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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
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Monday 19 October 2009

Lundi 19 octobre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 19 October 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 19 octobre 2009

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am probably going to steal someone's thunder, but I just noticed a very good friend of mine up in the gallery: a former minister of the crown in this Legislature and my very good friend, Claude Bennett. I hope he understands that what I'm about to do to his successor today, I would never do to him.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to introduce and welcome to the House some members of Project Kids HEAR, who are in the gallery; 150 members and family members are here with Project Kids HEAR to advocate for the benefits of children who are deaf and hard of hearing. I welcome them, and I think we all welcome them to the Legislature.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome to the Legislature Brent and Laura Ferguson and their son, Cade, who is here happily wearing his cochlear implants.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to introduce Christine and Chris Wines to the chamber. They're from Grimsby, Ontario, and I welcome them here, as well as Paul Mundra, from Durham region.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I have two guests visiting from my riding today: Sharon Bell and Elizabeth Oliver. They're in the members' gallery. I would like to welcome them to the House.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I would like to welcome two members of the finest school board in Ontario, the Upper Canada District School Board: Greg Pietersma, chair, and David Thomas, the director of education. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: It's my honour to introduce Harry Watts, a World War II veteran and community leader from my riding who served overseas as a motorcycle dispatch rider and, in 2001, wrote one of the first—and maybe only—accounts of the experiences of a dispatch rider during this period. Later today, Harry and I will meet with you, Mr. Speaker, and the executive director of the legislative library to donate his book, *The Dispatch Rider*, to the legislative library. He is joined by his daughter, Laura Nahls, and Jeremy Diamond, managing director of the Dominion Institute. They're in the west gallery, and I know we'll want to welcome them all.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'd like to welcome, in the Speaker's gallery, 10 former ministers of municipal affairs, and I will ask that they stand: Claude Bennett, who served from 1978 to 1985; Dennis Timbrell, 1985; Dr. Alvin Curling, 1985-87; Dr. Chaviva Hošek, 1987-89; Ed Philip, 1993-94; Richard Allen, 1994-95; Allan Leach, 1995-99; Chris Hodgson, 2001-03; Helen Johns, 2003; and David Young, 2003. These former ministers have joined me today to celebrate—

Interjection.

Hon. Jim Watson: Excuse me. Steve Gilchrist. My apologies.

These former ministers have joined me today to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the ministry, which coincidentally falls during our second annual Local Government Week, which starts today, during which students from across the province learn the importance of municipal government. I hope the House will join me in welcoming these distinguished guests back to the Legislature.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: On behalf of Minister Broten and myself, I would like to welcome Norseman Junior Middle School and their teachers to the Legislature—Lesley Bullin and Jennie Cansfield. Welcome and enjoy.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to introduce Bill Laidlaw, the EO of the Canadian Assistive Devices Association. Welcome, Mr. Laidlaw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the Clerk of the House, I'd like to introduce several Clerks and secretaries from various state Legislatures seated in the Speaker's gallery. They are Patsy Spaw from Texas; Denise Weeks, North Carolina; Diane Bell, Florida; Ann Cornwell, Arkansas; Steve Marshall; Vermont, Pat Harris, Dowe Littleton and Joyce Wright from Alabama; and Bill Schaeffer from Virginia. Enjoy question period today.

FIRE IN LEGISLATIVE BUILDING

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you to some people. As many of you are aware, a week ago a fire broke out on the north wing. I think it's important, on behalf of all members of the Legislature, that we acknowledge those individuals who called in the fire; the firefighters, particularly, for their hard work and efforts of extinguishing the fire; and as well all the legislative security, maintenance and library staff who work so hard. We thank

everyone, and we're very fortunate this was not a more serious situation. Thank you to all those individuals.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On Tuesday, September 29, 2009, the House leader of the official opposition, Mr. Runciman, raised a point of order concerning the conduct of oral question period, and specifically, my interpretation of standing orders 23(h) and 23(i) and 37(a). Both the third party and the government House leaders, Mr. Kormos and Ms. Smith respectively, also contributed to this point.

At the outset, let me repeat what I have already said to the House: My ruling with respect to the previous day's supplementary question by the member for Nepean-Carleton, Ms. Macleod, which prompted this point of order, stands. I considered it to be out of order at the time and, having reviewed our precedents and the relevant authorities, I reaffirm that view.

I also accept the opposition House leader's assurance that he accepts this ruling and that his point of order is not a challenge to the Chair but rather a request for clarification. In fact, I'm grateful for the opportunity this has given me to clarify our rules and practices and my approach to the use of language in question period.

With respect to the question for the member from Nepean-Carleton which I ruled out of order, I've dealt with this theme in previous question periods. The member alleged that the granting of contracts by the present government to a specific firm was "a quid pro quo" for donations by that firm to the Ontario Liberal Party. I am hard-pressed to find a more blatant example of a breach of standing orders 23(h) and (i) in Hansard. That question makes an overt and unseemly allegation and directly ascribes motive to the alleged behaviour.

At this point, let me address what is important in part of the two opposition House leaders' arguments, being that standing orders 23(h) and (i) refer to another member in the singular. Indeed, to quote the member for Leeds-Grenville, "the wording is quite specific." It is, but the specific wording of the standing order is not the full extent of what informs the Speaker's decisions. The standing orders are the first-line guide to the conduct of proceedings in the House.

However, the standing orders do not exist in a vacuum. They are also informed by practice and precedent. In the current case, there is no dearth of authority for the proposition that an allegation made against the government, or the cabinet or a party—pick the formulation of your choice—often equates, in all meaningful respects, to an allegation against a member of the assembly. Various parliamentary authorities speak to this proposition. In the House of Commons' Procedure and Practice on page 526, it is noted, "Expressions which are considered unparliamentary when applied to an individual member have not always been considered so when applied 'in a generic sense' or to a party."

1040

This, of course, is the same as saying, as I am, that depending on the context and the specific situation, sometimes such expressions have been considered unparliamentary.

This matter is discussed in the Australia House of Representatives Practice commencing at page 500 of the fifth edition. A Speaker's ruling in that House set out their practice as follows:

"I think that if an accusation is made against members of the House which, if made against any one of them, would be unparliamentary and offensive, it is in the interests of the comity of this House that it should not be made against all as it could not be made against one."

Finally, David McGee in Parliamentary Practice of New Zealand notes that "allegations of corruption on the part of the government or a party and offensive terms applied to a party are just as disorderly as allegations against or an offensive term applied to an individual member."

Quite a quick canvass of our own Hansard has revealed numerous examples in support of this. Let me share with you just one to make my point. On October 16, 1996, the Speaker repeatedly called the leader of the third party to order for alleging that the government was "prepared to climb into bed with," "to dance with" and to "have a cozy relationship with organized crime." The member was required to withdraw the language before being allowed to proceed. Other broadly similar examples are not difficult to find.

It is certainly possible to identify from the record numerous instances when a specific allegation or imputation of motive—whether toward a single member, or certain members collectively—passed without comment from the Speaker or another member; in other seemingly identical or largely similar instances, the Speaker or another member objected to the comment.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It would be perhaps helpful that all members listen to this ruling, because it speaks to members on both sides of the House, and I think we should be listening.

It is certainly possible to identify from the record numerous instances when a specific allegation or imputation of motive—whether toward a single member or certain members collectively—passed without comment from the Speaker or another member; in other seemingly identical or largely similar instances, the Speaker or another member objected to the comment. This is less inconsistency on the part of the presiding officer than evidence of the "cut and thrust" of question period to which Mr. Kormos referred. Oral question period, as we know, is often emotional, inelegant and raucous.

In that cut and thrust, in the heat and speed of question period, it is sometimes a genuine challenge for the Speaker to find the correct balance between a legitimately aggressive opposition—or an equally aggressive government front bench—on the one hand, and the need to maintain a minimally orderly forum on the other hand.

And depending upon the context, the manner of delivery and general tenor of the House, what may be out of order one day will pass without comment or reaction on another.

The opposition House leaders raised this point of order in the context of standing orders 23(h) and (i), but it is equally important to keep in mind standing order 23(k), which provides that a member shall be called to order if he or she uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

Sometimes questions, comments, speeches and interjections contain veiled or not-so-veiled innuendo, and just as often are framed in such a way as to invite the listener to infer that which cannot be stated expressly. Aside from being examples of members attempting to accomplish indirectly what they are not permitted to do directly, they are also apt to produce disorder.

I think it is fair to say that the basis for the body of precedents we have that interpret “member,” singular, in the plural, lies in the broader power and responsibility of the Speaker to maintain order and decorum. In that broader context, then, simply put, an allegation or assignment of motive against multiple members, or against any collective that embraces members of the House, is not protected by the singular wording of the standing orders.

As Speaker, my goal is always to foster and encourage conditions that permit the opposition to perform its fundamental role of holding the government of the day to account. It is an adversarial system, without a doubt, but it is my view—which I have conveyed on previous occasions—that the maturity of temperate debate produces the best and most respectful environment for this to happen effectively. After all, Ontarians are also watching a government-in-waiting in action.

Let me now turn to the issue of standing order 37, which was also raised in that same point of order. I have recently addressed this issue too. On June 4, the last day of the spring sitting, I stated: “Speakers have traditionally allowed a fair amount of leeway in allowing questions to be put. In this, I am no different than my predecessors. I have taken the view that members should be given the greatest freedom possible in the putting of questions. Like a hockey referee at playoff time, I am always mindful not to be overly intrusive, and as much as possible, to let the game play on.

“The member made reference to standing order 37(a), which refers to the necessity of questions being of urgent public importance. This particular reference has caused some difficulty for almost all occupants of this chair. Like them, I am reluctant to sit in judgment as to what is or is not a question of urgent public importance....

“It is a subjective question, and as demonstrated yesterday by the response to this point of order by the government House leader, there are differing opinions on what is considered to be either urgent or of public importance. One member’s pothole is another member’s crater.”

That statement continues to reflect my approach to the chair, especially during question period. It was not an in-

vocation of standing order 37(a) that prompted me to move on from Ms. MacLeod’s supplementary question on September 28, but rather my impatience with her remarks in the context of standing order 23(h), (i) and (k).

I accept that this all leaves much to the judgment of the Speaker, judgment that, during question period especially, is often applied in a heated, loud, emotional and adversarial environment. Certainly, I won’t always get it right. Indeed, I apologized to the then-leader of the official opposition on June 9, 2008, for having reacted to something that the record revealed he had not actually said.

When the House leader of the official opposition sought clarifications on the ruling given September 28, he indicated that the consequence of that particular interpretation of standing order 23 is that it would hamstring his party’s ability to be an effective opposition. I acknowledge that the subject matter of the question posed by the member from Nepean–Carleton was not trivial and agree that it is a job of the opposition to hold the government to account and that they should do so vigorously and insistently. But I cannot agree that it is necessary to disregard the principles of decorum in order to do so.

As I said earlier, my preference is to let the game play on and permit all reasonable leeway. Only when I feel the line has been crossed, as I did in that instance, would I want to interfere with the free flow of question period or debate in general.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question for the Premier, stemming from his summer of scandal: Premier, in last week’s report on your billion-dollar boondoggle at eHealth, the auditor revealed that “one of the firms bidding was aware of additional pertinent information that had not been disclosed to the other vendors.” In other words, the firm Anzen got the inside scoop and won the contract. Premier, who gave Anzen the information and encouraged them to submit a second bid on that contract?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague. My colleague is more than intimating—he is in fact publishing—allegations that there may very well have been, as he calls it, bid-rigging and price-fixing.

I think it’s important to accept the auditor’s report in its entirety and not just parts of it. Furthermore, in his scrum he was specifically asked about the issue of fraud or criminal activity, as my honourable colleague is alleging, and he specifically responded to that question and said, “We saw no evidence of fraud or criminal activity here.”

There was a finding. We accept every one of those findings. We will adopt every single one of those recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Premier, quite frankly, what Ontario families would appreciate is a name. Tell us who gave Anzen that additional information.

Sometimes, as Premier, sir, you have to ask the hard and difficult questions to get to the bottom of these situations. You know that Anzen's original bid was 500% higher than that of other qualified bids, but Anzen was selected and then asked to submit a second, lower bid. That certainly smacks of collusion and bid-rigging.

The public has a right to know who gave Anzen that favourable treatment. Who is the Premier trying to protect?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate my honourable colleague's perspective on this, but I think for impartiality and objectivity, we should continue to look to the Auditor General.

Again, he was asked if there was any evidence of fraud, and he specifically said, "We saw no evidence of fraud or criminal activity." He went on in the scrum, and when he was asked, "If it wasn't fraud or criminal, then how would you describe it?" He said: "I would basically say, when you get a lack of oversight, you get broken rules. It goes together like a horse and carriage. That's the best way to put it. The controls just weren't there."

The auditor is right: The controls just weren't there. That's why we're adopting every single one of the recommendations put forward by the auditor, and that's why, prior to receiving the report, we have now specifically prohibited uncompetitive contracts when it comes to consultants in Ontario.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, quite frankly, Ontario families that funded your boondoggle don't want crocodile tears; they want a name of who was behind it in handing out these sweetheart deals.

No wonder you were dubbed this weekend as "Canada's Worst Government." Your incompetence has exposed taxpayers to civil claims by bidders who saw that favouritism, and civil claims may only be the beginning. The Premier knows that bid-rigging is a breach of public trust and is punishable under the Competition Act and the Criminal Code of Canada. The auditor can only go so far as his mandate allows to point out this misconduct of the McGuinty Liberal government.

Ontario deserves answers. Why is the Premier afraid to call an inquiry to pick up where the auditor left off?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can understand that it's in my honourable colleague's political interest to pursue this, but we're charged with upholding the greater public interest. That's why we asked the auditor to accelerate his look at eHealth, that's why we have willingly embraced every single one of the recommendations put forward by the auditor, and that's why we've even gone beyond that and put in place a number of new rules. We now require competition for contracts with our consultants. Consultants can no longer charge for hospitality and

food. They must have their expenses approved by the Integrity Commissioner.

We are also continuing to reduce the use of consultants. Under our government's watch, they've dropped overall by 34%, but within eHealth and the Smart Systems for Health agency, we've reduced the use of consultants in comparison to previous governments by some 40%. We think it's an improvement. Obviously, there's still more work to be done.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Come on. These untendered contracts go up some 4,000% at eHealth under the McGuinty government. I know that this is a Premier who does not like to ask difficult and uncomfortable questions of his minister. It's clearly a Premier who would rather look the other way, but taxpayers want answers, Premier.

We know this goes all the way to the cabinet table. In 2008, the auditor reveals, the McGuinty Liberals gave themselves a three-month waiver from Management Board rules restricting untendered contracts. Premier, who gave the Management Board the orders to waive the regular rules?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague, with this continuing line of questioning, is saying that he lacks confidence in the auditor's report, that the auditor was less than thorough, and what he did produce he's prepared to accept in part but not in whole.

I put it to the people of Ontario: You can rely on the partisan perspective of the official opposition or you can rely on the findings and specific recommendations on the auditor. I'll put the auditor's opinion, perspective, findings and recommendations up against the official opposition's any day, and, I would submit, so would the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Lost confidence? I tell you, Premier, it's the people of Ontario who have lost confidence in a Premier who would rather look the other way in this billion-dollar boondoggle.

On June 17, the Premier announced new rules around untendered contracts. In your press release, you said that ministers at Management Board would be responsible for administering the new rules. But, Premier, it was Management Board in the first place that broke the rules. This is worse than the fox guarding the henhouse.

I'll ask you more directly, Premier: Was it your Deputy Premier, Minister Smitherman, who encouraged Management Board to break the rules and go on this untendered-contract spending spree that benefited Liberal friends?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To be clear, what treasury board did on that particular occasion is the kind of thing that has been done by previous treasury boards in previous governments. We've now changed that rule so that it can't happen again. All governments may have done it, but this government has put a stop to it. We're now re-

quiring that if a consultant wants to enter into a contract with the province of Ontario, with the government of Ontario, it must be part of a competitive bidding process. We think that's fair, we think that's reasonable and we think it's in keeping with both the spirit and the specific recommendations of the auditor's report.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Quite frankly, five straight questions and five times the Premier refused to give a name. He refused to say who was behind this billion-dollar boondoggle. This is clearly a Premier who would rather sweep this under the carpet than get answers for taxpayers who are working hard and saw \$1 billion get flushed down the drain.

It has become very clear that after six years in office, this is a government that won't give up its dirty secrets willingly. The \$30-million IBM sweetheart deal had to be discovered through freedom-of-information requests. Who knows what other contracts were slipped through that four-month Management Board holiday?

Premier, we need, on behalf of working families in our province, a full public inquiry so that we can understand what role your Deputy Premier and your government played in handing out these sweetheart deals to Liberal friends.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I thought we had a very thorough review of the matter at hand by the auditor. I accept that, I respect that and I endorse that, and we adopt it in its entirety.

I believe that my honourable colleague is more interested in engaging in political games than he is in accepting the auditor's report in its entirety. On this side of the House, we have decided that our responsibility lies in bringing the auditor in, in giving him complete leeway to conduct his investigation and in accepting fully and wholeheartedly his recommendations. We adopt each and every one of those. We have faith in the auditor. I only wish that my honourable colleague would do the same thing.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. When it comes to health care, there are two different worlds in McGuinty's Ontario. In one world, our health dollars pay \$2,700-a-day salaries for recording voice mail messages; in the other, local hospitals close, services are cut, and waits for long-term care keep growing and growing.

On Friday, I sent a letter to the Premier urging him to ask the Auditor General to conduct spot audits on the use of consultants at the Ministry of Health, at the LHINs and at hospitals. My question is a simple one: Will the Premier do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from the leader of the NDP. I think it's worth reminding ourselves that the reason the auditor originally decided to take a look at eHealth was of his own accord. It was not

the subject of a request coming from any party that forms part of this Parliament. He also has the authority to conduct these spot audits whenever he thinks it's appropriate to do so, and I would encourage him to do whatever he thinks is appropriate in the circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians deserve to know where their precious health care dollars are going and how they are being spent, especially when the McGuinty government is cutting health care services in this province.

In the gallery today is a woman named Christine Wines from Grimsby. The surgery she needs is an OHIP-listed service, but her local hospital says they cannot afford to provide it for her. Can the Premier explain to Christine why this government is keeping well-connected insiders in the lap of luxury when it can't find the funding to provide the surgery that she so desperately needs?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Although there's a lot of creativity in here—and I appreciate that, as the son of a professor of poetry—the facts are not unimportant. The fact is, we've increased funding, since 2003, for health care by 42%. That is a dramatic increase in funding for our hospital care. As a result of that, we're now funding 1.69 million new procedures, which are leading to reduced wait times. Nine hundred and seven thousand more Ontarians now have access to family care. We have 14 new MRI machines and double the number of MRI hours of operation. We have almost 1,800 more doctors practising in the province of Ontario. We have 150 family health teams now caring for 1.9 million Ontarians, with more of those family health teams on the way. We are certainly investing more in health care.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier talks of creativity, and all we see out of his mouth is callousness. The Premier tells Ontarians like Christine to accept health care cuts in these very tough times, but he refuses to take steps to end the health care consultant gravy train.

