all.

Ontario's first Take Back the Night was held in Ottawa in 1978. In 1981, in Toronto, Take Back the Night was held in honour of Barbra Schlifer. It shone a light on sexual violence and the devastating impact it has on the lives of girls, women and our communities.

This month, there were over 14 Take Back the Night events in communities and on university campuses across Ontario. The growth of Ontario's Take Back the Night events is due to the commitment by women in the communities in which they live and work to bring attention to the issue of violence against women.

Each Take Back the Night event symbolically reclaims the night for women and girls—for all women who have been told to avoid walking at night for fear of attacks against them.

I would like to commend the staff of our rape crisis centres and the women who join them in Take Back the Night marches for the courage to make violence against women a very public issue that cannot be ignored.

I invite all Ontarians to continue to raise their voices so that each woman and girl can walk, be it day or night, without the fear of violence. We must join together to

effect change and stop the cycle of violence against women.

1520

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to respond to the minister's statement.

Today we acknowledge all of the Ontarians who participated in a Take Back the Night march this past month. September is recognized across Canada for Take Back the Night activities.

Since the late 1970s, women have been marching in Take Back the Night marches. These marches have been organized by groups dedicated to helping women achieve safety and empowerment.

When the march began, it focused on unsafe streets, cities and campuses. This year, the march seeks to highlight the problem of violence against women and sexually-based violence.

All women have the right to live in safety and dignity, free from intimidation and the threat of violence. Unfortunately, violence against women occurs every day in Ontario. In 2006, Ontario police recorded almost 1,000 incidents of spousal violence each month. On average, two women in Ontario each month are killed by their partners. A Statistics Canada survey indicates that 51% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence at least once; 29% of married or previously married women were assaulted by their spouses; 60% of women who've been sexually assaulted have been attacked more than once; and only 14% of victims turned to the police.

We have a long way to go to make women safe in our society. Too many tragedies have increased awareness and the need for action. We must be ready to take the necessary steps if we are truly committed to doing all we can do to stop violence against women. We must do all we can to ensure that women can walk alone at night without fear and ensure that they're not vulnerable at home, at the workplace or at school.

Notwithstanding the government's statement today, they have failed to live up to their professed commitment. On three separate occasions, the official opposition has asked the Attorney General to assist Ms. Patricia Marshall of St. Catharines and her two daughters. Despite a videotaped, properly obtained confession from a young man found masturbating in Ms. Marshall's backyard while looking into her daughters' bedroom window, a senior crown attorney withdrew the charges. The crown attorney failed to notify Ms. Marshall that he had done so, contrary to the crown's policy manual. To date, neither the crown attorney nor the Attorney General has provided a reasonable explanation for the withdrawal of this charge.

In the meantime, Ms. Marshall and her daughters continue to live in fear in their own home. This is unconscionable.

If the minister responsible for women's issues is serious about making women safe in our society, we would suggest that she start by urging the Attorney

General please to take action to protect Ms. Marshall and her daughters, a step which he has refused to do thus far.

The Progressive Conservative caucus will continue to advocate on behalf of Ms. Marshall and her daughters, and on behalf of young women, girls and children across Ontario to ensure that the necessary supports in our social, legal and justice systems are in place for their protection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's a pleasure today to be rising in support of Take Back the Night—Reprenons la nuit.

In most communities around this province, a Take Back the Night event has already taken place. I know that in my community, we marched on September 17 and marked the 31st anniversary of the Sudbury Sexual Assault Crisis Centre's Take Back the Night march.

Take Back the Night marches started in the late 1970s. They have been held by colleges, universities, women's centres, YWCAs, rape crisis centres, community centres, high school students' groups, battered women's shelters and other organizations dedicated to helping women achieve safety and empowerment. Events have been held in England, Belgium, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean islands, the United States and many, many other corners of the globe.

Some of these events look like candlelight vigils and allow survivors of sexual assault a place to speak out. Others are thunderous rallies demanding equality and an end to sexual violence. This is what the one in Sudbury looks like, anyway.

All events strive to bring awareness of the problems of sexual violence and to support those who have been victimized. The events bring attention to violence against women as well as the broad issues of sexual violence, including sexual assault, rape, date violence, sexual abuse, domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment, child abuse, Internet harassment and other unhealthy relationships.

The sad reality is that we still need Take Back the Night events in Ontario. We know that one woman in two in Ontario and in Canada is the victim of sexual assault at least once during the course of her lifetime. This is an absolutely staggering statistic. This is something that we should all be horrified about.

We must also connect the dots between violence and equity. Women need economic equity. Someone who is economically dependent upon her abuser will never be free of that abuser. This means addressing the situation we currently have where women in Ontario make 71 cents on the dollar that men make for work of equal value. We need action. We need a living wage, because the face of poverty in Ontario is a female face. It is mainly women who work for minimum wage. We need minimum wage to be \$10.25 an hour now, and we need this to be indexed.

We need safe transition housing as well as more shelter beds for those who are trying to escape abuse. We still don't have an adequate number of shelter beds and we lack poorly in transition housing, especially in northern Ontario.

This also means addressing equity issues in every environment of Ontario—addressing equity in our schools, our workplaces, and of course in our own homes. Take Back the Night events demand our attention and should inspire us to work every day of the year to end violence against women and the inequities that allow this violence to exist in the first place.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: I am very pleased today: I've received a petition from Merlin Alexander, who lives in Brampton, Ontario.

"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 those 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'll affix my signature to it.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: I too have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's somewhat different from that one.

"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 hydro, cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to 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, I affix my signature to it and I send it down to the table.

1530

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the good people of Timiskaming–Cochrane riding and it's regarding a PET scan for northeastern Ontario.

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

"Whereas by October 2009"—that's pretty soon—"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 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 send it to the Clerk with page Jacquelyn.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Joe Dickson: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the residents of Whitby and Durham region, adjacent to Ajax–Pickering.

"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,"—and I have, as you can see, quite a number of them—"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."

I affix my signature to that and pass it to Hafiz.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition provided to me by Mr. Stan Clayton of Pickering, Ontario, and Re/Max Twin City Realty Inc., which reads:

“Whereas the new 13% HST was not part of Dalton McGuinty’s election platform in 2007 and is in addition to the new, enormous health tax; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government will pay taxpayers, with their own tax dollars, a one-time so-called tax rebate during 2010; and

“Whereas condominium owners in the province of Ontario will pay at least 6% more in condo fees as a result of the new 13% HST and additional amounts to comply with the reserve fund requirement of section 93 of the Condominium Act;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government cancel its plan to introduce a new 13% tax on Canada Day, 2010, and abandon this tax grab against condominium owners in the province of Ontario.”

As I agree with the petition, I affix my name thereto.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I especially want to thank the Islamic Society of North America for collecting this at their mosque; especially Omar and Rita Othman and Mona Hassan, who did a lot of the work. It reads as follows:

“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’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Megan to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty’s 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, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; 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, farmers 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 affix my signature. Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s a pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents from Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville;”—our local hospital—“and

“Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville’s hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

“Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000; and

“Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take the necessary actions to fund our hospitals equitably and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East Local Health Integration Network address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington.”

I’m pleased to sign, endorse and present this to my favourite page, Ava.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: I’m pleased to be able to rise again today to deliver a petition signed by many, many people in my riding.

“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, heat, hydro, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to 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 fully support this petition, I affix my signature to it and I send it down with Carlos.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that reads:

“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 want to thank the members of the ISNA mosque in Mississauga, some of whom are my friends, for this petition. I agree with the petition and affix my signature.

1540

TAXATION

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: “Whereas Ontario is in recession; and

“Whereas Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs under Dalton McGuinty’s watch; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals promised not to raise taxes; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals did not campaign on harmonizing the PST and GST; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s plan to harmonize the PST and the GST will result in Ontario taxpayers paying 8% more for a multitude of products and services including gasoline, home heating fuel, Internet services, haircuts, gym memberships, legal services, construction and renovations, car repairs, plumbing and electrical services, landscaping services, leisure activities, hotel rooms, veterinary services for the family pet, and even funeral services; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers cannot afford this tax grab;

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

“That the government of Ontario abandon the harmonized sales tax plan announced in the 2009 budget; and

“That the government of Ontario abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act and consult with the taxpayers and voters through a referendum or by campaigning on a platform of raising taxes before introducing any tax increase.”

That is signed by 1,600 residents of Carleton–Mississippi Mills, and I agree with my constituents.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to read a petition for the riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is conducting a review of the province’s underserved area program (UAP) that will result in numerous communities across rural and small-town Ontario”—like mine of Durham—“losing financial incentives to recruit and retain much-needed doctors; and

“Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep physicians are essential to providing quality front-line health care services, particularly in smaller communities; and

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

“Whereas taxpayers deserve good”—fair—“value for their hard-earned money that goes into health care, unlike the wasteful and abusive spending under the McGuinty Liberals’ watch” especially “at eHealth Ontario;

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

“That the McGuinty government not reduce or eliminate financial incentives rural communities and small towns need to attract and retain doctors.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and present it to Helen, one of the new pages.