The Premier has another chance to show Christine he cares about how precious health care dollars get spent in this province. I've also called on him to ask the Auditor General whether it's appropriate for senior health care bureaucrats to get their paycheques from hospitals in what appears to be an effort to skirt the pay guidelines. Will he agree to do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to speak to this issue as well. That is a practice, in my understanding, that's been around for a long time. It was there under the NDP, the Conservatives and now, under our government. If it doesn't offend the letter, it certainly offends the spirit of the salary disclosure legislation. That's why we have undertaken—I believe my honourable colleague knows this—to ensure that if you look up the salary of a senior bureaucrat working inside the Ministry of Health, that will be reflected under the Ministry of Health column and

not buried away in some other hospital. Like my colleague, I disagree with that practice and that's why we're going to change it.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier as well. After six years under the McGuinty government, Ontario has lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs and seen a massive increase in the welfare caseloads. Can the Premier explain why, when people need help more than ever before, he's shutting down job training programs like the self-employment benefit?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Actually, sadly, there is a growing demand on our retraining programs and the support we provide to people generally who have lost their jobs because of this terrible economic dislocation caused by this global recession.

If I can speak about our Second Career program momentarily, we had anticipated that it would take about three years to have that program fully subscribed. We thought we might take three years to have 20,000 Ontarians who lost their jobs enrolled in that. We've now reached that limit in about 16 months. What I've now charged Minister Milloy with is, I've challenged him to come up with a way to ensure that we can continue and maintain that program under different guidelines that are affordable to Ontario taxpayers but, at the same time, meet the needs of families who are losing those jobs.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In the gallery today is Paul Mundra from the Durham region. Mr. Mundra was an applicant to the SEB program and was scheduled to start in November. He went through an extensive screening process and attended numerous interviews and presentations. Now, the program has been abruptly cancelled.

Can the Premier explain to Mr. Mundra how the government can find millions for consultants and other insiders but is unable to help him get back to work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: As the Premier indicated, we've had tremendous success in terms of Employment Ontario services that have been offered to Ontarians over the last year. We have about 21,000 people who have come forward for Second Career. At the same time, we continue to offer a variety of core services to individuals.

As the Premier indicated, we want to make sure that the services that are offered are the most effective possible, that they are reaching those individuals who are most in need, so we're undertaking a review of a variety of services. The core services remain. The self-employment benefit: We have about 3,000 people who are part of that program. They will continue to receive support, but we have announced for the time being that we will not be taking in any more applications as we go through and review this program.

I would remind the honourable member that when the Auditor General took a look at this—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: With 350,000 jobs lost, the need is enormous in this province for help for these workers, and it's not just the SEB program that's being cut. The Second Career program is leaving new applicants in limbo for months, job action centres are being shuttered across the province, and important programs like targeted wage subsidy and the Ontario skills development program are being gutted.

In the midst of an unprecedented jobs crisis, as unemployed Ontarians struggle to get back on their feet, why is the McGuinty government cutting them off at the knees?

Hon. John Milloy: I find it incredible that the leader of the third party, a party that has done nothing but mock and make fun of the Second Career program, is now standing up with crocodile tears. We have welcomed 21,000 Ontarians into the program. We are committed to ensuring that the Second Career program continues. We continue to process and approve applications for that program, albeit on a limited basis while we undertake a review. We hope to have an announcement shortly, aimed at the January intake. We have been offering services to a range of unemployed Ontarians, and we have hundreds, if not thousands, of stories of people who are redoing their lives right now by participating in these programs.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Premier, who blocked the Auditor General from investigating the McGuinty government's waste of \$1 billion in the eHealth scandal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I believe my honourable colleague is talking about a reference in the auditor's report, which was a troubling one, where he said that he had been blocked by some senior bureaucrats with respect to the investigation. I have made it clear to the secretary of cabinet and to all our ministers and deputy ministers how important it is for us to co-operate fully with the auditor. In fact, the secretary of cabinet has just recently sent a letter to Mr. McCarter, our Auditor General, effectively affirming that. I want to reassure the auditor that we want to maintain our perfect record, apart from this particular issue, of co-operating fully with the auditor when it comes to these kinds of investigations.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: With respect, that still doesn't answer the question, because since he was first asked, the Premier has had a week and a half to find out who was obstructing the Auditor General in his probe, but he's still hanging on to his dirty secret. Premier McGuinty deflected and stonewalled the Auditor General for six months before he got access to the records, but even then, the Auditor General has said that some of the records are missing. That's of great concern to us, given the magnitude of this scandal.

If the Premier shares our concern about who blocked the Auditor General and what was missing in those records, then he will call a public inquiry to let the people of Ontario know what has happened. Will the Premier do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's the first I hear that the auditor did not get all the material that he thought was appropriate to his work. If there is additional material that he needs, obviously we will do everything to ensure that he receives that.

I do want to again share with members of the House a letter from the secretary of cabinet, Shelly Jamieson, sent on the 16th of this month to Mr. McCarter, our Auditor General. She says, "I note that"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As I have made comments in the past, it's always helpful that members are sitting in their seats if there are going to be interjections; as well, though, that members show some restraint in some of the comments and not to have this constant comment being shot across the floor.

Premier?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to make reference to a letter sent by the secretary of cabinet, Shelly Jamieson, on the 16th of this month saying the following: "I note that in your report you raise a concern that your access to ministry records was on occasion insufficiently expeditious...."

"I assure you of my commitment and that of my deputy ministers to full and timely co-operation with your office."

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Children's aid societies held a press conference last week to sound the alarm about the McGuinty government's \$23-million cut to child welfare and protection services. After blowing \$1 billion on an eHealth boondoggle, why is this government cutting funding to services to some of Ontario's most vulnerable children?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very, very pleased to have an opportunity to speak about this most critically important issue.

Kids in the protection of children's aid societies are some of the most vulnerable kids in our province, and I am absolutely committed to ensuring that every opportunity is given to those kids. Very early in the privileged role that I now have, I had the opportunity to speak to the leadership of the children's aid societies, to reach out to those organizations and let them know that we are ready, willing and able to work with them through this period of time when they must find a pathway to sustainability in their budget. I look forward to continuing to work with them.

These are important steps that we are undertaking. There is much more work to do and we are absolutely committed to doing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They don't need a reach-out; they need a lifeline—a financial lifeline. They're cutting services to kids. That's what's happening in this province right now.

The government is ignoring the very agencies entrusted with looking after Ontario's most vulnerable children, and it's ignoring First Nations leaders who are seeing the impact of these cuts first-hand. They're telling me everywhere I go in this province that it is a frightening situation. Why won't the McGuinty government recognize the error of its ways and commit to restoring the funding before more young lives are at risk?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Let's be clear on what the facts are in this case. Over the last decade, CASs have seen an increase in their budget in the amount of \$1 billion. That type of increase year over year is simply not sustainable. But let me also be clear that our standards to protect kids are tough in Ontario, and they must and will be met. That is why we are working through regional offices across the province to find long-term plans and develop partnerships and, at the same time, are putting in place a commission to ensure that we find a pathway to sustainability. There are 30 million more dollars in this year's budget than in the last. That is being distributed across CASs.

I am absolutely committed to working with the CAS leadership. I will be sitting down with them later this week. We will find a pathway through this circumstance, because kids are the most important resource in this province. I'm—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Revenue.

On TVOntario's program *The Agenda* last week, the NDP said that the HST was going to be a job killer. Understandably, many people are hesitant of a blanket statement made by the NDP on economic matters—albeit a different perspective. This hesitation was reconfirmed when on *The Agenda* the NDP misquoted a report from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce saying that Ontario would lose 10,000 to 40,000 jobs in the short term and more in the long term as a result of the HST. Len Crispino, the president and chief executive officer of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, who was also on *The Agenda*, refuted the NDP's misquote, saying, "Look carefully on page 36 of our report, which clearly says there is no decrease in the current number of jobs."

To the minister: To quote a question from the NDP, "I want to know: What kind of jobs are being created" by the HST?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question.

Twenty-first-century jobs: That's what's being created. We're going to take our tax system, which was created in 1961, in a different decade, and we're going to reform that so that in the 21st century, right here in Ontario, we can compete and win for the jobs, the jobs that our people need in this province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want the good people of Ontario to know that on this side of the House we are committed to ensuring that the jobs of the future, the jobs that we need today in the 21st century, the jobs that we need for our children, are going to be there, and we'll do that by reforming our tax system. Despite the allegations made by other parties, I can assure you that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which has called on this tax reform for over a decade, is supporting us and our move to ensure that there are jobs in the 21st century for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I don't want the Tories to be unloved, so on The Agenda the Conservatives stated they are not looking at the HST with an eye to business or the manufacturing community. After years of cutting social services and downloading to the municipalities, the Conservative Party is now trying to convince Ontarians that their main concern is the everyday Ontarian. They claim that the HST will negatively affect the low-income Ontarians.

This is in stark contrast to what the poverty groups in the province are saying. Groups such as the Ontario Association of Food Banks and Daily Bread Food Bank support the HST. The Daily Bread Food Bank stated, "We expect that that harmonization will actually mean people will have more money in their pocket. We think the new enhanced sales and property tax credit for low-income Ontarians will be additional sources of income that will help offset ... additional taxes...."

Who do we trust—the Tories or the people on the ground—

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I tell you, on this side of the House, we just have one—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The Minister of Transportation.

Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would say to the good people of Ontario, the people who have just one position on this file—members opposite who go on and on about small business are telling small businesses that we should not cut the small business tax, that we should not eliminate the small business deduction. They are telling us that—in our proposal, of course, they pay less. I thought that they were for small business.

I say to the members of the NDP, when we're on the same side as the Daily Bread Food Bank, when we're on the same side and you're on the opposite side, you just might want to check where your position is on this issue.

The most important thing that we need to do is ensure that we modernize our tax system, that we drag it out of the 20th century, despite the fact that we have the twins of the status quo over there—status and quo—and understand that in this 21st century we will compete and win for new jobs.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Now that we're back into real question period, I'd like to ask the Premier of Ontario a real question.

The auditor didn't have a mandate or the resources to subpoena witnesses—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The auditor didn't have the mandate or the resources to subpoena witnesses or go beyond the paper that was left for him. Even so, the auditor found favouritism in how the McGuinty Liberals handed out contracts. My question is very simple: In addition to John Ronson, Karli Farrow and Geoff Smith, who else in your billion-dollar eHealth scandal is connected to the McGuinty Liberals?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would caution the member in her line of questioning of implying motive for decisions that are made, and just ask that you be a little cautious.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There is simply no foundation in fact for what my honourable colleague is suggesting. Again, I would draw to her attention that part of the auditor's report where he discussed this very issue. He said, "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work."

Again, I think if you're going to accept the report, you should accept it in its entirety, as we have in government.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier quotes his set of facts. Let's quote some other ones.

John Ronson ran Liberal election campaigns and founded Courtyard Group. They received millions in untendered contracts from the McGuinty Liberals. Karli Farrow is Minister Smitherman's former chief of staff. She was also the Premier's own health adviser. She took a position with Courtyard before the end of the cooling-off period set out in section 19(2) of Public Service of Ontario Act. Geoff Smith is the Premier's own bagman and was appointed to the eHealth board—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

Geoff Smith is also a point person of interest and was appointed to the eHealth board and handed out taxpayer dollars to Liberal friends in all these untendered deals.

So the question remains: Why is the Premier refusing an inquiry that would tell us who else got rich on the scandalous use of taxpayer dollars and how they are affiliated to the McGuinty Liberal government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I would encourage my honourable colleague to read the report and to read it in its entirety and then to accept it in its entirety, as we have in government. There is simply no better way to put it than the auditor himself did, and I'll read the same extract again. He said, "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but"—again, this is important—"we saw no evidence of this during our work."

I think that's pretty conclusive. We accept that and I would encourage the opposition to do the same.

SMOKING CESSATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour le premier ministre. In the last year your government has cut almost a third of the funding to the smoke-free Ontario strategy, from \$60 million to \$42.8 million this year. Meanwhile, \$1 billion was spent on eHealth with very little to show for it. My question is simple: Can the Premier explain why he cut \$17 million from this life-saving strategy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health Promotion.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Our government remains committed to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and committed to protecting the health of Ontarians from the harmful effect of smoking and second-hand smoke.

The public health units and their tobacco enforcement officers also play a key role in achieving and maintaining high compliance levels with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

We have invested over \$37 million in cessation programs involved with smoke-free Ontario. In fact, we have also passed legislation prohibiting smoking in motor vehicles with children under the age of 16.

We continue to prioritize the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and we continue to work hard to improve the health of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The facts remain: Virtually every program within the smoke-free Ontario strategy has seen cuts—from prevention to cessation to public education. The only significant increase was in administration. The way we look at it is that the government is cutting \$17 million in prevention that keeps people from developing an addiction to tobacco while we continue to pay \$1.7 billion in treating people who develop an addiction to tobacco. The numbers don't seem to add up too well here.

Can the minister explain how this makes any financial sense?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Our government, again, is committed to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and we are committed to the health of Ontarians. We have seen a significant drop in smoking rates in this province and we are in the process of setting new targets for reduction in tobacco use in the province of Ontario. We are also developing a smoking cessation strategy to help specific populations of smokers, more particularly our young people and our ethnic communities and aboriginal communities. Smoke-free Ontario remains a key priority for this government.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, I understand that this week, October 18 to 24, is Local Government Week. This is the second year of the program, and many schools across Ontario will be participating in educational activities to learn more about the role of local government in Ontario. Just as we did last year, I understand the province is partnering with the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario and AMO to organize this year's event. I also understand the ministry is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

Minister, could you please talk more about Local Government Week and what your ministry is doing to educate the public about this very important level of government, that being municipal government?

Hon. Jim Watson: As the member mentioned, it is the start of Local Government Week in the province of Ontario, a time for us to celebrate the achievements of municipal government. In celebration of Local Government Week, as I said earlier, I had the opportunity of inviting former Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing with us. I'd like to welcome them to the Legislature, for those members who did not see the introduction.

Despite some ideological differences, we have one thing in common: Each of us has tried to improve the lives of our fellow Ontarians by providing municipal governments with the tools they need. The work that municipal representatives do has a direct impact on our daily lives, from garbage collection to snow removal, but today they are also the first point of contact in delivering social services, social housing and countless other benefits. The work is never easy; the challenges they face are ever-present. This week is a time for us to honour that work and to say thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Minister, for updating the House and highlighting this important week and the important work that municipalities do. As you know, Ontario municipalities still need our help. They are doing their best to manage in tough times and are asking us to do what we can to ease the burden that they carry. Infrastructure investments improve the quality of

life and, certainly, promote economic growth across Ontario by creating jobs for Ontarians and providing needed repairs to public infrastructure. There is an ever-constant need for not only new affordable housing but repairs to our existing stock of affordable housing.

I also know that one of the ways we can gain greater value for municipal governments is to provide them with a greater ability to respond to the needs of their communities. Minister, how is your ministry helping communities do just that?

Hon. Jim Watson: A year ago this month, we signed a very historic document with AMO and the city of Toronto called the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. It was an exercise that was based on consensus and goodwill, and the uploads that will take place over the course of this agreement will see \$1.5 billion per year benefit our 444 municipalities. With these uploads, Ontario municipalities will have increased on-going support from \$1.1 billion when we had the honour of taking office in 2003, to \$3.8 billion by 2018—a 250% increase.

In our proposed budget, we also committed \$32.5 billion over the next two years for infrastructure—that will help support 300,000 jobs—and \$1.2 billion with the federal government to build 4,500 new houses and repair 50,000 units. We're there in partnership with our municipal sector.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, the Ombudsman has said that not funding the life-prolonging cancer drug Avastin is bordering on cruelty. In his report, he recommended that your government fund Avastin past the 16-cycle cap for colorectal cancer patients who are showing positive results. Your predecessor did not take the Ombudsman's advice, nor did your ministry staff. The decision is up to you. Will you do the right thing today and commit to funding Avastin past the 16-cycle cap?

1130

Hon. Deborah Matthews: First and foremost, of course, my deepest sympathies go to anyone who is dealing with cancer of any type and to their families. Colorectal cancer is a very difficult disease to deal with, but I want to talk about your request to expand Avastin beyond the 16 cycles that are currently funded. We have a system to determine what drugs are covered, and it is not political. I don't think politicians are best equipped to make decisions about which people get what drugs and when. That's why we established the Committee to Evaluate Drugs. It is charged with recommending which drugs should be funded and for how long. It relies on clinical experts to give them the very, very best advice on what to do. I think it should stay with the experts, not with the politicians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Minister, your job is to make decisions in this House. You know full well your ministry's stand on this issue, so this decision is yours.

The Auditor General's report is scathing on eHealth and it exposed \$1 billion that went to waste. Extending the funding for Avastin will cost approximately \$9 million a year, a fraction of that \$1 billion your government has wasted. The Ombudsman says that the decision to cap Avastin was dictated by cost concerns and was in fact contrary to the accepted standard of medical care in this province. Isn't it sad that there is nothing to show for the \$1 billion, and now you say you cannot fund Avastin past the cap?

I'm asking you again: Will you today commit to funding Avastin past the 16-cycle cap?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: With respect, my job is not to make clinical decisions. My job is to make sure that the right processes are in place and that funding is there. That's why we've invested \$1.5 billion in new drug funding since we took office in 2003. Since 2006, we've added 26 cancer drugs to the formulary. We've increased funding for cancer drugs from \$72 million in 2003 to \$188 million. It was our government that started funding Avastin to improve treatment options for colon cancer. This year, more than 1,300 patients will be receiving it.

I think it's also important to note that there is an option under exceptional cases to extend beyond the 16 cycles.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. More than \$60 million of hard-earned taxpayers' money has been shovelled into the Navistar truck plant in Chatham. As a thank you to Ontarians for their generosity, Navistar has shifted production to Mexico and laid off all of its 1,200 Chatham workers. When will this government stand up to Navistar and demand it live up to its obligations to Ontario workers and Ontario taxpayers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's important to note that right now, we know that Navistar is busy having negotiations with its workforce, and that is one area that the Ontario government does not interfere with.