OPPOSITION DAY

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that, in respect of the Auditor General's forthcoming report on eHealth Ontario, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario authorize the Standing Committee on Public Accounts as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall meet for the purposes of reviewing the Auditor General's report;

That the subcommittee of the committee shall have the authority to call before the committee any witnesses it deems necessary to conduct a review of the report, including, but not limited to, Premier McGuinty, Minister Smitherman, Minister Caplan, current and former members of the eHealth Ontario board of directors and current and former employees of eHealth Ontario;

That the subcommittee can, through Speaker's warrant, compel the attendance of any person to attend and give evidence;

That the subcommittee can, through Speaker's warrant, require any person to produce into evidence such documents and things as the subcommittee may specify;

That the members of the committee shall be permitted to obtain production and review of any document or thing and disclosure of any viva voce evidence it deems necessary;

That any witness compelled to appear before the committee may attend with counsel and shall be required to give testimony under oath pursuant to section 59 of the Legislative Assembly Act;

That the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has priority over all other committees with respect to its sitting time;

That the committee shall complete its review and file its report on this matter no later than 60 days after the release of the Auditor General's report;

That the committee be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair and notwithstanding prorogation; and

That the committee may, if requested, permit any portion of its proceedings to occur in camera.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 1.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise to speak to the motion. I know a number of my colleagues in the PC caucus will be addressing the motion as well today, a very serious, sobering motion. It's with some regret that the PC caucus has been forced to move this motion, but really had no choice, given the absolute absence of leadership by Premier McGuinty in trying to get to the bottom of the eHealth Ontario scandal.

I'm going to briefly discuss how the McGuinty government in its own behaviour has set the tone for a growing culture of entitlement that has produced scandals now at eHealth, two scandals at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. and elsewhere in government.

I'm going to further examine the McGuinty government's record once the stories of these scandals first

broke publicly, and how the Premier and ministers have clearly placed preserving their own reputations ahead of protecting and restoring the public's faith in government.

Then I'm going to talk about the Auditor General's report. While we are beginning to hear reports now in the media of what that report may say, I am quite frankly more concerned today with what the report will not say and the limits placed on the Auditor General's investigation. That is why we need the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to pick up the trail and to get the job done.

Let me begin with the utter breakdown of accountability that resulted in the eHealth Ontario scandal, scandals at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. and heaven knows how many other scandals yet to come. And it's not just that the Liberals failed to detect these spending abuses. It's not just that they failed to stop these abuses of taxpayer dollars. It is that they set the tone and encouraged, by their actions, a culture of entitlement where an "anything goes" mentality became commonplace. I need not remind members here today that when the irresponsible use of taxpayers' dollars began, quite frankly, the example was set at the top.

We all remember not too long ago stories of how the Premier chartered airplanes to fly from Toronto to Hamilton and back or from Toronto to Niagara, so he wouldn't have to sit in traffic with the rest of us; how the Premier spent some two million tax dollars on chartered flights and luxury hotels for him and an entourage of some 40 individuals on a recent trip to India; how Premier McGuinty has become known as the Premier who travels with the largest entourage known for Premiers in history of this province. The Premier even went so far as to bill the taxpayer \$837 to ship ice from Toronto to Niagara-on-the-Lake for a ministers' meeting.

Interjection: No ice there?

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka asks if there's no ice there. Coming from Niagara, I can tell you and assure the Premier that our water freezes just as well as anywhere else in the province.

The Premier by these actions set a tone, and now we've seen the agencies simply following through on his example.

It shouldn't be seen as remarkable either for eHealth Ontario, of course, the agency that took untold millions of scarce health dollars and handed them out in untendered contracts to Liberal-friendly consultants, an incestuous "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" mentality as Liberal-friendly consultants grow rich and there's absolutely no progress whatsoever in bringing electronic health records into the health care system of the province of Ontario.

1550

This culture of entitlement, as I said, began at the top. Included amid the untold millions of taxpayer dollars frittered away at eHealth was a \$25,000 speech by the CEO, Sarah Kramer herself, where a gaggle of consultants all got their fingers in the pie—\$25,000 for a single speech.

Interjection: I hope it was a good speech.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It must have been one heck of a speech.

But why would anybody be surprised at this? Let's all remember that Sarah Kramer was hand-picked by the Premier himself. In fact, you could say that Sarah Kramer was the Premier's own personal untendered contract, and he set the tone. When the CEO's appointment itself is an untendered contract, it's no wonder that this anything-goes mentality flourished at eHealth Ontario.

That brings me to the second item I wanted to highlight today, the reaction of Dalton McGuinty, his minister and the Ontario Liberal government once the eHealth story broke. Quite frankly, the only reason the story broke at all, the only reason that the rot at eHealth was exposed to the light of day, was due to the diligent efforts of members of the Ontario PC caucus, their staff and members of the media. The McGuinty government was of no help whatsoever.

In fact, we've discovered that getting any information from this government is like pulling teeth. As discussed in question period today, the government is sitting on a freedom-of-information request from the PC caucus that deals with eHealth's potentially untendered contracts with IBM, untendered contracts where a potential massive conflict of interest was taking place. The PC caucus original filed its FOI all the way back at the beginning of June. As the Speaker knows, the legislation says there's a 30-day response period for these FOIs. But after 30 days, guess what? Nothing came. Finally, in early August, well past the deadline, eHealth contacted us, and guess what they told us? They were extending the deadline by another 60 days. And then this week, we received yet another letter telling us that they were delaying the release of this information once again by yet another 30 days.

Today, we finally have an inkling as to why this is the case. This morning's story in the Toronto Star, based on what appears to be a partial leak of the auditor's report, reveals some shocking facts about the dealings between eHealth, IBM and the McGuinty cabinet. Not only did eHealth hand out a whopping \$30-million untendered contract to IBM, but the contract was approved at the highest levels of government, by the cabinet ministers who sit on Premier McGuinty's Management Board of Cabinet. It's not just that the untendered contract binge was taking place under the McGuinty cabinet's noses; it's that cabinet ministers were actively taking part.

We also have good reason to believe that the Premier's office has had a hand in blocking this FOI. We already have the statement of claim from the former CEO at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. which stated that in the aftermath of that particular McGuinty Liberal scandal breaking, at the August 27 meeting with Minister Duncan, the minister stated that the FOI information had been held back for as long as possible, and the Premier's assistant chief of staff was present at that meeting. That's point 11 in that statement of claim.

It fits a wider pattern of behaviour that is a hallmark of a government that is fixated on saving the skins of its cabinet ministers at the expense of public interest.

We had the Premier and the Minister of Health standing in the Legislature and claiming that there would be a thorough third party review of eHealth from Price-waterhouseCoopers. You remember that, Mr. Speaker. Then, during the dog days of summer, when they hoped that nobody was paying attention, we found out that not only had that review never started; it had actually never been contracted from the beginning. Thanks to the efforts of my colleague from Nepean-Carleton, we brought forward a motion at the Standing Committee on Government Agencies to have eHealth reviewed by a committee of members from all three parties. We saw, one by one, a whipped vote of Liberal MPPs that voted down any attempt to provide committee-level scrutiny on this eHealth mess.

Then, just last week, we had two eHealth board members, one a top Liberal fundraiser and the other with very close ties to IBM, who were allowed to quietly resign from the eHealth board in the middle of the night—no announcement, no press release.

I remarked at the time that it's almost like playing roulette when it comes to how the Liberals handle these scandals. If you're unlucky, if you're a bureaucrat, you get publicly fired like the CEO of the lottery and gaming corporation. If you're lucky, you get to slip off into the night like the two Liberal friends on the eHealth board. And if you hit the jackpot, boy, you get to avoid accountability altogether, like Dalton McGuinty's ministers.

This brings me to my third and final point today: the upcoming release of the Auditor General's report. Let me tell you that I'm not the only person here who eagerly awaits its findings, but as you know, there are places that the Auditor General cannot go. While he can follow the money, he cannot compel testimony, for example, from the recently departed eHealth board members, like the top Liberal bagman. He cannot ask, let alone answer, all the questions, frankly, that need to be asked.

In contrast, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, when properly empowered, does possess the mandate and the resources to probe these matters. That's why today we are calling on the Legislature to empower the public accounts committee to do this job, to empower the committee to call more witnesses, to compel testimony, to demand documents and to use the power of the Speaker's warrants in order to execute its mandate. This will enable members of the opposition on the committee to fulfill their responsibility to hold the government accountable. If government members were actually serious about finding out the truth, they would embrace this opportunity to ask hard questions of their own. Such a process could go a long way to shedding a light on the growing culture of entitlement besetting the McGuinty government.

But let's be clear about one important thing: The ultimate responsibility for enforcing an acceptable standard of accountability throughout government does not rest with the committee. It doesn't rest with the Auditor General. It doesn't rest with the Integrity Commissioner. It doesn't rest with the official opposition. It doesn't rest

with the media. It is the Premier's job. It is the Premier's job to hold his ministers accountable, and as leader, he needs to make it absolutely clear that this kind of mismanagement by his ministers has a very steep price.

Let's not forget what is probably the biggest scandal at eHealth, that apparently almost a billion dollars has been spent on this project with no tangible progress towards developing a system of electronic health records that will actually improve patient care. Liberal-friendly consultants got rich; health care patients got zero in return. And it is unacceptable, absolutely unacceptable, that the Minister of Health has not been held accountable for this gross incompetence.

In the absence of any leadership by the Premier, this very important committee has a job to do. So let's stop the dodging. Let's stop the muddying of the water. Let's stop the straw man, the scapegoating, the shell game tactics we've seen from the Premier. Make the auditor's report the first step but not the last step. Let's do a thorough review that will actually fix the system, deliver the better health care that Ontarians expect and deserve, and get to the bottom of this eHealth Ontario scandal that Dalton McGuinty has allowed to flourish.