I will tell you that not just this current government but the one previous stepped forward to work with Navistar to ensure that they would have a footprint here in Ontario. We are looking forward to some positive outcome with negotiations between the CAW and Navistar. We are maintaining contact with the company and asking for that presence to be maintained in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It seems that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has already thrown in the towel. Last week she said, and I'm going to quote, that there is "no role" for the McGuinty government to play in resolving this Navistar issue. With 1,200 jobs and \$60 million of public money on the line, how can this government let Navistar off the hook so easily?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I will reiterate again: There is no role for the Ontario government between a company and its union in negotiations at the table. Any govern-

ment—in particular, an NDP one—would have learned a lesson in that regard.

Now, let me agree with the member opposite in this way. When we put money on the table for Navistar, it was particularly geared to items that would have a legacy effect in Ontario: first, R and D based at the University of Windsor that is significant for a scientific base, and that continues today and will in the future; second, for the training of workers at Navistar. That is funding geared to training for people that will maintain those skills in the future in this province. That is an important place for the Ontario government to be, to make that kind of investment with Navistar.

FOOD SAFETY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Food safety and quality are of paramount importance to both the agricultural sector and the broader general public. As a province, we pride ourselves on the quality and safety of the food that we produce here. Because it is essential to maintaining that good reputation, agricultural representatives have been asking for some time now that we implement animal health legislation, as seen in Alberta and Quebec.

Having myself been closely involved with farming for many years, I know that protecting farm animal health is important both in terms of food quality and safety, and the economic future of our agricultural industry.

Minister, could you please inform the House about the benefits of the animal health legislation that was brought before the House on October 5?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Certainly, the honourable member, who is a very strong advocate for the industry, has talked with representatives from the agriculture sector and knows very well that this is an important issue. Our industry partners have indeed been asking for this type of legislation to protect animal health, as we know that focusing on animal health in the livestock and poultry sectors will strengthen consumer confidence in our agriculture products. We know that when they have confidence in what is produced in Ontario, we have better marketability, not just in Ontario and Canada but internationally.

Should an outbreak of disease occur on an Ontario farm, both the public and our agriculture partners want to know that we will be able to act in order to ensure food safety and the protection of our industry. That's what this legislation—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: As the next generation comes onto our farm, I'm keenly aware of the positive impact that this will have on the safety and quality of our food, the future economic well-being of farmers, as well as on our ability to protect our food system from the potential outbreak of disease.

As discussions have unfolded with farmers in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, as well as with in-

dustry representatives, I can say that the ability to trace the origins of food products consumed by Ontarians is critical to consumer confidence. Should disease or food contaminants be found, traceability allows us to locate the source of the problem in a timely manner.

In a recent issue of the Ontario Farmer weekly, a concern was raised by a fellow member about the cost of establishing a food traceability system being borne by farmers. Minister, could you provide for this House more information on traceability and clarify the issue of the cost of establishing such a food traceability system?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Traceability is a very important issue in the agriculture sector. In fact, it was one of the key issues that we spoke about at the federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting. What the provinces of Canada have stressed with our federal minister is that, should there be a move to go to a mandatory traceability system, there should be federal funding to accompany that. That is a view held right across our country.

With respect to this legislation, it is enabling legislation that will be consistent with any requirements that may come from the federal government. We will also be consulting with our industry partners on this enabling framework. We believe that we have struck the right balance here and that should the federal government choose to fund a traceability system nationally for our food, we'll be—

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

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Last week, Haldimand County Hydro pulled the plug on a young hog farmer, Wayne Bartels, for an unpaid bill of \$11,000. Calls to your office for over a year now about the Bartels' predicament get nothing but sympathy letters and a briefing note that reeks of your failure on this file.

Minister, the lights are back on this morning on Bartside Farms thanks to federal dollars but no thanks to you. What exactly are you doing for young and beginning farmers frozen out of provincial help? I'm referring specifically to farmers like Wayne Bartels.

1140

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I would remind the honourable member that this government has been there for the livestock sector. We did provide a \$150-million ad hoc payment.

With respect to the challenges that there are in the livestock sector, particularly in hogs—and the individual that was identified by the honourable member is a hog producer—the province of Ontario made it very clear at our federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting that there needed to be a national response. That is why, on October 15, all of the provinces were relieved that the federal government finally came out with a program to assist and support those in the industry who are in difficulty. A very important part of that is a transition funding piece, so that those who are having difficulty making

money in the hog sector can transition to a sector that is—

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, I'm pleased that you are again so supportive of our federal Conservative government. But the farmers need more than a cheerleader from the Ontario government; they need someone to step up to the plate and do something. Other provinces have added to the federal program, but the Ontario hog farmers have received absolutely nothing from Ontario.

Minister, this is just the first of many farmers that will face this situation and be forced off their farms if you don't help. Is this how you plan to downsize the hog industry—by forcing new and beginning farmers out of business?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Actually, I think that it's important that the honourable member pay attention to what the Canadian Pork Council brought forward to the federal government, and it is in response to that ask that the federal government has made the investments that it has. One of those investments is \$75 million for a transition program.

Interjection.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It would appear that the honourable member already has the answer and isn't interested in the one I'm giving. But at the end of the day, all of the provinces in Canada urged the federal—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member just had the opportunity to ask the question, and I would really appreciate it if he would listen to the answer.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the—no, leave the clock running. The honourable member from Oxford, it's not appropriate to be jumping up like that. If you're dissatisfied, you know the standing orders. If you are dissatisfied with the answer, you have the opportunity to call for a late show.

Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Thank you, Speaker. All of the provinces across Canada urged the federal minister to come forward with a response to address the pressing needs, particularly in the agriculture sector. On August 15 of this year, the federal minister did pay very close attention to what all of the provinces in Ontario said that we needed to do, and that was to consider what the hog industry presented and provide a program that accommodated for those asks. The federal government has done that. I think that it's important that hog producers in Ontario pay very close attention and participate in—

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

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. With record unemployment levels, thousands of good jobs destroyed, and employment insurance claims

soaring across northern Ontario, can the Premier explain why the McGuinty Liberals have cut off the funding of local job action centres in northern Ontario communities like White River, Nipigon and Terrace Bay?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: Our ministry has been very happy to go into communities where there have been layoffs and work with those factories and with those employers as well as the unions to set up job action centres. Those job action centres help employees to access Employment Ontario offices. The contracts that are signed between Employment Ontario and those job action centres are for a period of time to allow workers to be adjusted. They're reviewed on a regular basis, and when they're no longer needed, they are wound up.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty Liberals want people across northern Ontario to believe these job action centres are no longer needed. I say that the McGuinty government is completely out of touch with what is happening. In some of these communities, the unemployment rate is greater than 50%. Things like suicide happen because workers have been laid off and have no opportunity. Not only that, but they've been told that the self-employment benefits have been halted as of October 9, and that targeted wage subsidies, the skills development program and the Second Career strategy are in limbo. People seriously consider suicide; other people have nowhere to go. Why are the McGuinty Liberals cutting the funding for these kinds of strategies at the very time when people need them most?

Hon. John Milloy: I know the member would never want to leave the impression in this Legislature that a job action centre is tantamount to Employment Ontario services. Employment Ontario exists throughout this province in every single community. It offers a range of services to 900,000 Ontarians. It offers training; it offers employment support; it offers resumé writing.

Yes, we are in the process of reviewing a number of the programs that are moving forward, but the self-employment benefit the member references has been suspended; we will not be taking any more applications.

He also speaks about Second Career. We are, right now, still accepting applications and processing them, and we hope to have an announcement shortly of a new program.

We are still providing employment supports to people throughout this province.

HEALTH PROMOTION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. We all know that the promotion of health and wellness of Ontarians is a good investment. That is why the Ministry of Health Promotion was created in 2005 to focus government efforts by providing effective programs to address chronic disease and obesity, but we know that there is no silver bullet for these prob-

lems. Instead, we must address the multiple preventable risk factors that affect the health of Ontarians, such as poor nutrition, a lack of physical activity and substance abuse.

In the past, Minister, your ministry has had several preventive programs funding local and provincial initiatives which addressed each of these health risk factors, but I'm sure you will agree that our focus should be more than just addressing these conditions and behaviours on an individual level. What is the government doing to support local organizations to better promote health within their own communities?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member from Ottawa Centre for his question. I know that member is a person who works diligently to advance the interests of community. I concur with his point that there are many preventable factors that affect our health. A person who eats well but drinks excessively is not maximizing their health. A person who is physically active but takes up smoking is not maximizing their health. Each of these risk factors should not be addressed in silence, as we recognize that they are interconnected.

To this end, I'm pleased to talk about the \$16 million that our government is investing annually through the new healthy communities fund. This new fund is helping local partners promote physical activity, healthy eating, intervention, tobacco control and mental health promotion. It will help organizations build and maintain important partnerships across risk factors and increase the work they are doing to improve the health of Ontarians.

PREMIER'S WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity on behalf of all members of the Legislature to wish the Premier and his lovely wife, Terry, a happy 29th anniversary today. Premier, all the best.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This past week, I spoke with many of my constituents who have come through my door seeking help and answers regarding the strike at DriveTest. Every group is affected. Our youth cannot obtain their drivers' licences at all. Numerous other individuals of all ages cannot renew or retry their licence. Livelihoods are being seriously compromised.

Out-of-province or out-of-country new residents cannot exchange or apply for their Ontario licence and, without that licence, cannot buy or insure a vehicle. Driving schools and instructors for cars up to tractor-trailers are losing business and must lay off their staff to

try and compensate. Without a driver's licence, individuals cannot get a job, keep a job or even upgrade to do a better job.

In this time of high unemployment and uncertainty, adding to the problem when we can help fix it is irresponsible. The striking employees of Serco-Des perform highly skilled and often dangerous jobs. They issue government ID and are responsible for ensuring proper documentation for new Canadians and do all the testing and retesting required for all classes of drivers.

This strike is not about money. Employees are seeking security—a minimum number of hours a week without the threat of supervisors doing the work of employees.

The jobs require consistency in order to maintain the high standard that the Ontario government requires. This cannot be achieved working in an environment of uncertainty from season to season.

In the interests of public safety, with people on our highways without a truly updated and tested licence, it is the government's duty to step in and not only end the neglect of public safety, but also assist our Ontario residents in continuing their livelihoods by achieving a fair and equitable settlement.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Bob Delaney: Even though Ontario's roads are North America's safest, in our daily lives we can see the things that people do, deliberately or inadvertently, to place their own safety and that of others at risk on our roads and highways.

The Minister of Transportation has introduced a bill to ban the use of hand-held devices while driving. This law comes into effect on October 26. It will begin with a three-month period in which Ontarians will learn through warnings about the new law. Police will issue tickets as of February 1, 2010.

Our constituents, all of us, overwhelmingly support making it illegal for drivers to talk text, type, dial or e-mail—or do all of them at the same time—using hand-held cellphones or other hand-held communications and entertainment devices while driving a vehicle.

Paramedics, police and firefighters may continue to use their devices while on duty, and drivers may use their cellphones, obviously, to call 911.

I've tried doing all of the things that the bill proposes to ban, and I'm surprised at how distracting and dangerous these activities truly are.

I commend my colleague from Durham for his own leadership role on this legislation. We all need to pay attention to the road and put away the gadgets while we're driving.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Perhaps that could be extended to the Legislature as well.

The member from Durham.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Speaker, for that comment.

The Speaker of this House needs to know that the cattle, hog and horticulture payments missed a large number of farmers, especially those who are new and expanding.

I also draw to the attention of the minister the case of Andrew Frew, a young farmer from my riding of Durham and a leader in local agriculture. The Frew farm marketed almost 7,000 finished hogs in 2007, yet under the rules of the program, this farm still did not qualify for funding.

I urge this House to review the cattle, hog and horticultural payments program to ensure it provides fair access to all hog producers.

The farms and agri-businesses of my riding are highly innovative and responsive to the needs of today's marketplace. Examples of innovation and excellence in Durham riding include Algoma Orchards' processing, storage and retail operation, about to celebrate its opening.

Ontario's farmers are making investments, introducing new ideas, adding value and achieving excellence. It's time for the McGuinty government to show equally high standards in establishing policies that do not overlook any qualified producer, not just in my riding but in Ontario.

Agriculture is the food basket of Ontario, and I commend the minister, who will probably attend Algoma Orchards' opening in my riding of Durham in the coming weeks.

SERVICES FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to welcome the parents, children, volunteers and professionals who are at Queen's Park to draw attention to issues of access to education for hard-of-hearing and deaf children across Ontario.

Project Kids HEAR is committed to ensuring that all Ontario school boards offer standardized supports to their hard-of-hearing and deaf students, whether they attend school in Toronto, Windsor or Thunder Bay. Supports such as amplifiers used by teachers, physical sound buffers and more captioned learning material must be available in every classroom where students need them.

I wholeheartedly agree with James Borer when he states, "The province should set clear and consistent standards so that children have equal opportunity to learn, whether they use sign language, hearing aids or cochlear implants."

All over the province, children with special needs are being placed in regular classrooms without adequate support. This is not just happening to hard-of-hearing and deaf students; it is happening to autistic children, students with learning disabilities, those suffering from ADD and many others.

I urge the government to quickly address the imbalance that exists in Ontario schools today and immediately implement provincial standards of support so that all of our children, no matter what their abilities or their

disabilities, have a firm and great chance to learn in this province.

SERVICES FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm pleased to rise in the House to express my support for Project Kids HEAR, with members and families here at Queen's Park today to raise awareness for the issues of children across Ontario who are deaf and hard of hearing. Their message is very simple: that all children across the province deserve equal opportunity to reach their potential and be fully participating members of society.

Children who are deaf and hard of hearing face different challenges in achieving that goal, but these challenges are not insurmountable. With the proper resources and access to educational and medical facilities, these children can perform at the highest level and to their full potential.

For the families of these children, it is imperative that we provide them with as many options as possible to ensure their children have the highest quality of life. Whether these families choose to use signing, cochlear implants or other devices, the goal of Project Kids HEAR is to make choices available to raise the quality of life for their children.

This government has done some great work for those who are deaf and hard of hearing, and we realize there is much more to do. I'm very pleased that I've had the opportunity to advocate for this group here at Queen's Park and to let these families know that we believe our children have the right to hear and to be heard.

Project Kids HEAR has 150 members and families at Queen's Park today meeting with various ministries and MPPs. I encourage my colleagues here, if you don't have a meeting today, to please take the time to attend the reception at 5 p.m. today in the legislative dining room. Mostly, I encourage all of us to stop and listen to the stories that these families have to tell and realize the impact we can make for their children.

CREDIT UNIONS AND CAISSES POPULAIRES

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to recognize and congratulate credit unions, which celebrated International Credit Union Day on October 15.

Ontario's 219 credit unions and caisses populaires serve 1.7 million residents through 687 locations, directly contributing to the economic and social development of communities across the province. They employ more than 7,000 individuals, with over 80% of these jobs created outside the GTA. They provide access to financial services in 43 communities where they are the only financial institution, and ensure competition by providing the only local alternative to a single bank in 37 other Ontario communities.

One dollar in every \$4 on deposit at Ontario credit unions and caisses populaires is invested in financing small and medium-sized businesses and agriculture in the province. And many credit unions dedicate far in excess of 1% of annual pre-tax profits to community initiatives.

In Parry Sound–Muskoka, Kawartha Credit Union is an example of a credit union with a strong community focus. The direct contribution of Kawartha Credit Union to the local economy exceeded \$9.6 million in 2006, with the credit union providing 148 direct and 72 indirect jobs. Through their community involvement program, Kawartha Credit Union has also financially supported dozens of local agencies and initiatives.

Credit unions and caisses populaires are important partners in our communities. I congratulate them all for the important service they provide.

1310

HELLENIC COMMUNITY OF OTTAWA

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to rise today and share with the House an important anniversary being marked in Ottawa this year. The Hellenic Community of Ottawa is celebrating 80 years of strengthening and servicing the Greek community in our nation's capital since their inception in February 1929.

In the early years, the association was instrumental in establishing Greek Orthodox religious services for the Greek community in Ottawa and facilitated networking with other Greek communities throughout North America.

By the early 1940s, the Hellenic Community had opened a Greek language school, established a church to worship, become incorporated in the province of Ontario and gave assistance to occupied Greece under the Canada War Relief program.

By the late 1960s, the Greek population in Ottawa swelled, and the Hellenic Community of Ottawa moved their facilities to their present-day location on Prince of Wales Drive, not far from my home.

Throughout all their eight decades, the Hellenic Community of Ottawa has been instrumental in keeping, nourishing and promoting the vibrant Greek culture, faith and language.

The Hellenic Community of Ottawa is also the centre of attention every August with a GreekFest that is a major part of Ottawa's impressive festival lineup. During GreekFest the entire Ottawa community is invited to participate in a week of festivities rich with the spirit of the community and the celebration of Greek culture. GreekFest is an event which anyone of any background can appreciate, and there's some pretty good food too.

To my friends of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa, especially President Pinelopi Makrodimitris-Karlis and Friar Alex Michalopoulos, I wish to congratulate you on long-standing and distinguished service to your community and your outstanding contribution to our city. Congratulations.

POAG JEWELLERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of attending the 50th-anniversary celebrations of Poag Jewellers, which is a fixture in Strathroy. One block of Frank Street was closed for this top-drawer event on a Sunday afternoon.

James Poag Senior first opened the shop in 1959 after launching his career by working in a jewellery store at the age of 13 and later completing a five-year apprenticeship in watch- and clockmaking. He met his wife, Judy, while she worked at an insurance office across the street, and after their marriage, Judy also became part of the store.

Sons Jim and Jeffrey began helping at Poag's as soon as they were able to see over the display counters. As any parent will confirm, Jim and Judy can take pride in the fact that both of their children have made the commitment to follow in their parents' footsteps. Today Poag's is still a family business run by both sons: Jim, a certified appraiser, and Jeff, a goldsmith and diamond setter. Jim's wife, Denise, runs the china department.

James and Judy can still spend about two or three afternoons in the store. Staff members often find them selling an engagement ring or a wedding ring to the children and grandchildren of their first customers.

I can personally attest to the hometown quality of their workmanship and friendly approach to doing business in a rural community, as well as their citizenship in the Strathroy-Caradoc area.

I hope all of you will join me in congratulating Poag Jewellers on their 50th anniversary and wish them another 50 years of success.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Seventeen new families will soon own their own home in York South–Weston thanks to Habitat for Humanity and the whole Habitat for Humanity team. I was very proud to take part in the groundbreaking ceremony that gathered members of the Habitat for Humanity board of directors, volunteers, home donors, corporate sponsors and partner families. It was a very special event.

From every standpoint, Habitat for Humanity showed what great things can be achieved despite limited resources, but with clear vision, with unparalleled resolve and a unique sense of solidarity. The work they do is targeted for people who also have limited resources—but that is the only limit partnering families have, because in far more important resources, partner families are rich. They are rich in determination, in dignity and in their aspirations. When these qualities meet the organizational ability of Habitat for Humanity, leaps forward are attained.