1600

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to rise in the House this afternoon to discuss the PC opposition day motion. There is no question that what the Progressive Conservative caucus is raising today through this motion is a very important question because we recognize that this is an issue that continues to be on the minds of every Ontarian throughout this great province. The reality is that there is still much we do not know when it comes to the scandal that erupted under the McGuinty government's fumbling of the eHealth project.

New Democrats are going to be supporting this motion. We hope that it can be a step in the right direction, a step that brings us closer to full transparency and disclosure and to assuring each and every one of us that this fiasco that occurred within the eHealth agency under Minister Caplan's watch will never happen again.

What will this motion do? This motion certainly focuses on the upcoming Auditor General's report. The Auditor General does value-for-money audits. He does a good job of it, but his mandate is clearly value-for-money. We hear that his report will be released next Wednesday, October 7, although pieces of this report did start to mysteriously trickle out, as it is obvious from the Toronto Star article from today.

New Democrats are anxiously awaiting the release of the Auditor General's full report. We want the full story. That is why, in August, we brought a motion before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. This motion, unfortunately, was blocked by the Liberal members on the committee. This is a shame. Just think where we would be right now if the committee had already been underway.

New Democrats are hoping that the Liberal backbenchers today will have more conviction; that they will

speak up for their constituents, who want to know; that they will vote in favour of this motion so that Ontarians will finally be provided with answers—answers that they deserve. We are hoping that, once and for all, the details of the eHealth scandal will become clear, and then we can put this issue behind us, learn from it and move forward so that we never go there again.

This motion, if passed, will allow the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to carry out a full investigation into the eHealth spending scandal. It would allow us to bring any and every one involved in front of the committee. Engaging in a process like this is serious business. It would allow us to shed light on any outstanding questions that will remain after the Auditor General's report. It would bring full transparency to the mess that we have on our hands right now.

The reality is that Ontarians are angry. They are furious, actually, that this government has allowed \$16 million in untendered contracts to just fly out the door. They are angry that these people who are supposed to be responsible for health care dollars are happy to just sit back, do nothing and watch the money go.

The Minister of Health has failed to provide adequate answers. He is clearly more concerned with covering his back than with ensuring competency and transparency in the way almost half of our tax dollars are spent. Remember, we are talking about the minister in charge of 43% of tax dollar expenditures in this province. He has fostered a climate of arrogance, insider deals and spending excesses. We see this through his work now at eHealth and before when he was the minister responsible for OLG, which has again reared an ugly head.

New Democrats believe that our health care dollars are precious and need to be treated as such and that Ontarians who pay their taxes and fund the health care system deserve to have answers and explanations when there are mistakes made. Instead, Ontarians and New Democrats have just encountered brick walls when we ask questions. We have witnessed freedom-of-information requests which reek of political interference. We see excuses and weak apologies offered one day, then firing and huge severance packages offered to people the next day. We know that there is much going on behind closed doors, but we still do not know what that may be, nor do we have any reliable assurance that this mess will not happen again, that it was just an isolated incident.

We had witnessed this with the recent upheaval of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., as the entire board was fired along with the CEO. Now the former CEO is suing this government for \$8 million. We are starting to wonder if the scandal will end here or which agency will make the front page of the paper next week or tomorrow.

It is in this context that New Democrats have considered this motion. We have tried so many other avenues that are open to us, and still the answers are not satisfactory; the answers are not forthcoming. It is a sad day for Ontario when the opposition parties feel that the only way they will receive answers is through a committee process that has to subpoena witnesses. Where

have we ended up? Where we will have to ask our Minister of Health to testify under oath in order to really know the validity of what he tells us? The opportunity to appear before standing committee will hopefully mean that we can finally get all the facts out on the table and all the questions answered. We want to put this behind us. We want to learn from it. We want to make sure we never go down this path again.

Let's take a moment to look back at where this whole scandal started. The first we heard about possible misspending at eHealth kind of came in as a trickle. On May 13, the Toronto Sun printed an article saying that in the last two years eHealth has spent \$67 million on consultants. When asked about it, Minister Caplan used every excuse known. He told us that it was money well spent and that it was just a fraction of what the US has been investing to get an electronic health record up and running. He assured us every diabetic patient in Ontario "will have an electronic health record by 2012. Full records for every Ontarian will be in place by 2015 or earlier." This is what he said then. That was the commitment of his government, and he stood by his word. Today, where do you figure this commitment stands?

In May we did not know that a big chunk of the \$77 million was just handed out, allowed to be used without a proper tendering process. When the news of untendered contracts and unreasonable expenses finally came to light, we started to get a better idea of what we were really dealing with. Let us not forget that when the scandal first broke, Ontario was in the midst of a serious economic downturn. It was in the midst of a crisis where every Ontarian was told to brace for layoffs, brace for more bad news, brace for more closures. While Ontarians were being told the bad news, they were hearing about huge bonuses and severance packages, multi-million-dollar untendered contracts, limousine rides and coffee-and-muffin billing on top of \$3,000-a-day consultant fees—what a disconnect.

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We also found out about across-the-board unacceptable expenses such as the speech presented by Sarah Kramer, the former CEO of eHealth, last November. People who are losing their jobs were paying \$25,000 for a speech. This \$25,000 speech was written by one speechwriter and five consultants. The consultants billed from \$200 to about \$393 an hour to revise, edit, discuss and brainstorm with Ms. Kramer for her speech. As the consultants and executives at eHealth had no problem throwing money out the window, our government continued to tell Ontarians to tighten their belts, continued to tell Ontarians to brace for more layoffs, continued to read in the paper that thousands of workers were being laid off in northern Ontario, in the auto industry and in the forestry industry while this was going on. This was as consultants and executives at eHealth continued to throw the money out the window. Preparing themselves for the new McGuinty tax grab of 8%—this is what ordinary Ontarians get to do while the consultants get paid \$3,000 a day.

It was in that climate that Ontarians grew furious. The sad news is that today things are no better. We are still waiting for so many details. Through the summer, additional information trickled in about the extent of the insider deals, and of the complacency of high-level bureaucrats and members of this government.

Different stories kept coming out about whether Premier McGuinty did or did not have a hands-on in the hiring of former eHealth CEO Sarah Kramer. The truth behind the quiet resignations at eHealth's board of directors—one can't help but think that there's a parallel to the Titanic. Remember "Let's get into a lifeboat because there's not enough lifeboats for all of us"? Well, this is what this story looks like: the stepping down of eHealth chair Alan Hudson and the statement released by Sarah Kramer. We just didn't know when it would end. It went on for the entire summer of 2009.

Back in June the Minister of Health had told us that PricewaterhouseCoopers would carry out an audit over the summer months. However, two months down the road this contract was put to rest. Minister Caplan cancelled the contract, providing the explanation that it would overlap with the forthcoming Auditor General's report. New Democrats found out through a freedom-of-information request that the PricewaterhouseCoopers contract had never been signed; work had never begun. But yet in June both the Premier and the Minister of Health assured Ontarians that an independent consulting firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers, would review eHealth expenditures.

I want to quote for this House some of the Hansard quotes which explain the case. I'll start with a quote from Minister Caplan from June 2. He said, "I think that PricewaterhouseCoopers is a well-known and well-respected accounting firm. It's one of the world's recognized firms to do this kind of work. I look forward to the recommendations and insights they might have on ways in which we can strengthen the financial controls and the management practices at eHealth."

Again from Mr. Caplan—quoting from Hansard, June 4—"We have one of Canada's, indeed the world's, foremost auditing management firms looking at the management practices and financial controls under the auspices of an internal government auditor."

It keeps on. Also on June 4: "I know that" the opposition "would support having, under the auspices of an internal government auditor, PricewaterhouseCoopers come in to provide that external third party view of what has taken place; to have a look at the management functions, look at financial controls—again, provide us with the proper advice, guidance and recommendations that can be implemented to protect—"

Even Mr. McGuinty said, "But we need to get the best advice from PricewaterhouseCoopers and the best advice from the auditor, and then, on the basis of those recommendations, see what we might do to ensure that this does not happen again."

But then the rug was pulled out, the light was shone and we realized that there has never been a contract to

hire those people; there has never been any work done by those people. Those were all empty words.

Now we are supposed to ignore this whole fiasco and pretend that those promises were never made. This is an unacceptable manner in which this government is conducting itself, and this behaviour must end.

In spite of all this evasion, there has been information that we have been able to secure, and we know that there is much more coming down. Today, a Toronto Star article told us that the cost of Ontario's attempt to build an electronic health system has soared to more than \$1 billion—\$1 billion of our taxpayers' money. This is a lot of money. But this figure is only one small piece of the whole story. It does not tell us about the waste that has occurred because of years of stalled work. It does not explain the cost to Ontario's patients of inefficiencies in our system—the financial, the human and the emotional cost of not having that work done.

This \$1 billion may have been money well spent if we had a functioning electronic health record system to show for it. The electronic health record system could allow you to walk into your physician's office and he or she would be able to look at your recent visit to the emergency room or could forward your information to a specialist or a hospital if a transfer was needed. Unfortunately, none of this is possible today. We have a \$1-billion investment, and we are no closer to having an electronic health record that allows the entire health care system to communicate information and to do this while securing patient confidentiality and privacy of information. Instead, Ontario's patients remain sorely underserved when it comes to electronic health records. Not only do we have nothing to show for all of that money, we are pouring good money down the drain as our need for these funds grows.

New Democrats have a lot of ideas as to what we could have done with \$1 billion if we had actually delivered services with it. The sad reality is that our health care system is under increasing strain. Hospitals are facing soaring deficits that have forced them to cut costs even when it's the care that suffers. We have witnessed cuts to emergency rooms, maternity wards and physiotherapy services. As emergency rooms close in these small communities, like what happened in Fort Erie on Monday at Douglas Memorial Hospital, it is the hospitals in the larger centres that are increasingly strained under this weight—hospitals like those in Niagara Falls, which are now serving patients in the communities of Port Colborne and Fort Erie because there are no services for them at home.

We also see the desperate need for additional funds for home care, long-term care, community health centres, and the list goes on.

Ontarians are witness to the loss of nursing positions all across the province. The Ontario Nurses' Association estimates that last year about 1,200 nursing positions disappeared. Those are patient needs that go unmet and promises this government has made that are being broken. There is lots of need across this province and

across communities, but this government turns a blind eye and pours the money down the drain—\$1 billion. There are many more examples of what New Democrats would do.

Being conscious of the time, I will wrap up by saying that New Democrats will be supporting this motion. We need to get to the bottom of this story so that everybody knows the facts, so that we can put it behind us, so that we can learn from it and so that we can assure the people of Ontario that we will never go down this path again where millions of dollars get squandered with nothing to show for it.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm not sure "pleased" is the word, but I will participate in the debate this afternoon. I'm actually going to talk about the substance of the motion, because nobody has actually talked about the motion that's before us.

The motion starts by saying that "the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall meet for the purposes of reviewing the Auditor General's report...." Of course, as those of us who sit in this chamber know, if you were to look at the standing orders of the Legislature, you would find that the mandate of the public accounts committee is already that. As per standing order 108(h), "the Standing Committee on Public Accounts ... is empowered to review and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendation on the report of the Auditor General and the public accounts, which documents shall be deemed to have been permanently referred to the committee as they become available...."

To put that in plain English, reports of the Auditor General have always been subject to review and debate in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. But with respect to this particular report, the eHealth report—for those of us who sit on public accounts, and of the six years I've been a member of this House, I think I have sat on this committee for five, so I've got some experience sitting on this committee. The Auditor General works very closely with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and he informed us back in the spring, as the debate over eHealth broke, that in fact, he was already planning to do eHealth.

He was already in the process of doing eHealth, and because of the debate that was ongoing, and then the request from the Premier that he look at it more closely, he was thinking that he might be able to release the report early. At that point, the committee unanimously—i.e., members from all three parties—said, "If you get this report done early, we will come back to the House and deal with the report during the summer." We actually unanimously requested the House to give us permission to sit during the summer if the report came in early.

Obviously, it didn't come in early, but that's what the committee has done. So there's no question that the committee is going to deal with the eHealth report immediately when it comes along. We already agreed to that back in the spring. That's not news.

I think it would be helpful if we talked a little bit about what actually happens to the Auditor General's report. We should maybe even start by talking about what happens when the Auditor General goes out to do an audit. This isn't in the auditor's function of certifying the public accounts of the province of Ontario; we saw that happen a week or so ago. This is doing what's called a value-for-money audit in programs in individual ministries, in individual agencies or in individual transfer partners. The Auditor General goes in, has a look at the program and says, "Is this program being properly implemented? Is the money being spent on this program being well spent on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario?" This, of course, is exactly the question that we—every member of this Legislature—want answered with eHealth: Is the money being well spent, and if it's not, how can we fix that?

What happens with public accounts is that each year, as the auditor presents his reports, or as he does special audits, the committee chooses which chapters of the report we will look at. Each party has equal input in choosing the chapters. Each party gets to choose an equal number of chapters. The NDP gets to choose just as many chapters as the Liberals or the Conservatives. We're all treated equally. Each party selects various chapters. We come in and we say, "Okay, here's the report on this."

The Auditor General briefs the members because, first of all, it's important that the committee members have some background. Then we call witnesses. The people who come to be witnesses are the people who are responsible for implementing the program, the people who are responsible for spending the money.

When you've got a report, the deputy minister comes and brings along the responsible assistant deputy ministers and the director of the particular program that's under review. They'll show up.

When we're dealing with an agency—we've dealt with places like Ontario Hydro, the Ontario Clean Water Agency. The CEOs of those agencies come along with the deputy minister from the relevant ministry. If we're dealing with health, as has often happened if it's something that's now under administration of the LHIN—for example, when we dealt with some hospital issues, we had the deputy ministers, we had the CEOs of the LHINs and we had the CEOs and whoever was relevant from the administration of the individual hospitals. We have a whole cast of people coming before us already who are responsible for how that money is being spent.

After the hearings, we work collectively, collegially, constructively. This is the most effective committee of this Legislature, in my opinion, because the members of all three parties historically work together to provide a constructive report that helps to identify what has gone wrong and what can be done to fix it, and we make further recommendations to the ministry.

The ministry then has to report back to us and tell us what they've done to fix the problems that were identified. If they don't report back to us, we follow up with

them and say, "Where's the report?" In fact, as late as this morning—and I'm sorry; this was an in-camera discussion so perhaps people are going to censure me for spilling the beans—we were having a collegial discussion about how we can more effectively follow up on ministerial report-backs.

This is a very collegial process. In fact, there's an annual national public accounts conference. When we get together, all the public accounts people and all the Auditors General annually from all across Canada, what you actually find is that this is the most effective public accounts process in the country. It's not just me saying that. The Chair of the committee, who is a Conservative member, is frequently called upon to report to other public accounts committees all over the country and to work on committees from all across the country on behalf of Ontario public accounts because we are recognized. So we already have a very effective process.

Let's look a little bit more closely at some of the other things that are in the motion. The motion says that we could ask the Premier and the minister questions. Quite frankly, if the opposition members here can't get their act together to ask the Premier and the minister questions, what do you think they do every day in question period? They can read the Auditor General's report. They can ask them questions. They're right across the aisle every single day in question period. We already have a way for opposition leaders to do that. They can ask questions every single day of the week. So we've got that covered.

They want to be able to ask eHealth people questions. As I already explained, eHealth people will already come to public accounts. That's an ongoing convention. But on top of that, government agencies, another standing committee, has the authority to identify eHealth as an agency they would like to review. The only thing the opposition has to do to have a review of eHealth is to put that on the list for the year, not as they did a week or so ago, where they said, "We want to change our mind at the last minute and, after we already have briefing books and hearings scheduled with another agency, we'd like to cancel them and bring in eHealth," but in the next round, which will happen in a few months, the only thing the opposition has to do is say, "Hey, we want to review eHealth," and it's done. They can bring eHealth into government agencies and spend as long as they like calling witnesses. In government agency reviews, there are public hearings. Anybody who wants to comment can show up to the public hearings. They've already got a venue for that.

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Let's look at what else this motion says. It says that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has priority over all other committees with respect to its sitting time. Where I'm really supposed to be right now is in the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. We share a sitting room with public accounts on Wednesday. What this motion really says is that you can bump the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions out of their sitting room so that committee can't get on with its work.

Then it goes on to say that you would have to complete this work within 60 days. What that really means is that public accounts is being told not to work on all the other issues it's working on, issues like community health, the Ontario Clean Water Agency and Ontario jails—the biggest spender.

So this motion, quite frankly, makes no sense. The only thing it does is politicize an extraordinarily functional, productive process so that the new opposition leader can grandstand. Quite frankly, I'm appalled, and I will not be supporting this motion.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I thank you for that indulgence. It's certainly a pleasure to follow our leader, Tim Hudak, who I think made a definitive statement today on this opposition day motion number one. I think it's a debate that needs to have complete attention by everyone here, and I certainly did listen to the member from the government side. She made the accusation—she set a negative tone right off the bat by saying that no one has addressed the issue. Quite honestly, if she had read in detail, we've been fighting—almost every question in question period, Mr. Speaker, and you would know that, sitting in the chair, has been about this very issue, trying to get to the bottom, trying to get to the truth of the matter: "Who knew what when?" The litany of this saga on eHealth and the OLG and who-knows-what-yet from all these agencies, boards and commissions started way back, I think prior to 2008 when we first got a look at it. Right after the election there was smoke, so there must have been fire somewhere.

On August 15, 2008, we filed a request for information. Our leader and members—at that time, I think it was Mr. Runciman—filed for a copy of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care's eHealth strategy; a copy of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care's chronic disease prevention and management strategy; and a copy of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care's 10-year strategic plan for health care, a commitment legislated under the Local Health System Integration Act. We were requesting information, and at that time there was a delay. We suspected that something was happening at that time.

In 2008 again, in September of that year, the Liberals dissolved Smart Systems for Health and renamed it eHealth Ontario. This was done on the same day of the mandatory reporting for C. difficile, which took the attention of the media, so no one really paid attention to this shifting of the sands from Smart Systems for Health to eHealth. At that time, they put in place what we would consider a board that was out of control. It seems to me that right at the beginning the salaries they paid some of these people were \$400,000. We've heard all of the numbers: the \$25,000 speech, the trips to Banff and the conferences. The extraordinary abuse of resources was shocking. I won't try to muddy this thing. There were some quality people; don't get me wrong. There were some quality people involved, but what did they achieve? What did we get?

In fact, I want to continue the tragic sequence of events here. We entered in—is it September again? In 2008 the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care filed regulation—this is important—339-08 to bring into effect the changes that took place on September 26, 2008. The Ministry of Health also issued a press release in which they disclosed that Dr. Alan Hudson was appointed as the chair of eHealth Ontario and Sarah Kramer was appointed president and CEO. This is where it started. There was some kind of relationship between Dr. Hudson, who was highly regarded—at that time he was very well sought after—I think a professional, of course, relationship, between him and Ms. Kramer. So there must have been some influence directly with the Premier to hire somebody for \$400,000. And then the expenses started to come in: charging for a cup of tea, a night-time cup of tea, those kinds of things. It was just sort of evidence of abuse, entitlement.