But this time, the great Habitat for Humanity team went even further, because the new homes built in York South–Weston also respect the values of sustainability, energy efficiency and environmental sensitivity, as they

are the first green homes built by Habitat for Humanity in the whole of Canada.

It is my hope that, in and out of York South–Weston, their example will be appreciated and followed.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding committee membership changes.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the following amendments be made to the membership of certain committees: The member for Richmond Hill replaces the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore on the Standing Committee on General Government, and the member for Kitchener–Conestoga replaces the member for Richmond Hill on the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

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

Motion agreed to.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding sign language interpreters for certain proceedings.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, during introduction of visitors and oral questions on Wednesday, October 21, 2009, as well as during statements in the afternoon, sign language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber to interpret the proceedings to guests in the galleries.

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

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES FEMMES

PERSONS DAY

JOURNÉE DE L'AFFAIRE « PERSONNE »

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise to acknowledge this month as Women's History Month and October 18 as Persons Day.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour souligner que c'est le Mois de l'histoire des femmes et que le 18 octobre est la Journée de l'affaire « personne ».

On October 18 in 1929, women were declared “persons” under the British North America Act. For the first time, women had a legal identity and the right to serve in the Senate.

This year, on the 80th anniversary of this historic time, the Famous Five—Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Emily Murphy—have been so appropriately named posthumously to Canada's Senate, the first time in history for such an honour to be bestowed. These fearless and passionate women envisioned a future that could be more equitable, more just and more secure for Canadian women. They cleared the way for women to participate as equal partners, decision-makers and equal beneficiaries in our society.

J'ai le plaisir de dire qu'il y a de nombreuses femmes en Ontario qui s'investissent, avec autant de passion et de détermination que les « Célèbres cinq », pour que la province soit un endroit plus équitable.

Three Ontario recipients of the 2009 Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case come to mind: Jeanette Corbiere Lavell, who successfully fought for 15 years to regain her Indian status after she married a non-aboriginal man; Bev LeFrancois, a social activist for women's rights since 1970 who helped establish community, women's and rape crisis centres and shelters for battered women; and Pauline Fogarty, a young woman from Thunder Bay who designed a girls' collective and is actively involved in social issues such as youth in the mental health system. Their stories make us pause to realize the accomplishments of women in our communities, in our courts and in our Legislatures. Women's History Month gives us pause to appreciate the advances made by women in many areas.

As our country is in the final stages of preparing to host the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympics, it is fitting that this year's theme for Women's History Month—Women in the Lead: Winter Sports—is shining a well-deserved light on the Ontario women who have broken down barriers in winter sports, women who have broken ground for others, ranging from Isobel Stanley, daughter of Lord Stanley, who helped form the first women's hockey league in 1894, to Karen Blachford, a Paralympic gold medal winner who in wheelchair curling proved that we can all participate in sports, and most recently Veronika Bauer, who took aerial skiing by storm, winning five World Cup gold medals in one of the world's newest winter sports.

L'histoire des réalisations féminines en Ontario est haute en couleur et édifiante. Ce sont des réalisations par des femmes de tous les horizons et des quatre coins de l'Ontario.

To the women who have made Ontario rich through your accomplishments, I say thank you for leading the way. To today's women leaders, on behalf of all of us in Ontario, I say congratulations on your achievements and thank you for showing young girls what can be accomplished with skill, hard work and a dream.

Thank you. Merci.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a pleasure to add my voice to Women's History Month and Persons Day.

J'aimerais commencer par vous dire que j'ai une grand-mère extraordinaire, une grand-mère qui n'est pas née « une personne » parce qu'à ce temps-là les femmes n'avaient toujours pas le droit de vote, mais elle faisait partie des suffragettes, des femmes qui se présentaient pour avoir le droit de vote. Finalement, comme il était mentionné par ma collègue, en 1929, les femmes ont été déclarées des personnes, et un peu plus tard, elles ont commencé à avoir le droit de vote. Je vais continuer à vous parler de ma grand-mère parce que je trouve que c'est un exemple typique des batailles qu'elles avaient à faire.

Ma grand-mère a eu 14 enfants, ce qui était assez commun dans son temps, qu'elle a décidé d'éduquer. Cela voulait dire qu'elle a dû retourner au travail. Ma grand-mère était professeure. Lorsqu'elle a eu 25 ans—on la considérait une vieille fille—elle s'est mariée, et parce qu'elle était mariée, elle a dû laisser aller son travail. Mais au fur et à mesure qu'elle a eu ses enfants, le salaire de mon grand-père, qui travaillait deux « shifts » par jour, sept jours par semaine, n'était pas suffisant pour envoyer ses 14 enfants à l'école. Ça fait qu'elle est retournée à l'école.

À ce temps-là, il y avait des écoles pour—c'était affreux—les « arriérés mentaux ». On les appelait comme ça, mais c'était vraiment des gens qui avaient des problèmes de développement. Ils ne pouvaient pas trouver de professeurs, donc ma grand-mère a fait une tournée là. Elle est devenue leader syndicale pour son école et son conseil scolaire. Elle a eu à défendre toutes sortes de cas bien spécifiques aux femmes.

Les femmes à ce temps-là avaient le droit à deux semaines de congé de maternité. Donc, si tu as accouché, tu avais le droit à deux semaines, et si tu travaillais, tu devais revenir au travail. Il y avait une femme à son école qui était enceinte mais qui n'était pas mariée. L'école a décidé qu'elle ne lui paierait pas ses deux semaines de congé de maternité parce qu'elle n'était pas mariée. Les défis que les femmes ont rencontrés se sont multipliés tout au long de la carrière de ma grand-mère.

Maintenant, je me vois ici comme députée. On est 107 députés, mais seulement 27 de nous sont femmes. Si on avait la parité, 50/50, je suis certaine que les choses seraient très différentes ici à l'Assemblée législative. Si on regarde du côté fédéral, les choses ne sont pas mieux.

Je siège présentement à l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, et même ça—je suis sur un comité qui s'appelle le comité des femmes. J'ai dû m'y reprendre à deux fois pour venir à bout de faire adopter une proposition qui changerait le langage vers un langage neutre. Au comité des femmes, on utilise ce langage : « les droits de l'homme ». Qu'est-ce qu'on est en train de dire par ça? Que le langage n'évolue pas? J'ai dû m'y reprendre à deux reprises avant que le comité des femmes

accepte d'utiliser un langage neutre et de parler des droits de la personne plutôt que des droits de l'homme.

Je reviens là. I want to come back and talk a little bit about this place, the Legislative Assembly. My office is on the first floor, by the east door. When you come into Queen's Park you have this array of walls covered with very severe-looking men. What greets me every morning when I come to work? A row of 30 such men, each looking more—how can I say—severe than another. And none of them will crack a smile, because these are paintings, so they don't change from day to day. But it just sets the tone that this is a place for men. Everywhere you look, you see pictures of men. I kind of get tired of this, Mr. Speaker. Your office is very close to mine. I wish we could redecorate, and the first thing I would put in is—those monstrous pictures of men that I have to look at every morning are very nice and everything, but we need a little bit of variety. Pictures of women in this House would be a big step.

I cannot talk about Women's History Month without talking about pay equity; pay equity is a women's issue and needs to be addressed. Minimum wage, \$10.25 an hour now, is also a women's issue—and I'm running out of time. Merci, monsieur le Président. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Today, I'm very pleased to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to recognize Women's History Month and also October 18 as Persons Day.

It was 80 years ago that the British Privy Council decided that women were persons under Canadian law, and we owe that landmark decision to five outstanding, determined and very persistent women who took their fight all the way to the Privy Council in England, the highest court in Canada at the time. The Famous Five—Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Nellie McClung—changed the lives of women of their generation and of all future generations. These women opened the door of potential political opportunity to women who would later take up the challenge.

Persons Day falls in October, during Women's History Month, and it is an appropriate time to celebrate the contributions of women in the past and in the present who have shaped Canada in so many ways. In business, in the arts, in sports and in politics, women have increased their presence and their influence, and have demonstrated that they can excel in non-traditional fields.

This year's theme is women in winter sports. This theme shines a well-deserved light on the women who have changed the face of winter sports. With Canada hosting the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, it is the time to celebrate the many Ontario women who have achieved outstanding success in sport. Ontario has had many female leaders who have competed and left a very significant legacy. As with all firsts, they have paved the way for future generations of women, and we are proud and thankful for their contributions.

I was interested to read that hockey was one of the first venues for women to actively participate in. The first

women's hockey game was played in 1892. Back then, they took to the ice, long skirts and all. Since then, Ontario women have continued to excel in winter sports such as figure skating, speed skating, aerial skiing and wheelchair curling. We salute all these passionate, successful and determined women, who serve as role models and who continue to pave the way for future generations.

Last month in my community, we celebrated the accomplishments of women during Oktoberfest week, and we nominated and selected women to be, for example, professional of the year, volunteer, youth, etc., for their outstanding community and personal accomplishments.

This month, we need to remember the progress that women have made. More women than ever before are pursuing post-secondary education, thus increasingly becoming economically independent. More women today are owners and operators of very successful small businesses. In all areas of life, women are working extremely hard toward independence and self-sufficiency, and we celebrate and recognize those outstanding women.

Having said that, we know there are still challenges ahead and barriers to overcome. We still need more women at the parliamentary level, whether it's in the provincial Legislatures or federally, and we need to continue to encourage competent, capable women to seek public office.

However, today is a day of celebration. We have a proud history in Canada; we have a proud history in the province of Ontario. To all those who have led the way, to the women who have gone before us, I say congratulations on your many, many achievements and thank you for showing us and those who will follow what we can accomplish with dedication, with a lot of hard work, with a dream and with teamwork.

1330

PETITIONS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

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

"Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep doctors 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 value for their hard-earned money that goes into health care, unlike the wasteful and abusive spending under the McGuinty Liberals' watch at eHealth Ontario;

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

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

I'm pleased to present this petition to one of the new pages, Elliott, and approve of it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the good people of Nipissing, who are asking for a PET scan.

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

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

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

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

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

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from a number of constituents from Toronto and Ottawa, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

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

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

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

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ 13% blended tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes; and

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

“Whereas this McGuinty Liberals’ tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

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

I’m pleased to affix my name to this.

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition in support of the Tom Longboat Day Act and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tom Longboat is one of Canada’s greatest long-distance runners; and

“Whereas Tom Longboat is a great role model for all Canadians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Tom Longboat Day Act into law so that we can honour this remarkable athlete and courageous Canadian, who is a great role model for all Canadians.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and support all those from my riding who have signed it.

TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: I have literally thousands of petitions on this particular topic. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

“Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty’s new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes and,” to end it all, “funeral arrangements; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the” dreaded “health tax, which costs upwards

of \$600 to \$900 per” person. “And now he is raising our taxes once again;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

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

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from a number of citizens of Windsor, Ottawa and Peterborough. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed by a great number of my constituents.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 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 as I agree with this petition.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: Again, I have a number of petitions from Kirkland Lake and Essex. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition regarding the negative impact of industrial wind turbines on our neighbourhoods, with signatures from Port Rowan, Clear Creek and along Lakeshore Road:

“We, the undersigned citizens, who live in the area of the Erie Shores Wind Farm, are concerned about one or more of the following issues and are asking that you take immediate action to address and remedy these negative effects created by the operation of the industrial wind turbines:

“(1) intrusive noise, low-frequency emission and strobe effect created by the turbines’ rotating blades;

“(2) negative impact on physical and mental well-being;

“(3) loss of enjoyment of day-to-day life in the previously peaceful environment;

“(4) affected neighbours were not informed of the final location of the turbines; and

“(5) the resale value of our properties is below the already depressed real estate market.”

I affix my signature to these petitions.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: Again, a petition from taxpayers from Barrie, Collingwood and Cambridge. It reads as follows:

“A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the re-

location of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

Once again, as I agree with this, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

1340

TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: Again, I have hundreds of petitions from my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the proposed harmonization of the Ontario retail sales tax (RST) with the federal GST has the potential to increase costs to many small businesses and their customers; and

“Whereas these added costs would have a devastating impact in difficult economic times, and organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders’ Association have estimated harmonization would add \$15,000 in new taxes to the price of a new Ontario home;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, reject the harmonization of the GST and the RST unless there are exemptions to offset the adverse impacts of harmonization, so that the outcome will be a reduction in red tape, not higher taxes.”

I’m pleased to endorse this, sign it and present it to Rushabh.

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Jim Brownell: Again, I’m pleased to present a petition in support of the Tom Longboat Day Act. This is signed by a number of my local constituents, who, every year, participate in the Tom Longboat race at Canada’s oldest fair, in Williamstown, in my riding. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tom Longboat is one of Canada’s greatest long-distance runners;

“Whereas Tom Longboat is a great role model for all Canadians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Tom Longboat Day Act into law so that we can honour this remarkable athlete and courageous Canadian who is a great role model for all Canadians.”

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

TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: This petition is entitled “Scrap the 13% McGuinty Sales Tax.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the 13% McGuinty sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services; and

“Whereas the 13% McGuinty sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for coffins, coffee, haircuts, gym

memberships, newspapers, lawyer and accountant fees and meals under \$4;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to not increase taxes for Ontario consumers.”

The signatures are from Selkirk, Cayuga, Dunneville and Lowbanks area. I affix my signature.

TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present another petition here. Thousands of them come in daily. This one reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I would certainly like to thank the members of the Mississauga community called Effort for collecting the signatures, and particularly Khalid Qureishi and Sadia Khalid. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

“Whereas the cost to businesses to produce goods will go down permanently as embedded sales tax is permanently eliminated from the business cycle, enabling 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 support measures to swiftly enact Ontario’s comprehensive tax reform procedures, including the move to a single sales tax in Ontario, as proposed in the province’s 2009-10 budget.”

I agree with the petitioners. I’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Bethany to carry it for me.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ANIMAL HEALTH ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SANTÉ ANIMALE

Mrs. Dombrowsky moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 204, An Act to protect animal health and to amend and repeal other Acts / Projet de loi 204, Loi protégeant la santé animale et modifiant et abrogeant d’autres lois.

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I’m delighted to have the opportunity to speak to what I believe is a very important piece of legislation. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. He has brought a good deal of enthusiasm to his new role and to this office, and I very much appreciate the information that he’s bringing to me from the agriculture community in his riding.

It really is an honour to be a part of a government that has proposed the Animal Health Act, 2009, and to have the opportunity to make, for this assembly, some points in its favour. I want to remind you why we have introduced this very important piece of legislation. People in Ontario may or may not know—certainly those in the agriculture community know—that the agri-food industry contributes some \$30 billion each and every year to the economy in the province of Ontario. In addition to that, this industry employs over 700,000 people. Now, I’m talking about the agri-food sector, so, while we do not have 700,000 farmers, we have 700,000 people involved in providing safe, quality food products.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Seven thousand or 700,000?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: No, this is 700,000 people. One of my colleagues was questioning the number. But that would relate not just to those people who plant and harvest the crop but the people who process the food product as well. These people are responsible for enabling this province to say that we provide the safest and best-quality food of anywhere in the world.

Ontario's livestock and poultry sectors generate more than \$4.5 billion in farmgate activity each year. That's just the livestock and poultry sector, and we know that there are many other sectors that contribute significantly to the Ontario economy and even more specifically to our rural economies. We have the largest poultry industry, the second-largest swine and dairy industries and the third-largest beef industry in Canada, so in many sectors we are significant producers at the national level as well.

The presence of animal disease in any of these sectors can have a very serious consequence on the economic health of the agri-food industry and therefore the economic strength of the province and the very well-being of all Ontarians.

1350

I share these figures in this assembly today so that folks can truly appreciate the significant interest the people of Ontario have in ensuring that we're doing everything possible to protect animals' health and well-being and in ensuring that we have measures in place to protect animals in the province of Ontario. We know as well that there is a link between animal health and human health, and protecting our animals can help us better protect the people in our province as well.

The proposed legislation would provide measures to assist in a number of things. It will assist in the prevention, detection and response to and control of animal diseases and other hazards. It also includes a framework for a traceability system that will be able to track food from the field where it's produced to the fork, where our consumers enjoy it so very much. It will fit within any national traceability framework that may be developed. As yet, we do not have a national traceability framework, but we are, in this legislation—and we certainly are looking forward to debating it in this Legislature, going to committee with it and getting feedback from our stakeholders, particularly on this traceability piece. I would say that it is an enabling piece of legislation.

We also look forward to that time when the federal government will announce its financial support for a national traceability system. When that happens, the province of Ontario will be ready to walk out the door with them on that, in that we have the framework legislation in place.

An efficient traceability system allows for the quick identification and control of disease and food safety hazards related to animal products. In the industry, there has been a good deal of discussion and conversation about traceability. Traceability also contributes to our province's ability to demonstrate to the world, not just to our consumers in Ontario—I believe they have been convinced—that we do have the safest and best-quality food of anywhere in the world. That is why the Buy Local initiative has taken off. That is why farmers' markets are doing so well across the province. There is definitely a sense and an understanding that locally grown Ontario food is safe. But we also need to be able to demonstrate to the national and international markets that we have safe, quality food, and a traceability system will enable

producers to be able to do just that on the world stage. This will in turn, of course, help the agri-food industry be more competitive.

While this legislation would give us the tools to work within a national traceability system, we also continue to support Ontario farmers and food processors, as many of them have already made their own traceability investments. That is definitely a credit to our farmers and food processors in Ontario, because they have recognized why this is an important announcement: It does give them a competitive edge. So there has been some significant investment in this area already.

Three years ago, we helped create OnTrace. OnTrace is an organization that provides traceability systems to producers in Ontario. In May of this year, I announced that our food safety and traceability initiative, which is a four-year, \$2.5-million joint investment—when I say “a joint investment,” this is an investment in which we will be partnering with the federal government again. These are things that we are able to do because we have signed an agreement with our federal partner to work on these sorts of initiatives that the industry has said are important and that they need. So, in May of this year, I announced the food safety and traceability initiative, which is a four-year, \$2.5-million investment. This will enable Ontario farmers and Ontario food processors to continue to put in place the building blocks for a traceability system.

That event happened in Guelph, and there were many industry participants there. They were very, very grateful for the fact that we've recognized this is something they need to be competitive and sustainable going forward, and they very much appreciated that.

Under this new food safety and traceability initiative, individual farms and businesses are able to receive up to \$20,000 to develop or improve their food safety and traceability programs. So many businesses have taken advantage of this that we are providing more than \$3.9 million this year alone, and we look forward to funding more innovative projects over the next year as well.

I think the fact that there has been so much take-up on this funding opportunity demonstrates that we have farmers and food processors in Ontario who, number one, appreciate that the support is there, and who recognize that making these investments in their operation, whether they're primary producers or processors, will enable them to be competitive in a global marketplace.