Now, in January 2009, shortly after Christmas—things were talked about over that period—there was a request for six 2003 Smart Systems for Health program—request status of the program. We simply wanted to know what was the status of the transition from Smart Systems for Health to eHealth. The FOI requests the cost of restructuring of Smart Systems for Health to eHealth: the cost of the new office, new employees, the moving expense and all of the evidence making this high-profile, very expensive, very luxurious. The people of Ontario at that time were starting to feel the first impacts of a very severe recession.

The FOIs were issued to obtain documents for the cost of shutting down Smart Systems from 2003. Then again, still in January 2009—so this thing's been going on and on and on—we had a request for the costs of consulting, accommodation and food from 2007-08, in fact for the whole lifetime of the eHealth discussion. Then, on January 28, 2009, an FOI request was filed to obtain the cost of travel, accommodation, entertainment and food.

You know, all of those requests, it was reported in the media, were being blocked at the very highest level, because there was a sense that this thing was out of control. I believe honestly that cabinet knew and I believe honestly that they were in crisis control. We have since—the media, I think, coined it—referred to this as the summer of the scandal. When you have one person running wild with taxpayers' money—lo and behold, we found another one: OLG, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming commission.

We had at that time the assurance from the Premier himself in a conference, when questioned, to put the fire out, that he had committed, and that he had been in conversations with a consulting firm that would take on this task of bringing some closure to it. Later we found out, again probably through inquiries from our leader at the time, Bob Runciman—and now Tim Hudak leading that parade—that in fact there had been no conversation and contact. This is a public document. I'm not fabricating this as I speak.

It's troubling because we've asked questions but we have had absolutely zero answers—we just dealt with a

notice to close debate on sending these expenses for all agencies and commissions to the Integrity Commissioner. So there's no ministerial accountability. The minister has never been asked to even apologize for wasting hundreds of millions of dollars. He's been asked to resign several times by both opposition parties, I believe. Nothing has happened. He still sits there smiling, chirping all the time about—a total disregard for the \$1 billion.

This morning—this thing has so many legs to it, it's almost like a spider—in the Toronto Star of all papers—

Mr. John Yakabuski: A centipede.

Mr. John O'Toole: A centipede, exactly. "EHealth"—this is the Star's headline; for the viewer here, you could call my office and I'd send it to you, because it's scandalous. "EHealth Operation Bled \$1B." Think of that. That \$1 billion, how many nurses would that have hired? How many persons in long-term care would have gotten the care they needed? How many families of autistic children would have been helped? This is a complete, flagrant abuse of taxpayers' money—a billion dollars.

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This isn't me; this is from the auditor. I'm quoting from the article, just to be careful here, because this thing will end up in the courts. Somebody has to pay, and the buck stops with the Premier. You can talk about ministers and ministerial accountability and responsibility. This is the Premier's job. I'm just shocked.

Mr. McCarter, the Auditor General for the province of Ontario, says, "It ain't pretty. This is not a happy tale." That says it all right here. That report will be filed next week. We had a question today, and the Premier indicated that he would share it with our leader, Mr. Hudak, and perhaps the other leader, Ms. Horwath, as well.

The issue here is that once that's out, this is not over. There have to be consequences for this type of inappropriate use of taxpayers' public money in a climate where they're planning subtly to jab the taxpayers of Ontario for another \$3 billion to \$4 billion through the harmonized sales tax.

This government has increased spending by 66%. We are short of doctors, hospitals are threatened, children's aid societies—everyone in this province is fed up with the lack of accountability—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: —and discipline, starting with the Premier of the province of Ontario.

I say that this motion by the opposition today needs the support of those members here who are standing up for their constituents in the province of Ontario. If I had more time, I'd make more points, but I have to relinquish the floor to some of my partners here.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, that certainly took me by surprise. I would have expected that members from the government side would want to speak to this motion as well. But you know, quite frankly, they're embarrassed.

They're embarrassed by the inaction of this government when it comes to accountability. They've seen the headlines. They've heard the stories. They've seen all the reports. They've listened to the questions. Their heads have been down.

The Premier and his ministers continue to try to block FOI requests and to avoid answering questions. I know the member from Guelph said that if we want answers, we have question period. Well, that is a joke. That's a farce. We don't get answers in question period, and the people of this province deserve answers. That is why our leader, Tim Hudak, brought forward this motion. I want to speak to the motion.

The current circumstances do not allow the Auditor General to compel people to testify. I know the member from Willowdale was challenging that. He's a lawyer; he should understand these things. He should know how this place works. The Auditor General cannot compel people to come and testify. The committee in its current form, without this motion being approved and passed by the Legislature, can't compel them either, and it cannot compel people who are no longer employees of eHealth or no longer members of the board.

If we're going to unravel this gigantic ball of intertwined snakes that is eHealth and the scandal that this government is embroiled in and trying its best to wriggle its way out of, if we're going to get to the bottom of this and clear up this slithering mess, the Legislature is going to have to be given the power and the weapons to attack it. Currently we don't have that. That's why we've asked this body today—and I'm appealing to every self-respecting member of the government side. There can be no greater priority for every one of us who is elected to represent constituents and stand in this assembly than to get to the truth so that the people of Ontario will have the information they so justly deserve.

You know I'm correct in this and you know that our leader, Tim Hudak, is correct in tabling this motion. The best way to get to that is to allow the public accounts committee to investigate this whole mess. There are so many unexplainable or hard-to-fathom twists and turns that are involved here. It's like a mystery. Why do we have, for example, Geoff Smith and Khalil Barsoum, by cover of darkness, with no press release whatsoever, resigning from the board of eHealth? Well, under the current circumstances Geoff Smith and Khalil Barsoum could not be asked questions before the committee with regard to their role and their knowledge and their ties to the Liberal Party, and their ties to IBM, which as we heard just recently in information leaked by the Toronto Star, received a \$30-million untendered contract.

This scandal is enveloping everyone, and the only way we can get to the truth is to have the public accounts committee fully investigate what has gone on. This motion is very well researched and thought out, allowing "That any witness compelled to appear before the committee may attend with counsel and shall be required to give testimony under oath pursuant to section 59 of the Legislative Assembly Act." We will have the strength

and the tools to get to the truth. Without this, we will not have it, and the only people who will be able to deny us this resolution today, this motion, are the people on the government side of the House. We already know that the third party is supporting it. We've tabled the motion. If they deny it, then they are denying justice and truth to the people of the province of Ontario, and that would be a travesty.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to participate in this debate today. I want to underline for people who may be watching and listening how we got here, how we in fact got to what many would term an extraordinary motion, a motion that sets out that a committee is going to have the authority to summon witnesses and will hear testimony under oath. I think many people would say, "Well, this is somewhat extraordinary," and it is. We need this extraordinary remedy because, if you look at the history of this issue, we have a majority government which has used virtually every manipulation, every trick in the book, to avoid public scrutiny.

I want to roll back the clock and give people a picture of what has gone on here. Today's headline in the Toronto Star I think says it all: "EHealth Operation Bled \$1B." I think most people across Ontario—people who are having a hard time, people who've lost their jobs, people who've taken pay cuts to keep their jobs, people who are watching their local hospital emergency ward being shut down, people who are watching health care being cut in their community—would reasonably be quite upset to know that an agency of this government, the McGuinty government, bled \$1 billion and, as the paper says, there's not much to show for it.

This didn't just happen today. In fact, as other members have pointed out, this has been going on—this government has been the government now for six years—over a six-year period. It's a government that had nothing to say. It's a government that was not forthcoming with the information, not open, not transparent to the people of Ontario. In fact, to even get at this, Conservative opposition members and NDP opposition members, had to put in a number of freedom-of-information requests. We all know the freedom-of-information rules around this place. There is a certain period of time that a government agency has to comply with the freedom-of-information requests, but if you check the record there, it has again been one effort after another of delay, obfuscate, avoid, evade, such that many of these freedom-of-information requests still haven't been answered many months after they were submitted.

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But some of them were forced to be answered and that is when things got interesting. On May 13 the Toronto Sun printed an article saying in the past two years eHealth had spent \$67.2 million on consultants. I know people across this province who would say \$67.2 million is an awful lot of money. In my constituency, \$67.2 million would probably provide most of the budgets for

most of the hospitals. That's what it translates to. But what's interesting is when the Minister of Health, the minister who is supposed to be responsible to the public on health matters, was asked about this, his first response was that this was money well spent. That's on the record in this Hansard, in this House, that the \$67.2 million that was referred to was money well spent.

He said that all diabetic patients in Ontario will have an electronic health record by 2012; full records for all Ontarians will be in place by 2015 or earlier. He said that was the commitment of this government. I think people at home need to judge. Here is the headline from the Toronto Star: "EHealth Operation Bled \$1B"—and virtually nothing to show for it. I think people at home are entitled to judge. What was the Minister of Health talking about?

But it doesn't end there. We found out in May that a big chunk of the \$67 million that was handed out was never handed out according to proper tendering purposes. In other words, there was no record of requirements saying, "Here's the task. Here's what we want accomplished. These are the criteria. What do you propose to do and what do you think the appropriate level of pay should be?" There was none of that. This was all done in the side room, untendered contracts.

And we found out, as we delved into it more, that many of the people who were getting the untendered contracts were consulting firms and individuals who have a very cozy relationship with the Liberal Party. We found, for example, that one of the principals here was the co-chairman of the last Liberal election campaign. His company has done very well under these consultancy contracts.

So the information, despite the government's efforts to block the freedom-of-information requests, delay the freedom-of-information requests, obfuscate on the freedom-of-information requests, started to leak out. And what did we get from the minister? Well, it got even more interesting. What we got were responses from the minister saying that opposition members didn't know what they were talking about, that opposition members were trying to make a tempest in a teapot, that there was nothing here for public concern.

The Minister of Health has a huge budget. I think the people of Ontario expect some openness and some transparency from the Minister of Health, but if you check the record, there was none.

If you check the record of what went on here, I think it becomes even less and less appropriate, because one of the things that happened is that the officials in the Ministry of Health—civil servants—had some concerns about what was going on here. They also had some concerns about the person whom the McGuinty government was going to bring in to, so-called, right the ship—get the ship going in the right direction. They had some concerns about a person named Sarah Kramer, but apparently after Sarah Kramer went to the Premier's office, all of those concerns were put aside and the order went out that, "Sarah Kramer will be the person in charge here."

Let's talk about Sarah Kramer. This is a person who charged \$25,000 to have a speech written. I'd like to get a look at this speech because it must be some speech for \$25,000. I have all kinds of people in my constituency who live on less than \$25,000 a year, but this person, who we believe the record will show was basically appointed by the Premier, thinks that blowing \$25,000 on a speech is nothing. But it doesn't end there. When you look at the record, the consultant who was brought on for the speech billed from \$200 to about \$390 an hour to revise, edit and discuss this speech. I'm given to wonder: What is going on here?

We all know that Ms. Kramer was only in the job for about seven months. What was she paid for seven months of work that didn't amount to anything? So far as we know, she was paid about three quarters of a million dollars. I say "so far as we know" because I believe that if we do get the opportunity to call witnesses, examine people under oath and examine records, we may well find that it was well in excess of that.

I go back to the Minister of Health because, as more and more of this information started to leak out, the Minister of Health started to say to the public, to the people of Ontario and this Legislature, "Oh, don't worry. We're going to have PricewaterhouseCoopers carry out an audit as to what happened with eHealth." In fact, I want to quote the number of times that we were told this and that people were told this.

On June 2, the Minister of Health says: "I think that PricewaterhouseCoopers is a well-known and well-respected accounting firm. It's one of the world's recognized firms to do this kind of work. I look forward to the recommendations and insights they might have on ways in which we can strengthen the financial controls and the management practices at eHealth." I think any reasonable person listening to this would come away with the conclusion that PricewaterhouseCoopers has been retained to do some sort of audit or study.

Then there's June 4: "We have one of Canada's, indeed the world's, foremost audit management firms looking at the management practices and financial controls under the auspices of an internal government auditor." I think any reasonable person listening to this would have thought, again, that PricewaterhouseCoopers has been retained to look at this sorry mess.

Again on June 4: "I know that the opposition would support having, under the auspices of an internal government auditor, PricewaterhouseCoopers come in to provide that external third party review of what has taken place, to have a look at the management functions, look at financial controls, and provide us with the proper advice, guidance and recommendations that can be implemented to protect the public." That's the Minister of Health on June 4.

Then he goes on: "That's precisely why I had a conversation with board chair Dr. Hudson and sought assurances, which were not received, and why I've directed eHealth and the board to undertake a third party review. That will be under the auspices of an internal government

auditor, along with the agency's external auditor, PricewaterhouseCoopers."

1700

Any reasonable person in this province would have thought, listening to those representations, that PricewaterhouseCoopers had been retained to do a review. But you know what we found after these and other representations were being made to the people of Ontario? We found that there was not a review by PricewaterhouseCoopers and there never was going to be a review by PricewaterhouseCoopers. In fact, when PricewaterhouseCoopers was contacted, they said, "We have no such retainer, no such contract, and have been given no such undertaking." I think a reasonable person looking at this would say, "This looks like evasion. This looks like trying to avoid openness and transparency." But it goes on.

You see, we do have a committee called the government agencies committee, and the government agencies committee can call government agencies to review what they're doing. For example, Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One have been called before this committee to explain things like rate increases, to explain the pay of some of their senior executives, to explain their use of consultants, from time to time. Opposition members on the committee put forward a motion to have eHealth come before the committee to be reviewed, on the same terms as Hydro One or Ontario Power Generation or the Ontario Securities Commission. And you know what the government members did? They were so eager to provide openness and transparency, they were so eager to disclose these facts to the public of Ontario, that they voted down the motion. Again, I think any reasonable person who saw this sorry record, who followed the paper trail, would say, "This looks like more evasion. This looks like a government trying to avoid openness and transparency. This looks like a government trying to avoid having the people of Ontario know what is going on."

So that is how we got to where we are today. A motion put forward, yes, by the leader of the Conservative caucus, calling for an extraordinary remedy: that the committee should have the power to summon witnesses, and if you don't reply to the summons, then you're in contempt of the Legislature and there are legal penalties; and the authority to require the production of documents, and if you fail to produce the documents, you're in breach of the law and there will be legal penalties; and the power to order people to testify under oath. Why is that necessary? Because I think we've seen already, members of the government have been saying things that, later, it turns out were simply not factual. When you're in that kind of scenario, that is when you need to summons people under oath, and that is when you need to require people to testify under oath, because it's very clear that anything up till that extraordinary step hasn't worked and hasn't been met with openness and transparency, which the people deserve.

I want to return to where we started off. Members of the McGuinty government seem to think that blowing \$1

billion out the door and not having anything to show for it is not a serious issue. In fact, when questions have been asked about this, you get comments from the government benches, "Why are you worried about this?" Well, I'm worried about it because I know, in my part of the province, how many people have no income or a very limited income, and when they see \$1 billion being blown out the door with nothing to show for it, they deserve answers. They deserve answers on this issue, and that is why this motion is before the Legislature today.

We have been met with obfuscation. We have been met with evasion. We have been met with stories that have been told and that later turn out not to be factual. We have had freedom-of-information requests delayed, denied or only partially answered. There is no other route that the people can go. There is no other avenue than having this brought forward in this way.

The government will say that the Auditor General is going to look at this. But the fact of the matter is, the Auditor General, because of his legislative mandate, has a very narrow window—a very narrow window—through which to look at this. He can look at money that was spent, and he can look at what was produced. But he cannot look at the other questions.

I think that one of the answers people deserve is, why has there been literally, in this case, a six-month exercise of trying to hide, evade and avoid the facts? The Auditor General can't get at that.

Another question that needs to be answered is: How could all these untendered contracts go out the door and the Minister of Health's response is, "I saw nothing, I heard nothing, I know nothing and I'm not smart enough to ask any questions." That's where we're at. That's exactly where we're at.

If I may go back to another sorry situation involving this same minister, it was only a few years ago that we saw people being defrauded of their winnings at the Ontario lottery corporation. There was report after report after report. Much of it was in the media, coming from all quarters of the province. What was this same minister's response then? Despite all the media coverage, his response was, "I saw nothing, I heard nothing, I know nothing and I'm not smart enough to ask any questions."

This cannot be allowed to continue. This, by definition, breaches all the rules of responsible government, yet it seems to be the common order of the day with this government.

The government says it is acting. I think what is really happening is called reacting. After this government gets caught, out comes the damage control strategy; out comes the attempt to say, "This will never happen again." The fact of the matter is, if you follow the sorry record at the Ontario lottery corporation, and now you follow eHealth and some of the other things that have gone on, this is happening over and over and over again.

That is why we need an extraordinary remedy like this, so we can start asking these questions: Why is this such repetitive behaviour by the McGuinty government, and why do consulting firms and companies that are

close to the Liberal Party, that contribute to the Liberal Party, continue to get these kinds of contracts?

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

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure this afternoon to join the debate on the opposition day motion. I thought I would begin, as usual, by injecting a little clarity into the debate. I won't shout and wave my arms, but I would like to give a little clarity to the situation.

On the motion "that, in respect of the Auditor General's forthcoming report on eHealth Ontario, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario authorize the Standing Committee on Public Accounts as follows:

"That the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall meet for the purposes of reviewing the Auditor General's report," that already happens. This motion is redundant. I would like to refer to standing order 108(h): "Standing Committee on Public Accounts ... is empowered to review and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations on the report of the Auditor General and the Public Accounts, which documents shall be deemed to have been permanently referred to the committee as they become available...."

It's already in the standing orders. This is a redundant motion, and I think that it's important to inject that clarity.

1710

I'd also like to go on to say that it is this government that invited the auditor to report, and we will wait till the auditor is finished the report and we look forward, of course, to receiving that report.

Reports by the Auditor General have always been subject to review and to debate—by whom? By the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Therefore the motion is unnecessary. It gives the Standing Committee on Public Accounts authority to do exactly what they do. They did have authority to meet during the summer. On June 3 in committee, the member from Oxford, Mr. Hardeman, from the very caucus that Mr. Hudak leads, brought forward a motion which was supported by all members present. I do have the good fortune to have the very words of Mr. Hardeman from that day. Mr. Hardeman said on June 3, "I move that following the Auditor General's completion of his value-for-money audit of eHealth Ontario, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the Auditor General to release that chapter of his annual report in a special report to the Speaker...." There you have it, the words of a member of Mr. Hudak's own caucus.