Now, as I indicated, the new food safety and traceability initiative is part of the Growing Forward agreement, which is the new national agriculture framework. That framework commits \$300 million over the next five years to help grow the Ontario agriculture industry. We made an announcement about the Growing Forward agreement, and this is an example of one of the pieces of that very important agreement that is actually working to help producers and processors in our province.

We have ensured that this legislation is consistent with legislation in other jurisdictions across the country and, in fact, around the world, especially those jurisdictions that have livestock sectors similar to our own and even

some that might be a little bit different. Certainly the livestock sector is one we pay particular attention to.

Throughout the last three years, we have also consulted with industry partners, and our industry partners told us that they wanted legislation to address animal health issues in Ontario. That's another reason why we're coming forward with this. If this legislation passes, we will continue to consult with our industry partners and ensure that we work with them on the development of new regulations.

That, quite frankly, has been the way we have operated since coming to government. It's certainly fair to say that it's the way this office has operated and how we have treated our stakeholders. We have an open-door policy; people have an opportunity to bring their concerns to us. I think that what we will hear when we have public consultations is that the proposed legislation does reflect many of the issues that came to us from the stakeholders. I think it's fair to say that we continue to be open to looking for ways to improve the legislation that is before us today. As well, we will be hosting a forum on traceability early next year to help our industry partners adopt traceability and show the innovation and competitiveness that comes from successfully implemented traceability systems.

This legislation is, in my view, the next logical step in our government's commitment to supporting animal health in the province of Ontario. We have made some moves and some investments. I think they are certainly important investments for the industry, and they've been well received by the industry. What we are debating in the assembly today is the next logical step to support the industry.

1400

Members of this House and many of our participants in the agriculture industry will know that we have established the Office of the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario. That office is held by an assistant deputy minister. At the present time, the office is filled by Dr. Deb Stark, a very capable and well-respected individual. I see that the member from Oxford is nodding his head, and I'm very appreciative of that. The chief veterinarian has an important job to do, a very responsible job. I think it is important that she is recognized and respected in the agriculture community across Ontario, and I believe that, in fact, is the case.

We have also invested in the University of Guelph's Animal Health Laboratory. We've made some significant investments in that laboratory. We are proud of the fact that in Ontario we do have the University of Guelph and that it is known across Canada for the good work, the research, that is done there. I'm very happy to say that this government has recognized that there had been a significant drought in terms of investment in that facility, a drought of many years, and we had a lot of catching up to do. But because we do value the industry, we know how important it is that we have a well-resourced research facility, as we have at the University of Guelph. I think that that has been a very, very important investment.

We are also helping livestock and poultry organizations develop their own traceability systems, bio-security protocols and emergency plans. When I say "we," I again would like to indicate that this work happens on the concession road. We have folks from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs going out and dealing with our farmers and food processors. They come to us with their issues as well, and their questions, and I think that together we are building an excellent and safe food safety system in our province.

We have consulted with industry partners, who very clearly told us that Ontario needs this animal health legislation. I want to thank them as well for all of the help and assistance that they have provided to me personally, to this office and to the people who work at OMAFRA as we worked on this proposed legislation. There is a clear connection between the health of our animals and the health of our people and the strength of our agri-food industry, and that is why we believe it's important at this time that we move forward with animal health legislation.

The McGuinty government wants to foster a strong, prosperous and healthy Ontario. This proposed animal health legislation will provide the framework that we need to make sure that our animals are protected, to make our agri-food sector more competitive, and to contribute to the good health of all of the people in Ontario.

I've made some general points with respect to the legislation, and I'm delighted that my colleague and parliamentary assistant is going to go into a little bit more detail about this very important document. He and I have had the opportunity to go through it line by line. I think that it's fair to say he has an excellent understanding of what is in the document. I do look forward to his comments now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Mr. Rick Johnson: As you all know, I have only recently become parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I'm honoured to be working with Minister Dombrowsky at this exciting time as we move to protect vital contributors to Ontario's economy.

I would like to first talk about the purpose of the legislation and key definitions. If passed, this proposed Animal Health Act would provide important measures to help us better prevent, detect and respond to animal health issues in Ontario. While the federal government has broad authority to respond to animal diseases, Ontario is the only province without its own legislative powers to act to protect animal health within its borders.

This proposed legislation is intended to complement, not duplicate, federal authorities and would help make sure Ontario's livestock and poultry sectors are prepared to address animal health risks.

As I'm sure you're aware, all animals have the potential to carry and transmit diseases that could pose risks to animal or human health. For that reason, the proposed legislation includes a broad definition of "animal," which

includes not just livestock and poultry but in fact any creature that is not human. The proposed legislation must include all animals to cover all potential disease sources, although implementation would focus primarily on farmed animals. This is consistent with federal legislation as well as legislation in other provinces, and was supported by industry partners during consultations.

Another broad definition used in the proposed legislation is that of "hazard." If passed, the proposed legislation would cover a broad range of issues that could affect the health of animals, not just diseases. These are referred to in the bill as hazards. Experience internationally has shown there are situations other than disease that may require action to protect animal and human health. Because of this, the proposed legislation includes other categories of hazards: chemical, radiological and physical. By referencing hazards beyond disease, the proposed legislation would allow us to address animal health concerns such as chemical contamination or metal shards in animal feed.

In 2005 our government created the position of chief veterinarian for Ontario to oversee a provincial animal health strategy, and I would like to speak to that role. We heard from industry partners that it was important for the chief veterinarian to have certain powers within legislation. This, we heard, would make sure that animal health issues were given the high priority they deserve. We listened, and the proposed legislation includes provisions for a chief veterinarian for Ontario to be appointed by the minister and to have specific legislated powers. A little later I will tell you about some of the measures that could be taken to protect animal health, should this legislation pass, all of which would occur under the close watch of the chief veterinarian. The chief veterinarian would also be a key link between animal and human health, with close ties to Ontario's chief medical officer of health.

With regard to the reporting of hazards, the province can have all the power it wants to respond to an issue, but if we don't know there is a problem, those powers are meaningless. Because of this, the proposed legislation outlines provisions for reporting specific animal health risks to the chief veterinarian, who will guide the response, which could be simply confirming the hazard is not present, notifying industry to increase biosecurity, or taking further action as needed.

Reporting requirements would fall into one of three categories, similar to the structure used under federal legislation.

The first category would be so-called "reportable" hazards. Animal health issues that would be listed under this category would need to be reported immediately to the chief veterinarian for Ontario by anyone who suspects, is aware of, or should be aware of the issue. This could include a livestock producer, an animal transporter or a veterinarian.

The second category is called "immediately notifiable." Hazards listed under this category would need to be immediately reported to the ministry by laboratories

only. This applies only to laboratories because the notification to the ministry would be done after testing conducted at the lab confirmed a specific hazard.

Generally, reportable and immediately notifiable diseases and hazards need immediate action to help mitigate and control.

The third reporting category would also apply only to laboratories. It is "periodically notifiable" hazards. Items on this list would likely be diseases that are less of an immediate threat but are still important to keep track of for surveillance purposes, and watching for trends. Periodically notifiable diseases would need to be reported by laboratories on a schedule that would be set in regulation.

While the proposed legislation establishes these reporting categories, I'd like to stress that the specific hazards that would come under each of the headings would be developed in a regulation, should the legislation be passed. Minister Dombrowsky and I want to assure you that we are committed to consulting with industry partners when developing this regulation to make sure that the reporting requirements are appropriate.

Veterinarians may be requested to report other unusual incidents they come across in their veterinary practice that may not fall under one of these reportable categories.

1410

Again, let me assure you that the regulation that would be developed after consultation would clearly set out all reporting responsibilities.

I should note that the ministry would be able to take actions to prevent or control an animal health risk even if it were not reported directly to the chief veterinarian. For example, should we be aware of a significant animal disease that is in a neighbouring province, we could take appropriate measures to keep that disease out of Ontario.

The proposed legislation also sets out certain reporting requirements for the chief veterinarian. Should the chief veterinarian become aware of any animal health issue that could pose a significant human health risk, he or she would be required to report this to the chief medical officer of health.

Public health authorities would continue to have the lead in the event of any significant public health risk, but this legislation, if passed, would make sure that we are all working together to protect the province from potential hazards with animal or human health risks.

The proposed legislation provides for inspectors to be appointed and work under the guidance of the chief veterinarian for Ontario. Should the legislation be passed, when appointing inspectors, the chief veterinarian would look for a strong background in veterinary science and a familiarity with livestock and the poultry sectors. These inspectors would become the primary responders for animal health issues in the province and would be visiting specific premises should there be a reason to believe that there is an animal health issue there.

In addition to entering a premises, these staff would be able to inspect animals and related items, such as transportation vehicles. They could also take samples for testing and issue compliance for quarantine orders.

It should be noted that inspectors would not be able to come into a private home unless they had consent or there was a warrant, and a warrant would not be sought unless there were exceptional circumstances.

This bill also speaks to a provincial response to hazards. It is our hope that preventive measures will keep animal health diseases from affecting Ontario's livestock and poultry. However, the proposed legislation provides us with valuable tools should we need to respond to a hazard.

The proposed legislation would allow for inspectors to order certain measures be taken to address or control an animal health issue. This could include submitting samples for laboratory analysis, disposing of specific products or implementing other control methods that would have been outlined in the bill.

The bill outlines three escalating levels of controls that could be established to respond to an animal health risk.

The first level is quarantine. Under the proposed legislation, if an inspector had reasonable grounds to believe that an animal health issue existed and needed to be contained, he or she could issue a quarantine order under the guidance of the chief veterinarian. A quarantine order could involve isolating animals or related products or posting signage to keep traffic out of the affected premises. The length and conditions of quarantine would depend on the situation and would be set out in the quarantine order.

If the chief veterinarian believed that further monitoring for a certain hazard were required, a broader surveillance zone could be established for up to a 10-kilometre radius around the quarantined premises. Should a surveillance zone order be issued, it would include conditions that the chief veterinarian considered necessary to monitor for a specific hazard within the specific area.

For example, surveillance zone orders could authorize an inspector to examine animals or animal products and submit samples for laboratory testing to determine if the hazard had spread from the quarantined premises. A surveillance zone order could also specify precautionary or biosecurity measures within that zone.

Should more action be required, an animal health control area could be established which could cover a broader area than a quarantine or surveillance zone.

Only the minister can establish a control area, and this would not be done lightly. However, having the ability to establish a control area could help protect the province from an animal health issue that might affect another jurisdiction and not currently be present in Ontario.

A control area could also be established to protect parts of the province that were free from a particular hazard that was present elsewhere in the province or to prevent or control an issue that posed a significant risk to animal or human health in the province or part of it.

Should a control area be established, it could require that, within the area, animals and animal product be monitored and inspected; samples be submitted to a laboratory for analysis; owners report any unusual illness in their animals; specific biosecurity measures be

followed; animals or related products be destroyed; and specific premises be cleaned and disinfected.

The proposed legislation does establish a review system with respect to orders made by inspectors. Upon request, a director could review an inspector's order and may confirm it, alter it or revoke it. If it were absolutely necessary, the proposed legislation would allow for animals to be ordered destroyed. We know that this is a necessary measure that in certain circumstances could be critical to the province's animal and human health. To assist the industry should animals need to be destroyed, the proposed legislation provides a framework for compensation.

In regard to compensation, legislation is meaningless if we don't know about a problem, and farmers need to know that we will help them with costs they may face when addressing an animal health issue. This was something that we heard loud and clear from our industry partners during consultations. Compensation provisions encourage reporting and are a vital part of a strong animal disease detection system. We heard their comments and we made sure that the compensation provisions in the proposed legislation were clearly stated and consistent with those in other provinces and at the federal level.

Legislation is also meaningless if there are not adequate penalties for those who refuse to comply. We know that the vast majority of Ontario's livestock and poultry producers will willingly comply with orders that might be issued to protect their livelihoods. After all, many of these producers and their organizations have been asking for such protections for years. However, we also know that there need to be penalties for those who don't comply and put animal health and possibly human health at risk. The proposed legislation suggests strong penalties for any individual convicted of an offence under this act, should it be passed. Proposed fines range from \$1,000 to \$15,000 for individuals and are double that for corporations. Individuals could also face up to one year of imprisonment or both a fine and imprisonment.

As you know, animal health issues can not only have a devastating impact on the livestock and poultry sectors but can impact human health and the provincial economy. It is important that this be taken seriously, with serious penalties for non-compliance. The proposed legislation provides a framework for the minister to establish and oversee a provincial traceability system for animals and animal products. Our government believes that the Ontario agri-food sector fully understands the benefits to be realized through the implementation of traceability initiatives and will do so voluntarily.

Traceability systems provide us with the means to track the movement of food products ultimately from farm to fork. This ability is a key element of a strong food safety system and supports the province's emergency management response. Traceability also brings benefits to the producers of Ontario's agri-food products by opening new opportunities along the value chain and

in the marketplace. Traceability is also about improving reaction times. The faster a problem is detected, for example, the sooner it can be fixed. This applies to businesses wanting to produce the safest food they can, farmers raising the healthiest animals possible, or public health officials investigating food-borne illnesses.

By knowing where animals have been and what they have been exposed to at any given time, we can all act more quickly to get to the root of a problem. Many of our agri-food industry partners have already adopted traceability programs and many more are voluntarily moving this way.

In addition, the federal government announced in July of this year that they were moving forward on a mandatory, comprehensive national traceability system for livestock. As was discussed at the meeting of federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers at the annual meeting in July 2009, should a national mandatory traceability system for livestock and poultry be implemented, it will be supported by the federal government through federal regulations and federal financial resources. OMAFRA will continue to work with federal and provincial colleagues to ensure that the provincial-level traceability initiatives complement the national traceability system as it evolves.

If the proposed legislation were passed, some existing acts and regulations under those acts could be modernized and consolidated under this act. We would be consulting with industry partners if this were further considered.

1420

Regarding the consolidation of other acts, the proposed legislation has provision that would allow us to modernize and consolidate existing legislation under the new act, should it be passed. The Bees Act, the Livestock Community Sales Act and the Livestock Medicines Act all have aspects related to animal health, and these statutes could be replaced with appropriate regulations to be incorporated under this proposed legislation in the future.

The consolidation of these acts is consistent with our government's Open for Business initiative. We would also be consulting with industry partners if this were further considered.

Developing of regulations and ongoing consultations: As you have heard, this proposed legislation sets out a detailed framework for improving our detection of and response to animal health issues in order to better protect our province's animals and its people. Should the bill pass, work will still need to be done to develop detailed regulations in several areas, including reporting requirements and traceability. I want to assure you that we are committed to developing those regulations in consultation with all industry partners. To this end, Minister Dombrowsky has also committed to establishing an advisory committee to work with the ministry as regulations are developed.

So many provincial groups have worked hard to get this bill to where it is today. We want to keep working

together to make it one of the most effective pieces of animal legislation in the country.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: If the farmers in Wellington-Halton Hills were watching the debate on this bill this afternoon, knowing that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs was speaking in the House today, I think they would have expected, or anticipated, perhaps, that there might have been an announcement of new programs to support our beef and pork producers, who are in serious trouble. Unfortunately, that has not yet been forthcoming from this government or from this minister, but we will continue to call upon them to do the right thing to support our beef and hog producers.

With respect to Bill 204, the Animal Health Act that is being debated today, that was called for debate, I know that our caucus has a great deal of interest in this issue and we're certainly looking forward to hearing from our agriculture and food critic, Ernie Hardeman, the MPP for Oxford, who's going to be speaking on behalf of our party to lead off the response from the opposition to this bill. Ernie served as the Minister of Agriculture when we were in government and did an outstanding job. He is well respected and highly regarded in the farm community. So we're really looking forward to his comments on this.

Certainly, I'm aware that this bill has some limited support—in terms of its principle and what the government is espousing to do with this particular bill—in terms of some of the agriculture groups, but there are many groups, including the federation of agriculture, which are quite concerned about some of the details. I would suggest to you that this is a bill that should go to a committee for public hearings, and that's something that, hopefully, the minister would address in her opportunity to respond to my comments and confirm that in fact the government will allow hearings on this bill. I think it's most important that we get this right, and without the public input of some of the key interest groups with respect to this issue, there's a chance that we could be doing the wrong thing.

Again, I would ask the minister to consider public hearings on this bill. Hopefully, she will inform the House in a few minutes that in fact public hearings will take place so as to allow all the affected organizations a chance to come in, make their case and have the government consider their views before final decisions are made.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: On behalf of New Democrats, I listened to the minister's short speech and the parliamentary assistant's speech on this bill.

New Democrats know that a number of farm organizations have worked very hard to prepare this legislation. However, a number of those farm organizations still have questions to ask as to how exactly the bill is going to work, how exactly it's going to be implemented,

what the details of regulations are going to be etc. For that reason, New Democrats believe that this bill will require public hearings.

So far, what we've heard goes a long way towards sounding like apple pie and ice cream, but unless you see the details, unless you see how it's going to be implemented, unless you see how the mechanisms are going to work for farmers and for farm organizations, it will remain apple pie and ice cream.

So New Democrats feel very strongly that this bill should go before a committee, that there should be public hearings held not just here at Queen's Park, but public hearings held so that farm organizations—and, more importantly, local farm organizations—will have a very clear idea what it's about and what it's going to mean down the road when it is implemented. I say this with respect to the minister and the parliamentary assistant. I think everybody knows that farm communities in Ontario are facing really difficult times, and they need to know what the next two years, five years, 10 years hold for them and what this legislation holds for them.

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

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments on Bill 204.

First of all, we all know that we have the finest producers here in Ontario, and it's well recognized around the world that our producers provide, in this case, a quality crop as pork, cattle, chickens etc., so our meats are the best in the world. This legislation will help to ensure that that continues and that there's verification that it is ongoing.

The legislation is something that the industry partners have been asking for. I know there's been consultation in the past on this particular piece of legislation, so we have a good beginning as it comes into the House here. It would require individuals to report animal diseases to the Chief Veterinarian of Ontario. That reporting will assist, should there be situations that require such, and help to maintain that fine economic engine that agriculture—in this case, livestock—happens to provide to the people of Ontario and the consumers of Ontario.

Not only is it an economic benefit but it's also one that we benefit from each and every day at our kitchen tables. The partners in this industry, most notably Ontario Pork, Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and perhaps others, endorse what we are trying to do here. They have given their written support for this.

As seems to be the custom with our government, almost every bill in this Legislature winds up at committee; I can't imagine that this one would not. There are very few bills that are introduced by the McGuinty government that do not go to committee. They are very busy. I think three are sitting today.

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

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My concern with legislation in dealing with the agricultural community is the fact that when the legislation is put into effect, the agricultural community often isn't aware of what is happening with regard to a change in legislation.

Number two is that I have had a recent example of a very heavy hand laid on by the enforcement mechanisms with regard to legislation dealing with the agricultural community. One of the most noteworthy farmers in my area was charged with an offence that I felt was groundless, and they were looking for technicalities when it came to laying the charge.

Any of us who represent farmers in Ontario know, as the member for Rainy River pointed out, that the agricultural community is under tremendous pressure, and they have a lot of things that they have to do in their day-to-day lives. Unfortunately, under this government, the enforcement of agricultural legislation has been heavy-handed, as I've experienced in my own riding, and I am fearful that this kind of legislation will be dealt with in the same fashion. We do not need useless interference with the farming activity. Notwithstanding, we must, of course, protect our animals as well as the others. It's a complete failure of this government to enforce their legislation in an even-handed manner in the past, and my concern is, going forward with this legislation, we will see the same examples going into the future.

1430

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I do appreciate the comments I have received from the members from Wellington-Halton Hills, Kenora-Rainy River, Chatham-Kent-Essex and Carleton-Mississippi Mills. A couple of points were commonly referenced in their remarks. Number one was an interest in ensuring that the bill would go to committee. Again, my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex has reminded members of this House that our government has, I believe, a very clear record when it comes to ensuring that there is an opportunity for the public to have their say about proposed legislation.

I would also remind all the members of this assembly that you may or not know that there was a draft item of this bill posted on the Environmental Registry in June of this year, giving the agricultural community and representative voices in the ag community a heads-up that this was something we wanted to bring forward.

With respect to what may or may not be in regulations, again, if you look on page 56 of this act, it does indicate, under "Regulations," what we would intend to consider, if the bill passes; what would be considered reasonable in those regulations. I would offer that this is where we would direct our stakeholders to look if there are concerns about what might be contained in the regulations and whether or not it would be appropriate and or necessary.

I would only remind the members in this assembly that when it does come to ad hoc payments and additional support for farmers beyond that which we provide

through our participation in the AgriStability program, they voted against all of those payments we've made so far.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to address Bill 204, An Act to protect animal health and to amend and repeal other Acts.

I want to start out by saying the Ontario PC caucus is committed to food safety and animal health. We understand the importance of ensuring that the quality and safety of our food are protected. In fact, that's the only way we can protect our markets. We understand that in order to be globally competitive, our farmers need to meet with high standards of health, quality and traceability, and they need to be able to demonstrate they are meeting those standards. We are willing to work with the government to accomplish that. However, this bill goes far beyond what is required to achieve those goals, and results in added red tape and costs to our farming community.

I just want to point out that when any bill is introduced in the House, there is what we call a compendium attached to it to kind of explain in very short form what is in the bill. I want to read the compendium for this bill into the record:

"The proposed Animal Health Act, 2009 would provide the province with prevention, detection and response measures for addressing animal diseases and other potential animal health hazards. If passed, this bill would improve Ontario's capacity to:

"—protect both animal and human health

"—address livestock diseases

"—respond to emergency situations related to animal health.

"If passed, this legislation would require the reporting of certain animal diseases to the Chief Veterinarian of Ontario. It would also enable the use of quarantine orders, surveillance zones and animal health control area orders to help control the spread of any detected disease or hazard.

"The proposed legislation would also support a future traceability framework for the quick identification and control of disease and food safety hazards."

If that's what this bill did in its entirety, the PC caucus would support the bill in its entirety, but I'm afraid that is not the fact with this bill.

As you know, this bill was introduced two weeks ago. It is a complex bill, and I know that many of the stakeholders are still working out the implications of certain sections on their industry. In fact, I heard from some stakeholders that they hadn't been able to do their full analysis yet because they were having their briefings as recently as four days ago. I hope this isn't a sign that the minister wants to rush this legislation through.

I just want to point out, Madam Minister, that haste makes waste. In some of the other programs we've been bringing up in this House for some time, particularly as it relates to young and beginning farmers, it was haste that

made the waste that is costing a lot of these young people their livelihood.

I just want to say that the review of the bill is to ensure that we hear not only from the farmers but from all the people who are directly affected by this bill. Many stakeholders were looking forward to the introduction of this legislation, as has been mentioned by previous speakers, because they were expecting it to set up a traceability system, something that they had been asking for and working towards for many years. They have expressed disappointment that this bill contains only a brief section on traceability, and that it is only to allow the minister to establish, through regulation, at a later date, behind closed doors.

As I got the briefing—and I want to thank the minister for the briefing we received on the bill last week, after its introduction—one of the pages was on the traceability part of the bill. I want to point out that the actual directive in the bill on traceability is one paragraph. The explanation usually should be a gathering together of the information and condensing it to an understandable and presentable form. The traceability in the presentation was that it "enables the establishment of a provincial traceability system for animals, animal products, animal by-products and related things which may include premises and conveyance identification, animal identification and movement reporting. This permits the provincial traceability initiative to be coordinated under the federal government's national traceability initiative. There will be extensive consultation with industry partners as the province moves forward with the traceability system. Ontario has been clear that if the federal government would like to move forward on a mandatory traceability system for livestock and poultry, the implementation would have to be supported by the federal government."

I think I heard in the minister's presentation that in fact the provincial government was involved in directing the traceability and some kind of indication that they were involved financially with it. From this directive, I realize that it must be totally supported by the federal government. I guess I must have misheard what the minister said. But I just want to point out that the traceability part of the bill, which so many farmers were expecting to be the main focus of the bill, is in fact one paragraph in the bill, with some direction as to what type of regulations might be expected, if the regulations were put in place.

Certainly, in numerous meetings with the stakeholders and at the end of the federal-provincial-territorial meetings in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the minister gave the impression that there would be a greater focus in this legislation on the traceability. In fact, the communiqué issued at the end of the meeting said, "Ministers committed to move forward on a comprehensive national traceability system for livestock and poultry, which is critical for managing animal health and food safety issues, as well as expanding market access and driving efficiencies." Again, that was the communiqué expressed in the opinion of all the ministers at the meeting,

although I do believe there was one province that dissented in that decision.

One of the things the stakeholders were looking for was to ensure that existing traceability systems, set up by agricultural organizations—their own organizations—that are currently working, such as the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, will be allowed to continue under the new system. I do want to just point out that there were some concerns expressed by the cattlemen that they wanted to make sure that the new system would incorporate that which was already in place.

After seeing this government's efforts at creating an electronic database for eHealth, I can understand the farmers' reluctance to have this government design a database that would track all animal health records. I guess the farmers would be a little concerned that if they were going to use \$1 billion of agriculture money to create a data system for the animal health system, it would be better spent elsewhere.

Agriculture groups and farmers are also looking for details on funding for implementing the traceability program. While the agriculture organizations want this initiative, they have been quite clear that farmers and organizations cannot afford to bear all the costs.

In their submission to the proposed legislation, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said, "The OFA insists that farmers not be forced to bear the cost of regulations that result in public benefit." Again, if we're looking to protect the public health, we need to make sure that that is done on the public health contribution, as opposed to strictly on the producers.

1440

They went on to say, "They should move forward so as to not put Ontario animal producers at a competitive disadvantage relative to other national or international producers."

The government must ensure that funding is available when the requirement for traceability is introduced. Too many farmers tried to access funding from the food and safety traceability initiative, only to be told that the money for this year was gone and to not even bother applying. They need to know that there will be sufficient funding available and these costs will not be passed on to the farmers.

Perhaps the members on the other side of the House have been in Toronto too long and aren't aware of the state of agriculture in Ontario. Maybe they haven't heard from the hog farmers who are on the very verge of losing their farms. I received an e-mail from one last week who said, "We are again a day closer to bankruptcy," and asked once again why the provincial government wasn't helping them.

Maybe the minister and the members on the other side of the House haven't heard from the cattle farmers who say they can't afford to continue. I just want to point out on the cattle, hog and horticulture program that we've talked about in this House a number of times, and we keep hearing the minister expounding that there are other alternatives for these farmers, that the problem with

shutting off the hydro and having someone going out of business is not a provincial problem. This is, I suppose the minister would suggest, a self-inflicted problem by those 100 farmers who were totally missed out in the program that the government put in place. Maybe I should just read it.

On December 13, 2007, Dwight Duncan announced \$150 million in his budget or his update. It "will provide \$150 million in new dollars to strengthen competitiveness and to help cattle, hog and horticulture farmers manage the current"—not three-year-old—"market conditions. The Minister of Agriculture will work with the farming community to get this help to our farming families quickly." That was the announcement.

On February 12, I had the opportunity to tell the minister that I had heard from a lot of my constituents who were going to be missed by the program because there was no application form and the people who didn't apply for certain federal programs would not be eligible for this one, and that would invariably be the young, new and beginning farmers. Of course, nothing was done in March. This was in order to get the money out quickly. The announcement was made December 13, but we didn't have time to get the information to the proper people. The cheques went out in March. The cheques were dated, incidentally, February 27, but they went out in March.

This is the minister's answer to the question on March 17: "We have recognized that over a number of years, in the hog, cattle and horticulture sector, there has been serious hurt. That is why the dollars have flowed the way they have. That is why they have been delivered the way they have to farmers who, over a number of years, have suffered losses."

All of a sudden the minister has changed the finance minister's direction in his statement that it was going to be for the immediate hurt. The minister has now decided it's for the long-term losses that they've had. In fact, it was such a long term that people who were no longer in agriculture were getting cheques. In fact, my understanding was there were even some who were no longer anywhere—

Interjection: With us.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —with us who got cheques, and yet there were people who were keeping many, many hogs in 2007, when the minister announced that for the immediate hurt this money was available who were totally missed in that.

This is the minister's answer: "When we spoke with the stakeholders for cattle, hog and horticulture, they made it very clear that they wanted the money to their producers as quickly as possible. We committed to them that the fastest way to get these dollars to the producers was to use information we had in our system"—not current information; information we had in our system from the historical past—"so there was no requirement for application."

No, there wasn't. Not only was there no requirement for application; there was no system for applications for new farmers.

So again, it goes back to a previous time when a minister was asked how come he sent out a whole bunch of money without application, and he said, "Because I had to get it out in a hurry." I don't believe that's the appropriate way to deal with the agriculture community. I don't believe that's the appropriate way to deal with anyone and particularly with government money.

I just want to point out that that program uses 2005 and 2006 as qualifying years, which eliminates farmers who started in 2007. So immediately from day one, anyone who started in hog production in 2007 didn't get any assistance in 2008 to cover the losses of 2007.

The program uses 2000 to 2004 as reference years to calculate the annual net allowable sales. For new farmers or ones who have undergone large expansion in that time period, it's unlikely to be an accurate reflection of the size of their operation.

I just want to read this one. It's also out of Hansard from March 17. The minister—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Oxford, it would be helpful if you told us, from time to time, through the Chair, how this relates to Bill 204.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. We will be getting to that, because I think it's about the credibility—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd like you to get to it rather quickly.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As soon as I get to it, we'll let you know, Mr. Speaker.

The minister's answer was: "I think it is important to make some very important clarifications with respect to this program. We had the opportunity to meet with the cattle producers and the pork producers, who explained to us the fact that over a number of years there's been significant hardship in their particular sectors and that this government had a role to play. Our government has stepped up to the plate. We have recognized that over a number of years, in the hog, cattle and horticulture sector, there has been serious hurt." I'm not sure why they didn't realize that in 2006, but they realized in 2008 that it had been going on for quite a number of years. "That is why the dollars have flowed the way they have. That is why they have been delivered the way they have to farmers who, over a number of years, have suffered losses."

Again, I just want to point out that there's some question about the relationship between what the minister says and what the government is doing. That's why I think it's so important to make sure that we understand that leaving so much to regulation in this bill without having it defined for our agriculture community is of great concern. That's why I just wanted to point that out, and that's why I'm right back to where you wanted me to be. Thank you very much.

Last week, our leader and myself met with the fruit and vegetable growers and the tender fruit marketing board. They're very concerned about their members' survival as the costs keep increasing. Again, this is the

same thing: dealing with putting forward regulations that have no visible means of support other than the farmers having to pay for them.

The same day, I received an e-mail from a fruit winery that is being forced into bankruptcy and their assets are being seized because they couldn't get access to markets to sell their products, something that this government could have addressed by moving forward with the private member's bill introduced by the member from Leeds-Grenville that would have allowed the sale of fruit wines—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I know the member from Oxford is struggling to get back to the bill, but really, I don't see that it has anything to do with fruit wines. So please, help the Chair do what we're supposed to do, and that's address the bill on the floor.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm doing that, because I think this bill is all about the credibility of the minister and whether she will fairly treat the commitments that she's making in this bill, which has no parameters around it as to where it's going to go after that, and I think it's very important that our agriculture community gets the opportunity to hear the challenges that we face with this bill.

The farmers are already struggling, and that's why they can't handle the load of more regulations and more red tape piled on the regulations and red tape that they already face and manage to stay in business. They're already struggling. They're trying their best for their families, and thanks to this government, they soon are going to have to pay extra with the HST.

We can all agree that the goal of protecting food safety, and both animal and human health—I think we can also agree that the government needs the tools to be able to prevent and control diseases. When the draft legislation was introduced this spring, many of the agricultural organizations commented that it was too broad and went beyond what was required. I think that's where I started in this discussion, that it's far broader than it needs to be for the purpose for which the government introduced it.

1450

In their submission, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said, "The scope of any new on-farm animal care and housing standards or regulations should be restricted to animal health emergency situations that require a rapid response to control and contain disease outbreaks." That is one of the farm organizations that the government says supports this legislation, but they have grave concerns that the legislation goes well beyond what it needs to do.

The Ontario Farm Animal Council said in their submission, "We are also of the opinion, however, that the proposed legislation oversteps its mandate. The intent to regulate the handling and housing of livestock as described under the animal health promotion proposal must be restricted under the act to emergency measures and situations involving the containment and remediation of animal disease outbreaks and contamination." Again, it goes back to the credibility: What is it that the bill is in-

tending to do, and why is it so much broader than it needs to be to accomplish the health and safety of the food? They raise concerns that including non-emergency standards for animal health care will lead to another layer of duplication and red tape.

In their submission, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture stated, "The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) has been given a mandate to protect all animals.... As the OSPCA Act has been recently updated, we believe this easily provides enough regulation to account for animal welfare issues."

The Ontario Farm Animal Council had similar comments in their submission, and again, the control and dealing with the animal itself and the protection of animals is already covered in another piece of legislation, It has very little, if anything, to do with the need that the minister expressed at the start of this legislation to be dealt with.

Stakeholders, with some conditions, of course, have indicated their support for the traceability part of the bill. There is even support for animal health legislation, but not one agricultural organization or farmer indicated support for more red tape, which is what this bill creates. Not one stakeholder asked that we take away the rights of individual farmers in order to implement that red tape, and certainly no agricultural group in Ontario asked to have more cost put on the farmers.

To make sure I relate it to the topic at hand, I want to read a section of the communiqué that was written after the ministers' meeting in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I think it's very important for the record: "Ministers committed to move forward on a comprehensive national traceability system for livestock and poultry, which is critical for managing animal health and food safety issues, as well as expanding market access and driving efficiencies. They agreed that a mandatory comprehensive national system for livestock will be in place by 2011 and that implementation will be supported by national funding and regulatory framework. Ministers committed to engage key industry groups in the timing of implementation for each species. The Going Forward policy framework and agricultural flexibility fund will provide support for key elements of the national system. Ministers also discussed the need for traceability for all sectors.

"Ministers acknowledged the positive steps taken to engage trading partners on key market access...."

The communiqué from that meeting with all the ministers was that what we needed was a national traceability program in this province or in this country. In fact, I gather from the way it's written that the minister is holding back the commitment from actually supporting that for fear that we become part of one program rather than having duplication and overlap and have two programs, one the national one and one the provincial, all dealing with the same farmers here.

I just wanted to talk a bit about the regulation and the red tape. As with many other bills introduced by this government, there's far too much left to the regulations, and the minister mentioned the section in the bill. Out of

64 pages, eight of them, almost 10%, are just listing the regulations to make this act work. It seems to me to be a little excessive in the ability to make regulations as opposed to actually doing something in the bill. Increased regulation is the exact opposite of what the stakeholders asked for. In fact, in the submission to the draft legislation, Ontario Pork said, "This proposed legislation must work towards reducing the regulatory burden on the livestock industry and its ancillary industries." That was their comment. This is another group that supports the principle of introducing this legislation.

One of the areas of particular concern for farmers is section 63, which allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to "make regulations governing licences, certificates, registrations and permits, including,

"(a) prescribing activities for which a licence, certificate, registration or permit is required...."

There is nothing in this news release announcing this bill that tells the farmers there will be new licences, certificates, registrations and permits. There has been nothing in the minister's remarks that explains how this new layer of red tape would help farmers improve animal health. It's simply another layer of red tape that costs farmers both time and money without demonstrating any benefits to animal or human health. There is nothing there that would even suggest that there was a need for licensing in the process of trying to protect health and prevent the spread of disease by the Chief Veterinarian of Ontario.

Farmers will tell you that they already are drowning in red tape and unnecessary regulations. All the time that they spend filling out paperwork, trying to figure out what they need to do to comply with the latest regulations and dealing with different government bureaucrats, is less time that they can spend with their animals or producing the food that we rely on.

In their submission, Ontario Pork said, "Ontario's livestock commodities alone cannot bear the cost of regulations that put them at a disadvantage to imported products that do not have to meet the same standards. In order for domestic regulation to be effective in providing protection for all, Ontario must have a strong and vibrant domestic market, not one that is at a competitive disadvantage due to excessive and burdensome government regulation."

We know that many of the farmers are already struggling to make ends meet, and many of them are on the verge of losing their farms. We heard last week the story of the hog farmer—and we heard about that in question period today—whose power was cut off simply because he couldn't afford to pay his bills. For several days, he had to rely on the generosity of friends to supply diesel fuel for the generators that kept his 4,500 hogs fed and kept the ventilation going in the barn.

In an e-mail he said: "As young hog producers (my brother, 29, and myself, 36) with across-Canada award-winning production, after being left out of the OCHHP program, with the fed loan program being announced late and our provincial government doing nothing for its

producer in this 60-year crisis (while our neighbouring province pays out millions of dollars in support ... \$330 million so far this year) we believe that the support we receive is a crying shame.”

Again, this is a farmer who is not in the position to be paying more money to build a traceability or animal health system. So again, it speaks to the need for the government, if they're going to put regulations in place, to properly fund them, and furthermore, to prove that those regulations that are being put in place are there for a purpose, not just to have them put there.

Minister, although you refuse to acknowledge it, many of our farmers are already at the breaking point. They can't handle more costs downloaded from the government. Farmers have been telling the minister that they cannot afford any new costs, but instead of providing compensation for the increased burdens of the paperwork, the minister gave herself the ability through regulation to impose new fees—again, for things like regulations and licences. We have no idea what the licences would apply to, but yet there it is: the ability to charge fees for licences.