Also on June 3, the Legislative Assembly passed with unanimous consent a motion to authorize the committee to sit during the summer. The committee was ready, they were prepared; they were authorized in case the report should be presented earlier.

The standing committee already plans to review eHealth when the Auditor General's report is ready, and as with previous hearings, the committee will hear from witnesses. This commitment is why we have asked the

Auditor General to report on his own review as quickly as possible, and of course we look forward to hearing what the Auditor General has to say.

It's also why we're implementing new procurement rules across the board in the Ontario government, curtailing unnecessary expense claims and additional mechanisms to enhance accountability and transparency. We're committed to delivering better health care closer to home, and electronic health records are a key part of this strategy. Electronic health records will result in improved patient care and in a more efficient health system in Ontario. Our significant investments in electronic health records management will greatly improve the health care system in Ontario. We remain committed to ensuring that the money we spend on eHealth is devoted to initiatives that will strengthen and modernize this province's health care system. I am very proud of our health care record.

I do want to talk about some next steps that we have taken to protect public dollars and to improve transparency. We have eliminated any sole-source contracts. All new Ontario government consulting contracts must follow a competitive hiring process regardless of dollar value. Consultants will no longer be able to bill for hospitality, food expenses or for incidental costs. Management information technology, technical services, research and development, policy development and communications consultants are all covered by these new rules, and all the employees in Ontario's largest agencies, boards and commissions will be required to have their expenses reviewed by Ontario's Integrity Commissioner.

We have taken other steps. The McGuinty Liberals have simplified the rules on expenses. These new rules are shorter. They are clearer. They are posted online for everyone to see.

We will also require that the OPS employees of our largest agencies, boards and commissions receive online mandatory training on expense claims. Starting April 1, 2010, we will be posting expenses online for OPS senior management, cabinet ministers, political staff and senior executives at Ontario's 22 largest agencies. This will hold these employees to the same standard as cabinet ministers and political staff. We will also increase the number of random audits of expenses to ensure rules are being followed.

On September 1, 2009, Premier McGuinty announced that 22 of the province's largest agencies, boards and commissions will be required to have their expense claims reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner. This requirement is similar to the same rigorous oversight provisions that currently apply to the cabinet ministers' political staff under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act.

I think it would be remiss if I didn't look at some of the successful outcomes that we have seen already to date from eHealth Ontario. Since 2008, 80,000 Ontarians are in a pilot project for ePrescribing, which, of course, will help save lives. Since 2005, more than four million Ontarians are already participating in an electronic

medical records program which is run in partnership by the province and the Ontario Medical Association. More than one million children have electronic health records. All Ontario hospitals have gone filmless and are now using digital diagnostic scans, which will ultimately allow for scans to be shared right across the province.

We will continue to build on these positive changes that we have put in place. There is a whole lot more to say. There are new rules that apply to an endless number of agencies, boards and commissions, and I look forward to my colleagues who will go ahead and follow up on that.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I have some brief comments to make and I really want to reference some of the comments made by the Liberal members, the government representatives in the Legislature today, which I think are trying to perpetuate myths with respect to the opportunities available for the public and members of the opposition especially to get answers with respect to what happened at eHealth and the responsibilities of members of the government, especially members of the executive council, with respect to decisions that were taken at eHealth, which I think, in terms of their spending practices, have offended most caring Ontarians.

The member from Willowdale and the member from Guelph talked about the mandate of the public accounts committee, and the previous speaker from Kitchener–Conestoga. They've all suggested—and I'm including the member from Kitchener—that this motion gives the public accounts committee the authority to do what they already have the authority to do. That's clearly not accurate. If that's the way they really feel—we had the member for Willowdale yelling at us across the floor earlier today too that there's no reason for this; they already have the authority to do it. Well, if that's the case, let's see them vote for it. When the bells ring not too long from now, let's stand up and vote for it, if that's really the case. Of course, it isn't the case. The case is that we want to have the authority to call people before the committee. That wouldn't be the case; the ability simply isn't there under the current mandate of the public accounts committee.

1720

If you look at the situations with respect to former employees at eHealth, wouldn't it be helpful to be able to call Sarah Kramer, the former CEO, and talk to her about the meetings she had with Dalton McGuinty, the mandate she was given by the Premier, the discussions that took place with the Minister of Health, Mr. Caplan, with respect to directions given to the eHealth board and to her with respect to the management of expenditures within eHealth? Wouldn't it be helpful to be able to call Dr. Alan Hudson, the former chair—who had a very close relationship with the Premier—with respect to those discussions? Of course, under the current mandate, the public accounts committee has no ability to call those individuals.

What about the two directors who very quietly snuck out the back door two weeks ago off of the board. No public announcement; they simply disappeared off of the website. Well, Speaker, wouldn't it be helpful—one of them was a very prominent Liberal fundraiser, the other had very close connections with IBM, and we know we raised issues today in the Legislature with respect to untendered contracts dealt to IBM. Wouldn't it be helpful if the public accounts committee had the authority to have those people appear before them and testify with respect to how the board operated, what kind of directions they were given from perhaps even the Premier's office? Those kinds of contributions would be helpful to all of us in understanding just what occurred at eHealth, why it occurred, what role government members had with respect to the decisions taken, and especially what role the Premier's office had.

I think this goes right to the top of this government. We're talking about accountability, but it's all smoke and mirrors with respect to the government. We have this accountability act which they're forcing closure on. They're limiting debate on that. We're going to have it two hours at committee and then it's back, and we have a majority government and it's passed; it's forced through despite the objections of the opposition, despite the need of the public to know exactly what happened. That's the way they approach accountability. It's a joke, and it's an insult to every hard-working Ontarian in the province of Ontario.

I want to compliment our leader, Tim Hudak, the new leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, for bringing this motion forward for discussion today. This is important. It shines a light on this Liberal caucus. You know, it's actually depressing to see these members stand up here and defend the indefensible and suggest to the public that there's nothing new here, that this is not required. If we really want to shine a light on what happened at eHealth, this is absolutely required, and Liberal members, Liberal backbenchers, should have the intestinal fortitude to stand up and support it.

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

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: To many, this whole thing is about someone making \$2,700 a day and a free lunch, or maybe millions in untendered contracts, or perhaps \$1 billion wasted by eHealth. To me, it's much more important, though those are very important. Can you imagine how many nurses this government is presently firing around this province? Right now, at my hospital, I know nurses are going to be fired because of a lack of money, they say, and they've wasted it, in fact, on things like eHealth.

But I want to talk about our responsible government and our democracy. What is it? It's "a conception of a system of government that embodies the principle of parliamentary accountability which is the foundation of the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy. Governments (... the executive branch) in Westminster democracies, are responsible to Parliament"—that's us;

this is the Legislature. For six years I've watched Dalton McGuinty and his ministers avoid their responsibility to this House. They pretend to be innocent observers at a train wreck when in fact they were the engineer and the conductors on the train. I don't understand how they get away with it, but they do. It's becoming a laughing matter. That newspapers make fun of the Teflon Premier. The last Teflon man was John Gotti from New York City, and we know what happened to him.

This getting away with responsibility—what a thing to teach our young people. Clarence Darrow was a Chicago lawyer. He was famous for his appearance at the Scopes Monkey Trial. Clarence said, tongue-in-cheek, "My parents ruined the first half of my life, and my children ruined the second half." In other words, never take responsibility for anything, and that is exactly what Premier McGuinty and the members of his cabinet are trying to get away with. They cannot get away with it.

The answer is not to fire a bureaucrat and say, "Ah, we've solved the problem." The problem is malfeasance or incompetence, one or the other, on the part of this Premier and members of his cabinet. They have to stand up and be counted.

This motion, with its power so this would finally be a committee that could get at the truth, a committee that could subpoena witnesses and demand they appear in front of them, and perhaps the ministers and the Premier would be sworn in so they would have to tell the truth, as if it were an ordinary trial—this motion, I believe, will return to our Parliament and our democracy the responsibility of government that the people of this province so much deserve.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm happy to speak to this matter. This motion is unnecessary, and it's unnecessary because, as we've heard this afternoon, the public accounts committee already has the authority to review the Auditor General's report in this matter.

In fact, on June 3, in the public accounts committee, Mr. Hardeman, a member of the committee, brought forward a motion that was supported by all members of the committee. There are five Liberal members on that committee, two Tories, and one NDP member.

Further, also on June 3, the Legislative Assembly passed, with unanimous consent, a motion to authorize the public accounts committee to meet during the summer, should the Auditor General have finished his report earlier than he has—if it had been available in the summer: "The Standing Committee on Public Accounts may" also "meet up to two days by agreement of the subcommittee members with respect to dates, and may sit additional days by agreement of the House leaders...."

The standing committee already plans to review eHealth when the Auditor General reports. That report is going to be available next week and, as with previous hearings in the past, the committee will hear from witnesses.

In fact, I should point out that since the McGuinty government formed the government in 2003, the Auditor General has tabled 15 reports—15 reports since 2003, when the Liberals formed the government. All of those reports have been examined by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The public accounts committee will deal with the Auditor General's report in the course of its mandate. So it raises the question, then, why is the opposition party bringing this motion? What they're asking for is already going to happen. So why are they bringing this motion? The Auditor General's report isn't coming out until next week. In my view, the opposition motion is completely disingenuous. It's a complete political exercise to have a debate here in this chamber on the merits of the Auditor General's report, but the anomaly is that the report hasn't been produced yet. So let's wait until next week. The auditor's report is going to be out, and then the public accounts committee will take up the report, as is its mandate, as it has already decided to do and as it has done with the previous 15 reports of the Auditor General that have been produced since this government took office.