Section 64 of the bill says: “The minister may make regulations governing fees under this act, including,

“(a) requiring the payment of fees;

“(b) prescribing fees or the manner of calculating fees for the purposes of this act and regulations and for services provided under this act”—so we can send the inspectors in and she can set a standard of fees to pay for the inspector to come and inspect the property;

“(c) prescribing fees or the manner of calculating fees that are payable under this act in respect of applications for permits, licences, registrations, certificates, amendments and renewals of any of them and other administrative matters....”

Nowhere in the minister's remarks does she explain how new fees would improve animal health, human health or food safety. Nowhere does she explain why new fees would be required.

If the minister would just talk to the farmers, she would hear that they can't afford to pay more fees and they can't afford more paperwork. They are struggling to hold their farms, feed their animals and keep the lights on.

I do want to go directly—and this will make the Speaker very happy, I'm sure—to dealing with the bill section by section.

While we agree with food safety, this bill goes too far in removing the rights of individuals, in many cases without any foreseeable benefit to animal or human health, and in general terms I've explained that.

1500

We understand that in emergency situations, broad powers are required to allow disease to be contained quickly and effectively. I think everyone would agree with that. However, we need to ensure that the powers required in those circumstances are not abused in non-emergency situations. In many cases, it is because farmers are dealing with animal health and biosecurity that they are very cautious who has access to their farm

and their animals. If farmers believe that an individual has been on another farm where a disease is present, they may very well have very legitimate concerns about that person being near their animals. Except in the most urgent cases, where there is an immediate threat to animal or human health, we cannot allow legislation which overrides an individual's rights.

For instance, section 18 of the Animal Health Act allows inspectors to enter and inspect private property in a number of situations, including inspections for the purpose of “determining whether a person who holds a licence, certificate, registration or permit is carrying on an activity in accordance with the licence, certificate, registration or permit, including any conditions attached to it ... determining whether a person is carrying on an activity for which a licence, certificate, registration or permit is required under this act, where the inspector has reasonable grounds to believe that the activity is occurring.”

To me, I don't know why it takes that much explanation to say that if there is reasonable reason to believe that there is an infectious disease there, they can go in. But when you start talking about things that aren't licensed at all, we haven't yet heard how the minister is going to license them and how much they're going to charge for the fee to do that. Once you put the licence in place, the conditions you apply to the licence now allow someone without search or seizure warrants to go in and check to see what's going on in that barn. I think that's going well beyond the need to protect the health of the animals or human health.

But I think the bigger issue in this section is that this new inspector is being allowed to go into the private property not because there is a concern for food safety, not because there is a concern for animal or human health, but because there is a concern about whether the farmer has all the paperwork in order. I don't call that an emergency. I don't believe that checking out to make sure that a farmer has the right licence is so urgent that an inspector can't take the time to get the consent of the farmer to enter the property or to go to the justice of the peace and make the case that there is a requirement for inspections of the property.

The same problem occurs in section 58, which states, “A person who has authority under this act to order that a thing be done on or in any place also has authority to order any person who owns, occupies or has the charge, management or control of the place to permit access to the place for the purpose of doing the thing.” The police may be able to lay a charge inside a home, but that doesn't give them the right to access it without a warrant or consent, and this is the problem. This is giving more powers to the individual who is doing inspecting on behalf of chief veterinarian or on behalf of the minister than the police officer has. Inspectors shouldn't have the automatic right to access just because they can lay charges.

This bill outlines a number of other situations which a warrant is not required in section 41, which states, “If an inspector has reasonable grounds to believe that there is

something at or in a premises or on or in a conveyance that will afford evidence of an offence under this act but that the time required to obtain a warrant would lead to the loss, removal or destruction of the evidence, the inspector may, without a warrant, enter and search the premises or conveyance.” I would suggest that if whatever it was that the inspector was inspecting for can completely disappear in the time it takes to give a warrant, the risk for protecting the health and safety of our animals or our people isn't really relevant. If the risk is gone by the time we have the warrant, then I don't think the risk was there in the first place. I don't believe that that's an emergency situation that would require entrance without a warrant.

We need to be very careful that we are not removing the right of an individual unless it's absolutely necessary. For instance, without obtaining a warrant, this bill allows inspectors to access private property that isn't even related to the property being inspected: “An inspector who has the power to enter any land, building or other place under sections 41 and 42, and any person authorized under this act to accompany the inspector, may enter and pass through other private property for the purpose of reaching the land, building or other place.” So now we have an entry across someone else's property who has no connection to the suspected offence, and we don't need to get a warrant for that either. Again, I believe that that's going beyond what we need in order to accomplish it. When it is an emergency, why is it too much to ask the inspector to go through the proper channels and have permission to cross the land included in the warrant? Shouldn't the farmer who is on the adjacent property have the say of who crosses their property or is exposed to his animals?

I also want to raise the concern about section 30. This section says that people carrying out orders issued by the minister or chief veterinarian may, if authorized by warrant, “use reasonable force.” Now, the people carrying out these orders, such as euthanizing an animal, are likely to be vets or experts in animal health. I believe that expecting them, or even giving them the right, to use reasonable force puts them in an unfair situation. I expect a vet to be an expert on animals, not on how to use force.

The bill clearly states that the inspector may ask the OPP to accompany them when required. OPP officers are trained to deal with difficult situations. Wouldn't it make more sense for them to deal with the issue involving force? Why would we create a situation where untrained people are allowed to use force or act as a secondary police force? Again, I think it goes well beyond what we needed to do to correct the situation to deal with what the minister said the act was for.

Many agriculture organizations asked for the Office of the Chief Veterinarian, and I want to commend the minister for the appointment; I think Ms. Stark will be a very good chief veterinarian. The legislation to ensure that in an emergency situation, he or she has the power required to take action to protect the health of Ontarians, the health of animals and safety of our food supply, I think is very important.

Specifically, the agricultural organizations ask that in an emergency situation involving animal health, the role of the chief veterinarian be equal to that of the chief medical officer of health, and I agree with that. The Ontario Cattlemen's Association said in a recent e-mail, “It is essential that the Office of Chief Veterinarian for Ontario is recognized as an equal component of Ontario's emergency management authority, and that the OCVO is given the resources necessary to effectively implement Ontario animal health legislation.”

So it is disappointing to me that the proposed requirements for the chief veterinarian are of a lower standard than those of our chief medical officer of health. For instance, in order to be appointed the chief medical officer of health, that person must have been a practising physician for five years. It seems logical there would be a similar requirement for the chief veterinarian. It would ensure that the chief veterinarian not only has expertise but has at least five years of hands-on, practical experience. The chief veterinarian must not only be an expert on animal health and disease; he or she must also be knowledgeable about farming and farming processes. I want to point out that our current chief veterinarian, Deb Stark, spent five years in a mixed veterinary practice before joining the Ministry of Agriculture, and I'm sure she uses that experience frequently in her work.

I was also disappointed to see that the Legislature requires the chief veterinarian to be an employee. While the best candidate for this position may be a current employee, I think we can all agree that this is a very important role, and limiting the number of experts who can be appointed to this position seems contrary to the goal to ensure that Ontario has the best protection for our animal health. Once we put the best expert in the role of chief veterinarian, we must respect that expertise and give them the resources they need to do their job. Yet, in the very section of the bill that establishes the role of the chief veterinarian, the minister is given the authority, through regulations, to clarify, modify and restrict the chief veterinarian's authority. Why appoint an expert and then restrict their ability to do the job that they need to do? It seems counterproductive, to say it in a polite way, that at some point, because the chief veterinarian believes something needs to be done against the wishes of the government of the day, the minister could, by regulation, stop them from doing it. It just doesn't make sense. This allows the minister to overrule the chief veterinarian based on political influence. If there is an animal health disease outbreak in Ontario, we need to be careful that the decisions that are made are based on expertise and scientific research, not political influence. I think that's so important. I think of the first time I read the whole bill; that was the number one issue. If we're doing it for the public safety, we need to make sure that the best possible public safety that we can put in place, we put in place and we don't have a system where that can be overruled for other considerations.

1510

In their submission, Ontario Pork asked that the Office of the Chief Veterinarian “be given the authority to act

independent of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in reacting to specific situations that may place human or animal health and welfare at risk and placing Ontario in a clear leadership role by removing the potential perception of political interference in such emergencies.” This bill should be amended to ensure that the chief veterinarian has the authority to do their job, and I couldn’t agree more with Ontario Pork in that instance, that that office, if we’re going to have it, would have the authority to do the job properly.

As we consider this legislation, I think it is important to recognize that the animal health legislation and traceability system are sometimes—that it’s the legislation the agriculture industry asked for. I know there are a number of things in this bill that they will object to, such as new licences and permits, and I spoke to those. But I think we need to recognize that the industry’s goal is the same as is stated in the legislation. Farmers know, probably better than government, the impact of animal disease on their industry. Even diseases that don’t have a serious risk to human health can have a huge economic impact on the industry. I have to admit that I was surprised at how heavy-handed and punitive this bill seems.

We need to be able to deal with cases where there is negligence or fraud, but, at the same time, the inspectors need to be able to deal with lesser cases. This bill defines not only the maximum penalty but requires that people who are convicted of a first offence face “a fine of not less than \$1,000” per day “on which the offence occurs or continues.” This can include a member of the public who saw a hazard but didn’t know they needed to report it. This could include someone who failed to answer a question from one of the inspectors, and it could even include a person who is implementing an order of the chief veterinarian if the chief veterinarian had decided to implement the order themselves.

As well, if a person is convicted under this act, anything that has been seized, from animals, animal by-products to storage vessels and “any other thing seized in connection with the animal,” is all forfeited to the crown in the right of Ontario. The value of these items could far exceed the maximum fine.

I’m also concerned with section 40, which allows the director or inspector to file a notice requiring someone to pay an administrative penalty up to two years after the director or inspector found out about the contravention or should have known about the contravention—not two years after the contravention or offence, but two years after the inspector knew or should have known about it. That goes well beyond the norm, and I think it’s very, very punitive. I understand that sometimes it may take the inspector time to determine whether something was done incorrectly, but allowing the inspector two years after he found out about the problem seems unreasonable to me.

I’d like to also talk a little bit about the compensation. Section 26 says that the minister may provide compensation, leaving it up to the minister’s determination. In a recent e-mail, the Ontario Cattlemen raised a concern

about the section and asked for additional clarification. In fact, many of the agriculture groups gave their support on the condition that proper compensation be provided. For instance, the chicken farmers said in their submission that regulation-making powers are appropriate, provided there is an adequate compensation package. This section, as it is currently written, means that it is up to the minister to decide the compensation the farmers deserve. It also means that the decision may be made based more on budget implications or political science than what the farmer deserves. I think it is an indication of how compensation is viewed by the minister and the ministry.

At the briefing I received last week, compensation was described as discretionary. That same wording was used in an internal briefing for ministry staff. Discretionary is well beyond what the farmers are expecting in this. It’s implying that, if the ministry decides that the budget is already stressed this year, this may not be able to be covered. So if it’s discretionary, she has all the power she needs not to pay it, and I think that’s wrong.

This means that an inspector or any other official could order that a farmer’s livestock be destroyed as a preventive measure and that it is up to the minister what compensation, if any, he should receive for those animals. After dealing with this government on the cost of the greenbelt, the cost of endangered species and the cost of the Clean Water Act, farmers are understandably a little concerned that that compensation is not clearly defined. I think even the minister would agree that it would be better if it was clearly defined what the compensation was going to be.

In their submission, the Ontario Cattlemen’s Association identified a number of other circumstances in which farmers should be eligible for compensation, including losses from quarantine, extra feeding costs, lost market value due to weight or age and testing costs. All of these seem to be missing from the current version of the bill.

Again, I point these out because I think it’s so important that the government, in their presentation, used the support of all these organizations that supported the bill on condition that these things would be dealt with. So far they haven’t been dealt with, and I’m hopeful that as we go through these when it goes to committee, they will be dealt with. While the stated goal of the bill might be admirable and one we can all agree on, it’s once again in the details where the legislation fails. Again, this is in a number of other areas we’ve had before.

I want to mention a few of the sections that should be reviewed to ensure that we have the very best animal health legislation possible.

Section 7 requires that all people report hazards, and makes it an offence not to comply. The challenge is that most people would not recognize a hazard and would be unlikely to know what to do if they saw one. One of the agriculture groups rightly pointed out that if a farmer has a sick animal and doesn’t recognize the disease, the first call is likely to the vet, not the chef veterinarian.

Section 11 protects people from repercussions if they incorrectly report a hazard, as long as it’s done in good

faith. While it is important to have that protection to ensure reporting, there are also some concerns that this may allow frivolous false reports. This happens in a lot of facets of our lives: Somebody wants to get back at someone and they report them, and it could cause quite a challenge to the people who are mentioned in the report. In fact, visibly making an exception for any frivolous reporting, that they would be exempt from prosecution, I think is going a little far the other way to make sure we have people running around who could use this for the wrong purposes.

One of the challenges in this legislation is that it must deal with different levels of urgency related to animal disease outbreaks, from observation to the need for immediate action to ensure the disease is contained. Section 20 deals with cases where there is an extreme urgency, allowing inspectors to issue orders orally. If issuing them in writing would delay it, I think we can all agree that in an emergency situation that seems like a reasonable thing to do.

However, the bill goes on to say that the written copy of the order does not have to be delivered until seven days after the oral one is given. So this gives the person seven days to put it in writing. Since the information about how to appeal the order is contained in the order, and the owner or guardian is likely ordered to take action sooner than seven days, this effectively eliminates or at least severely limits the ability to appeal the order. We have seven days to appeal the order from the time the order is issued orally, but we don't get the written order saying how we can appeal it until seven days later.

In fact, section 34 outlines the process of reviewing inspectors' orders. It requires that the request for a review be submitted within seven days. If the written order is not delivered for seven days, this leaves the person receiving the order with little or no time to appeal after receiving the order.

There are times when members of the public look at government action and legislation and just shake their heads. They wonder where the common sense has gone. I think section 29 might be a good example of that. This section says that in certain circumstances the chief veterinarian can, instead of simply issuing an order, take action to implement the order. This covers a number of reasonable situations, such as when a person has refused to implement the order, cannot be served with an order or is requesting assistance. However, one of the circumstances outlined is that the person "required by the order to do the thing ... is not likely, in the chief veterinarian for Ontario's opinion, to comply with the order in accordance with its requirements." So the chief veterinarian has the right to implement the order simply because he or she thinks the farmer wouldn't comply with it; not because it's urgent, not because the farmer has said they won't comply with it, but simply because the chief veterinarian doesn't think they will do it.

1520

The next clause is the one that causes people to question whether there is still common sense in government.

It says, "A person who receives a notice under subsection (2) shall not do the thing referred to in the notice without the permission of the chief veterinarian for Ontario or his or her designate." So the person whom the chief veterinarian doesn't think will implement the order is now forbidden from implementing the order.

If, for instance, the order was to euthanize one of the animals, the chief veterinarian can decide that the farmer won't likely do it and can take over without ever giving the farmer a chance to do it in the method he chooses or the timing he wants. If the farmer is ready to implement the order earlier than the chief veterinarian, he can't do it. Even though he never said he wouldn't comply with the order and his goal is likely the same as the chief veterinarian's—to protect the animal's health—it is in fact an offence to implement the order and could result in the farmer being fined or having some of his assets seized.

It just doesn't make sense that you could have the kind of quagmire where the order is given, they can't implement it, but the chief veterinarian can come back and implement it. If you want to implement it before he gets there, you can't do it because you have to have the chief veterinarian's permission to do it, and he can't come there until he is going to come and implement it. It just doesn't make any sense.

Section 34 of the legislation outlines the process for reviewing and reconsidering an inspector's report. There is one part of this section I want to read, because I think it is a cause for concern: "If, within seven days after receiving a written request for review or a written confirmation of an oral request for review, the director does not make a decision under subsection (6) and serve notice of the decision on the person requesting the review, the director is deemed to have made an order confirming the order of the inspector."

What this means is that if someone is appealing an order and no one from the government looks at that for a week, the appeal is turned down. So if the paperwork gets misplaced or someone is on vacation, the appeal gets turned down. I don't think that's a sufficient answer for the farmer who appealed the order. It is possible that the inspector who issued the order made an honest mistake and the farmer is trying to have it corrected. It is also possible that the mistake is going to have serious financial consequences to the farmer. I don't think it's too much to ask, before the farmer spends the time and money to comply with the order, that the director have the time to respond to the appeal.

If you need to add a clause to deal with outbreaks where there might be a large volume of appeals, then there should be an amendment to that effect. It shouldn't be handled by lowering the level of responsibility on every appeal. Our government has a duty to be there to help our farmers. We should be trying to increase the standards and be more responsive.

I want to reiterate that the PC caucus supports food safety and animal health. We believe the industry has been taking important steps to implement traceability and food safety systems, and we support their efforts. We hope that steps can be taken to move traceability systems

forward and ensure that proper compensation is provided. We are willing to work with the government to ensure that this bill accomplishes the goal of improving animal health and providing the tools to deal with animal disease emergencies without necessarily adding burdens on our farmers.

I want to just quickly read a couple of responses—I know we've had some discussions about the support, or lack thereof, for the legislation, and we have some comments back from organizations. The first one is from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, which of course is one of the sectors of our agriculture community that is very much impacted by the legislation and the enforcement of it:

"OCA appreciates that traceability is a valuable component of a strong animal health system. We have encouraged Minister Dombrowsky to follow the national approach started by the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, which is industry-led. Our chair met Minister Dombrowsky in June and was able to explain some of that approach to her in the time he was given. We know traceability is a priority of both the federal and provincial governments and are willing to work with them to properly implement traceability in Ontario.

"The reason we are lobbying this approach is that CCIA has already implemented an animal identification system that is supported by the Canadian cattle industry. CCIA is also capable of capturing premise ID data and full animal movement tracking and OCA would not oppose mandatory premise ID, as long as registration is captured in the already existing CCIA database, and not through another new registry.

"With all the challenges we're already facing, from a profitability perspective, Ontario cattle producers should not be placed at a further competitive disadvantage to other Canadian cattle producers. While we acknowledge that Quebec has a mandatory traceability system, Ontario needs to be competitive with the western provinces as our supply chain is integrated with the west, so we also requested that no additional costs be placed on Ontario beef producers.

"OMAFRA defines traceability as: 'the ability to trace and follow food, feed, food-producing animals or substances through all stages of production and distribution. In other words, traceability is the process of tracking an identified product (and its attributes) as it moves between locations.' OCA and industry are still unclear, however on how this definition would manifest itself in terms of industry, and we anticipate further details on that."