1730

This government is going to deal with this issue. The Leader of the Opposition's motion is really just an attempt to debate this before the report has even come out. Fairness requires: Let's get the report, let's table it here, let's get it to the public accounts committee and then we'll deal with it there.

The flip side of this motion, if it's successful, is that we're in the position of this Legislature in effect ordering the public accounts committee and ordering the Auditor General what to do, how to execute its mandate. The motion is directing the public accounts committee to do thus and thus and to direct the Auditor General to do thus and thus. But the flip side of that is, supposing the motion was a motion directing the public accounts not to look into something or directing the Auditor General not to do something. That's the dangerous precedent here.

Let's have this play out and let's follow the due process. The public accounts committee has its role. The public accounts committee has already said that it's going to receive this report. The history of the public accounts committee is that on all previous reports of the Auditor General, all 15 reports, they've delved into the report; they've dealt with it. That's the history. That's the reality. The only reason this motion is before this chamber is so that the opposition parties can make political hay of this issue. Let's follow the due process.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm happy to be able to take the last couple of minutes to join in today's important opposition day motion. I want to go back to points that the member from Willowdale raised in his comments, because over and over again he suggested to us that in fact this is the way that public accounts operates anyway. But if you look at the opposition day motion, it requires,

through a Speaker's warrant, the attendance of "any person to attend and give evidence." I think that's an extremely important part of this motion. It also requires "any person to produce into evidence such documents and things as the subcommittee may specify," and then the members of the committee to go from there.

I recall when I was on public accounts, and so was the member from Willowdale, that we found ourselves in the position—he was asking the questions and he was simply stonewalled by the deputation that had come from the ministry. This would prevent such an effect as he himself experienced only a few short years ago.

We would not be able to debate this today if our party had not put forward the freedom of information. That's why it's so important. It was obviously important enough that the government was trying to hide what it had done in the last few months. That's the reason we're here.

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Before I begin speaking specifically about what the official opposition has brought forward, I think it's important to set the context of where we have come from and where we are today, and the work that this government has done.

This government is all about accountability, this government is all about transparency, and we have done nothing but that since we were elected in 2003.

When we began, when we formed government in 2003, we started with the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. What is that? It's multi-year fiscal plan, mid-year economic outlook, long-term reports, pre-election report. I think about that, and I can remember speaking in this House, and I know other members will from across the way.

Why did we do that? What did the government do prior to the accountability act review? I can tell you: \$5.6 billion. That was what was on the books at that time, when we took over government.

We said, from this side of the House, that no government would ever have to face that again. Difficult decisions were made. We as a government stepped up and we shouldered that. The people of Ontario put their shoulders to the wheel as well. We knew there was work to be done, and we began that way.

But what happened just prior to that? You know what? They don't like to talk about it, from across the way, but it was the Magna budget, when the people of Ontario said, "How could a government actually take a budget out of the House?" What respect did they have? What accountability was available to the people of Ontario?

We knew when we were elected in 2003 that it was a new day, and we were about accountability and transparency. At every step of the way, we have done that.

The pre-election report: I can tell you that in 2007 we knew where we were at. The people of Ontario understood, and they understood the long-term plans that needed to be put in place in order to ensure that the people would have the services they need and want in all communities across Ontario.

I don't have enough time to cover off all of the good work that we have done, so I'm going to highlight a few things that have happened over the time. I will also speak to things that have happened in the past.

We talk about freedom of information and the freedom-of-information requests that have come forward. How have the freedom-of-information requests changed since we formed government, a government that was about accountability, about transparency? We increased the ability for freedom of information: Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation, the municipal hydroelectric commissions, universities and hospitals. We knew that the people of Ontario wanted things to be available to them. They wanted that information. We concurred.

I can tell you I am quite proud of our record on freedom of information. I just want to share with all the people examples of the ministries: economic development, 100% compliance; research and innovation, 100% compliance; small business and consumer service, 100% compliance; transportation, 95% compliance; Attorney General, 91%. I could go on, but I believe that this sets a record. We knew that we needed to expand the transparency. The freedom of information was part of that.

Also, the committees were formed and they became stronger. Quite frankly, I don't want to say anything that would be considered inappropriate, but we know that from that side of the House committee work was not their strong side. We know that; the people know that. But we knew, as a government, that committee work was important. Committee work gives the ability for all parties to bring forward concerns and to work in a manner that brings all sides to the table. And not only that; it also allows for solutions, plans going forward. We as a government believe that's important, and that's part of the transparency and accountability.

1740

I believe other members from the government have spoken quite eloquently to the motion that's being brought forward today, so I want to speak to how we did not wait. No, we knew that steps needed to be taken right away. We were concerned, and so we began the process and eliminated sole-source contracts. We know that that was what the people of Ontario wanted, expected—came forward. Further, consultants will no longer be able to bill for hospitality, food, expenses or incidental costs. And I want to share a little bit of information here too, because we know that some of the contracts by previous governments in the past were difficult. Paul Rhodes, Leslie Noble, Tom Long and Michael Gourley shared \$5.9 million in untendered contracts from Hydro One, for everything from communication advice to training programs. I just use that as one example. That's why the freedom-of-information opening up of Hydro One. I could give you more examples, and I think it's important to give a few more examples to get them on the record. The tourism minister went on a province-wide junket in the summer of 2001. In the 145 days between April 1 and August 21 his staff racked up \$23,633.55 in expenses ranging from meals and hotels to plants, gum, doughnuts and napkins—August 23, 2001.

We know that the people of Ontario want to know—they work hard for their money, and they want to know how those dollars are applied in order to ensure that that process is transparent. They want to know that their hard-earned dollars are going to the services that are expected and needed in their communities. So by the steps that are in place today, we're moving that process forward. We're not waiting for the Auditor General's report. We have a process in place that will deal with that. We're bringing in the steps and moving forward to make sure that we are open and transparent, as we have always been as a government. All employees at Ontario's largest agencies, boards and commissions will be required to have their expenses reviewed by the Ontario Integrity Commissioner. This is a significant shift, and we know that as members we are reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner. We know that it is a very thorough process. And expanding the scope of the Integrity Commissioner gives the ability for the Integrity Commissioner to go in and do a thorough review—further transparency, further accountability.

But no, we felt that it was important to add even more additional steps to that. So we then went in and simplified the rules on expenses. We know that in the past sometimes there was just maybe not an understanding of what the expenses are because—and I just want to share with you that in the past a member bought a new television, and we know how expensive that is for a family. They have to scrimp and save for a very long time. A member went and purchased a larger set. They walked into Future Shop, they used a government credit card, they charged \$575 for the model, and their justification? To watch the parliamentary channel in the ministry offices. We know that if there was a higher level of understanding, then they would have known the proper process that would have been in place, and so that's why we're providing more training for OPS employees. They will receive mandatory training on expense claims, incidental costs, because we understand that sometimes there is a misunderstanding. But when there is a misunderstanding, the Integrity Commissioner would have the opportunity to review that, and, if deemed, then they would have to either pay back that full cost or they would have to pay back a partial cost. So by having the expansion of the Integrity Commissioner, this gives allowance for that, and I really do believe that it is very important for that to be able to do so.

Also, as we know, in all things, another step that is being taken is to increase the random audits. We know that in order for any system to remain strong, random audits give you the ability to go in and do a scan. It's one of the things that we can use as a tool to make sure that the system that is in place is designed and will maintain what we expect as a government, and that is, as a government, to be transparent and accountable to the people of Ontario. We have demonstrated that at each step from when we formed government in 2003, and we continue to reinforce that day after day. That is what the people of Ontario expect of us, and we understand our responsibility.

Starting on April 1, 2010, we will be posting expenses of the OPS senior management, cabinet ministers, political staff and senior executives at Ontario's 22 largest agencies, and that will be online. We know that there is an expectation by the people of Ontario that the information will be available online. It gives them the opportunity, as a lot of the information that they receive today is online. Having the information available in that manner, we believe, is the way to make sure that it is most accessible to the people of Ontario.

I see that I've run out of time. I must say that I, for one, have always supported, as our government has, transparency and accountability. I believe that there is always more work to do, but the steps that we have in place today will ensure that the dollars that the people of Ontario invest with us will go to providing the services that keep Ontario strong and meet the needs of all our communities. The further steps that are in place today will certainly justify that. We know that together we are stronger. Quite frankly, I can only assume, by the record from the other side, that the reason why they're bringing the motion forward today might be suspect—why they're bringing it forward.

Thank you for allowing me to speak on this important motion and setting the record straight.

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

Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number one. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Dunlop, Garfield

Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Sterling, Norman W.

Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie

Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John

Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brown, Michael A.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Hoskins, Eric

Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol

Moridi, Reza
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 20; the nays are 44.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On Tuesday the 29th, yesterday, the government moved a time allocation motion on Bill 201. In that time allocation motion, amendments were to be filed today at 5 o'clock. Because of a computer glitch, legislative counsel was unable to have the amendments prepared in a timely fashion, so we missed the 5 o'clock deadline. I'm seeking unanimous consent to file the amendments later, before the committee starts tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the House understand the request for unanimous consent, that the amendments be filed later? Agreed? Agreed.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, October 1.

The House adjourned at 1802.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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

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

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

**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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
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
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Eric Hoskins, 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**

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

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

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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**

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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 Craiton, 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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