"We are hearing that the bill will be going to second reading next week so if you have any issues that you would like us to raise please let me know."

That is the information we got from the Ontario cattlemen. Obviously, on their behalf, I wanted to read that into the record, because that was their—and when I read that last line, it was because we asked them what their position was on the present act, and that was one of the things they wrote to us that they would like brought up in second reading of the bill. So we very much appreciate doing that on their behalf.

On the mandatory reporting part of it, we have a presentation from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture:

"The OFA recognizes that immediate reporting of certain animal health hazards is a crucial first step to organizing a response to an emergency and minimizing the negative impacts to the agricultural sector. Producers, however, are already subject to considerable administrative and reporting responsibilities. These administrative responsibilities impose considerable costs that are not necessarily reflected in the price received by the producer. As such, any reporting may be seen as a potential and significant burden.

"The OFA strongly recommends that the ministry establish a mechanism for mandatory reporting that does not invoke significant additional costs and does not contribute to further burden. To do so, a comprehensive mechanism for compensation should be developed and readily available."

Again, that was a reply from the OFA.

There are a couple of other ones here from the OFA. This is on traceability:

"The OFA insists that farmers not be forced to bear the cost of regulations that result in a public benefit. Although we are not aware of a definitive cost-benefit analysis, we believe trace-back systems will provide more benefit to the consumer than the farmer. Costs associated with introducing traceability must have a mechanism to enable implementation costs to be transmitted down the market chain to be absorbed by the consumer, or otherwise covered by government assistance programs.

"Traceability initiatives should be specific to and designed compatibly with individual commodity circumstances. They should move forward so as to not put Ontario animal producers at a competitive disadvantage relative to other national or international producers. Legislation must recognize only certain sectors will benefit from provincial level traceability programs, while other sectors would benefit from being organized under national and perhaps international traceability programs. Traceability initiatives should be driven by demand and should be reflective of each commodity group's capacity to adopt best practices and standards.

"Should regulations governing traceability become mandatory, any proposed traceability systems must be flexible to accommodate existing programs and any programs currently being proposed by commodity groups."

1530

There are a couple other paragraphs that I'd just like to point out.

"The stated goal of this proposed legislation"—this is again from the federation of agriculture—"is to safeguard the province from the negative health and economic consequences associated with serious animal health events—particularly emergency disease outbreaks. The scope of any new on-farm animal care and housing standards or regulations should be restricted to animal health emergency situations that require a rapid response to control and contain disease outbreaks...."

“The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) has been given a mandate to protect all animals in Ontario. As the OSPCA Act has been recently updated, we believe this easily provides enough regulation to account for animal welfare issues.”

They want to make sure that this act doesn't extend beyond the health issues for our animals and that the animal health issues remain in the animal health protection act.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that in the time I had, I did get back to deal with the issues of the act. We very much appreciate your indulgence and the time that you allowed.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to congratulate the honourable Mr. Hardeman, who, as the agricultural and food critic for the Conservative caucus, always distinguishes himself with his knowledge, experience and expertise. I think he has delineated for us here today exactly why this bill needs to go to committee: because there are a number of questions that need to be asked and answered not only for individual farmers, but for farm organizations, for food processors and for people across Ontario who consume food products.

I think there are a number of questions that he has raised that illustrate why this bill needs to go to committee and why a number of organizations need to have the opportunity to come and discuss these issues, and to raise solutions, or to raise with government the fact that perhaps the bill is not exactly as advertised.

New Democrats believe that public hearings should not just be held here at Queen's Park. Because this is a bill which has the capacity to affect farmers and farm organizations and, indeed, individual Ontarians from one end of the province to the other, New Democrats believe that public hearings should be held in a number of locations across the province, so that farmers and people in the farm community will have an opportunity to discuss further what exactly is in the bill, what exactly isn't in the bill, how it's going to be implemented, what the mechanisms are going to be and who's going to pay for it.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: I appreciate the comments of the members from Oxford and Kenora-Rainy River, particularly the member from Oxford. I appreciate the experience that he brings to the debate, and I also appreciate that he has made some suggestions instead of just simply criticizing. That's something we don't hear around here all that often, so I appreciate that.

I'm very aware of the state of agriculture. Most of my neighbours are farmers. I've heard from them on a daily basis. I've asked them over the past couple of weeks, since this bill was introduced, to get in touch with me, to bring their comments to me, and directed them to the bill.

This bill is about protecting the agriculture industry. We all know what happened the last time there was an outbreak of BSE. The borders were closed. The industry

virtually shut down. Through the efforts that are being made in this bill, it is the hope that if there's ever another outbreak of any kind, we will have the system in place so that the whole industry does not suffer because of one or two cases.

It was interesting to hear the comments about inspectors made by the member from Oxford, in light of what happened with the inspectors we had during the end of the 1990s, nearly 10 years ago, and the problems that we encountered because of a lack of inspectors.

Our government has a very good record regarding bills going to committee, and I'm sure that this bill will go to committee to gather the input from stakeholders. That's part of what democracy is all about: hearing from the people who are most affected and most concerned about this bill.

Once again, I appreciate the comments that were made. I have taken copious amounts of notes, and I look forward to further comments as the bill is debated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? Now the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also want to compliment the member from Oxford, as everyone who has spoken relates to that, and thank him for the work he's done and for the points he brought to the debate on this important bill. I think we're going to kind of repeat much of what he said, which is clearly the duty in the two minutes here: to say that we support the goals of food safety and animal health. Certainly, I think, all of us do.

Sometimes you wonder what else is in the bill. When you look at this bill—and I think the members pointed it out—it's just riddled with red tape. That's really a cautionary note to all members who are trying to serve their constituents. My riding of Durham is one of the richest parts of agriculture in Ontario. Often we think of everything west of Yonge street being the food basket of Ontario, but certainly east of Yonge street is very, very innovative, creative agricultural—agri-business that I will be speaking about in the time that I will be allotted.

There's no better spokesperson on our side than the member from Oxford, and I think that it's like the OFA—we kind of wait for them to come up with the response to these things, and they have their concerns. They've put them on the table.

The member from Oxford raised a point, and the minister may have two minutes here to respond. Are you going to have public hearings? We don't want the song and dance, the soft shoe, skating around, figure skating. What we want is a yes or no? Or are you waiting for Premier McGuinty to run the show here, as he has with eHealth and the other things too?

My point, though, is that we believe it's a laudable objective. I think all Ontarians understand that. But when you peel off the skin of the orange here and get into the layers, you are going to find it's more like a pomegranate. You're opening up a whole bunch of seeds, what I call regulations. I'm concerned. Quite honestly, if they're going to have to pay for their own livestock identification issues, this is just more tax—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I just want to also add my comments to the presentation made by the member for Oxford. There are a few things I want to remind the member of. You were talking about the licensing. We are repealing three acts and incorporating them into this one, including the Livestock Community Sales Act. When I look at page 9, when you talk about section 12, and I read through it, I see licensing as it relates to livestock yards and the ability to repeal, take away, or refuse to license those types of entities. I think that's appropriate inside this act, since we are, as I say, bringing three other acts into this one as well.

I also want to just kind of quickly touch on the issue of the warrants. The member from Oxford talked about the ability of an inspector to go on to a property without a warrant. I am reminded of the "Shoot, shovel and shut up" syndrome, which we heard about before. It is possible. As a farmer, I can tell you that if I wanted to hide something, I could do it quickly enough, and it would be very difficult for an inspector, after the fact, to come in with a warrant and prove that there was an issue or a problem on my farm. It can be done. As I said, we talked about that when we heard—and many farmers will say, to avoid a problem, "Why don't we just hide it?"

It does our industry no good to pretend something isn't wrong. As a matter of fact, it's not only a danger to the farmer's operation, it's a danger to his neighbours as well. So we need to have the ability, if there is a real suspicion that there's something wrong, for an inspector to go in—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Oxford.

1540

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Oxford—I've done that before and I apologize.

The member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out that it's easy to do. Obviously, you just made the wrong turn when you left Toronto.

I want to thank the members from Kenora-Rainy River, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Durham and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for their comments. I'm appreciative of the fact that just about everyone from the government side who has spoken said that of course this will go to committee. I think it's very important that we go to committee and hear from all the stakeholders who have a vested interest in the results of this.

But I just want to point out that it's not only important to go to committee, it's also important that when we get to committee the discussion that takes place and the concerns that are expressed by the stakeholders reflect in the end result of the committee. As we've heard from the previous speaker, this government has a great track record of going to committee, but no one mentioned the track record of making amendments in committee. I

would hope that the minister would take that seriously and look at making this a better piece of legislation because of what happens in committee. As they may have taken, from the present structure of the committee—as I pointed out the concerns I had with the legislation, I find it very difficult to support it. With sufficient and the right amendments, I think the principle of what you're trying to do is very supportable, so I would look forward to working with the government to make sure we get a piece of legislation that is acceptable not only to the government but to all the stakeholders involved.

As it relates to the licensing, I would not be so concerned if I could be assured that the licensing only reflected on the sales barns act that is being repealed or the Bees Act that's being repealed, that it doesn't all of a sudden open the floodgates so you could put licensing in. You could actually issue a licence—and I'm just putting this out—for someone to keep broilers. Now that would not be acceptable to the broiler industry, would not be acceptable to the agriculture industry in Ontario, but the act allows that, so I would be concerned with that.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: On behalf of New Democrats, I want to indicate at this time that I will be sharing my leadoff time with my esteemed colleague from Trinity-Spadina, who has indicated he also wants to speak on this bill.

It is not my intention to repeat, chapter and verse, what my colleague from Oxford has already said, although I could raise a number of the issues that he has raised. Instead, I want to focus on a couple of areas where I think there needs to be more attention paid.

Let's start with what this bill is about. The government says, in the purposes and definitions section:

"The purposes of this act are to provide for,

"(a) the protection of animal health in Ontario;

"(b) the establishment of measures to assist in the prevention of, detection of, response to, control of and recovery from hazards associated with animals that may affect animal health or human health or both;

"(c) the regulation of activities related to animals that may affect animal health or human health or both; and

"(d) the enhancement of the safety of food and other products derived from animals that humans may consume or use."

So far, so good. This does sound like apple pie and ice cream, and who could be opposed to apple pie and ice cream? Well, I'm not here to indicate opposition; I'm here to indicate that when someone says, "We're offering you apple pie and ice cream, and isn't this wonderful?", you should look carefully and thoughtfully and ask some questions.

It seems to me that one of the big issues in terms of protection of food safety, especially when it comes to animal products, is traceability. You want to know that somebody got sick from eating this food, and Lord knows we've had some unfortunate examples here in Ontario. We've had examples in homes for the aged and

nursing homes. We've had examples in restaurants. We've had examples in meat-packing and meat processing facilities. Some people died; many other people became very ill. So one of the things you want to be able to do is take the incidence of this disease, this affliction, this illness, trace it back, find out where it came from, how widespread it is, and what needs to be done to protect the public.

Traceability, when it comes to animal products such as meat, is incredibly important. I think many reasonable people would have expected that issues of traceability would have been front and centre in this legislation; in fact, that it would have occupied the main stage. I wonder how surprised people would be if they found out that there's only one section dealing with traceability. Subsection 33(1): "The minister may establish..." It doesn't say the minister "must" establish, but if the minister feels like it, "The minister may establish and oversee the operation of a provincial traceability system for animals, animal products, animal by-products and any other thing related to animals that is prescribed." Then there's subsection (2), "Requirement to take action and reporting to ministry."

That's all there is about traceability. There's nothing that says that the minister shall. There's nothing that lays out the meat and the bones about traceability. It simply says the minister "may." So, in the context where we have seen, in many communities, seniors living in homes for the aged and nursing homes where we've seen people die and we've seen other people become very ill, and this bill is supposed to address this issue of traceability and this is all there is, I'm left to ask, "Well, what's going on here?"

I know that oftentimes when you get a bill, you also get a press release. The press release may say wonderful, wonderful things. I think most Ontarians, a great number of Ontarians, want to see some effective traceability mechanisms. I'll just list them for a while.

It will obviously be a very important issue for farmers. For farmers who grow beef, grow pork, who raise poultry, this would be a very important issue. This would be a very important issue for food processors. This would be a very important issue for food wholesalers and food retailers. This would obviously be a very important issue for restaurants, nursing homes, homes for the aged, hospitals. This would be an important health and safety issue for all those people across Ontario who say to themselves, "You know what? I'm going to Buy Ontario. I'm going to make sure I buy pork, beef, poultry that's grown and processed here in Ontario." This would be an important issue for Ontario's reputation, and this would be an important issue for Ontario's economy, given that we have a very large farm sector in this province. All of these people would be interested in this, and yet I read the bill and there's just one section; nothing more. I guess if there's only one section, one has to ask, "Why is that, and what could be happening here?"

Well, I've seen legislation like this before. I remember seeing the Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act, if you

read it, sounded as if, boy, we were just going to have all of these measures and all of these mechanisms and structures to ensure that people have clean, safe drinking water, except that there was an important detail left out: who was going to pay for this. The more we read the bill, the more we realized that the province was going to pass the legislation, but it was municipalities that were going to be forced to pay for it. Municipalities didn't have any money. Municipalities were already saying, "Look, we're already stretched a dozen ways in terms of paying the bills, and we don't have the money to pay for this new infrastructure. We don't have the money to pay for these new mechanisms."

So I'm left to wonder if that's what is going on here: The province may establish a food traceability system if the federal government is prepared to pay for it. My sense is, if that's the case, then there's not much of a food traceability system here at all. That's like saying to the public, "Hey, we're going to establish wonderful regulations, but in fact the regulations don't mean anything because somebody else is supposed to pay for it."

1550

If that's not the case, if the federal government is not going to pay for it, I guess I'm asking: Are farmers then going to be forced to pay for it? If that's the case, I think this leads to even more difficulty, because I think all of us know that all you have to do is pick up a daily newspaper from virtually anywhere in the farm sector, the farm communities of this province, and you know that farmers are really facing a very difficult time. I doubt very much that farmers would have the bank of income or the bank of money in the vault to pay these additional costs.

So all of us in Ontario who care about food safety and want to see an effective traceability system for things like pork, beef, poultry and other meat products need some very clear answers from the government. Who is going to pay for this? How is it going to be paid for? But we also need some very clear answers on what this thing looks like. What does it mean: "the minister may establish"? If this is a really important part of food safety, then it seems to me there needs to be something more here than "may establish." There needs to be a commitment that this "shall" be established, and a commitment as to exactly what the mechanisms are going to be, how it's going to be paid for, who is going to pay, and what the impact is going to be on farmers, on processors, on all of us in terms of better food safety, better food protection. For this reason, New Democrats believe that this bill has to go to committee and these questions have to be asked and answered.

I want to raise some other issues that I think need to be addressed. We've heard from farmers who have said to us, "You know, sometimes in the past, the term 'food safety' has been used to justify things that have nothing to do with food safety." It's been used to put in place regulations, requirements, that are marginally related to food safety if related to food safety at all.

Let me give you just a recent example: Turkey Farmers of Ontario. I think Turkey Farmers of Ontario

are a good organization. They're in charge of organizing the growing, raising and production of turkeys in the province. But they recently passed a regulation restricting turkeys from being raised out of doors on a farm or going out of doors on a farm. The argument that was used was that if you had free-range turkeys or turkeys that were allowed to get out of their confined space for a while and go outside, this might contribute to them contracting and spreading various diseases; let's say, for example, the avian flu. And so they put in place a regulation which says, nope, you cannot raise turkeys out of doors, and if you are a turkey farmer who operates under their auspices, you can't let your turkeys out for the purposes of any sort of free-range activity.

Others may want to introduce evidence on this, but I think there's pretty questionable evidence to suggest that turkeys that are allowed time out of the barn or out of the containment area are necessarily going to be at greater risk of contracting avian flu or some other kind of disease or affliction. I think there's questionable evidence of that at best. Here's a case where, supposedly, a regulation was being enforced in the interest of food safety when I don't think that was the case at all.

Now, there were some pretty negative repercussions about this because, as many people in the Legislature know, one of the requirements, if you want to be certified as an organic farmer, is that animals such as turkeys must actually have access to the out of doors. They do have to have some free-range activity and some free-range opportunity. So in this growing market of organic food products, where people who want to purchase and consume meat and other products that have been raised organically, turkey farmers in Ontario are being shut out of that because the regulation says, "No, you can't let turkeys out of the contained area, out of the barn, and let them have free range, even for a limited time."

The regulation was even upheld by an OMAFRA food tribunal, although now that the issue is on television, on the radio and on the front pages, the minister has decided that perhaps this is an unpopular political position to be in, and so there may be some movement here.

I think we want to be thoughtful and ensure that, with this bill, we are dealing with and addressing issues of food safety and that there aren't going to be measures that can be used for things other than food safety. For that reason, I think it ought to go to committee and be subject to some careful re-examination and cross-examination.

There are other issues that I think need to be examined as well. One of the points that has been made by farmers in my part of the province is that they say, "Look, all farmers care about food safety, and we all recognize that Ontario, as a province, needs to be recognized as a jurisdiction that cares about food safety, that is promoting food safety and that is putting in place mechanisms to ensure food safety." But many of the farmers in my part of the world are small. They don't have huge farms. They aren't connected with corporate farm organizations that finance them and advance them money. Most of the

farmers in my part of the province are working off-farm as well as on-farm in order to survive.

What they've said to me is, "One of the problems we have with some of the things that have been done is that they seem only to work for the large agri-business corporations. Those of us who are small farmers are frankly being put out of business by some of these things, because it seems that when the regulations are implemented, the cost of complying is such that we can't do it, and so we're put out of business."

Since there has been no discussion about the one section—food traceability—just a bare section by itself, no mention of mechanism, no mention of who is going to pay and how they're going to pay, I think this is an issue that needs to be raised. I think it would be really unfortunate to have legislation that is supposed to ensure food safety and greater food safety simply used by big operators to put more and more small farm operations out of business in Ontario.

Let's remember that some of the problems we've had with food safety have in fact happened at some of the very large corporate operators. For somebody to point the finger at a small farmer who is raising beef, pork or poultry and say, "You're the problem, you're the issue," just wouldn't stand up, given the historical realities we've seen in this province and in this country over the last couple of years. So we believe that the legislation needs to be looked at from that perspective as well. I don't want to see a body of regulations which has the effect of literally forcing a lot of small producers and small processors out of production because the only people who can afford to meet the requirements are people who have big corporate pockets. In my view, that's headed down the wrong road.

1600

I want to also raise the issue that the government has apparently, to many farm organizations, given the understanding—the officials have spoken of their intentions to set up an advisory council to advise the chief veterinarian on when intervention in a particular area may be necessary. But do you know what? There's no mention of this in the bill, and there's no delineation of how the advisory body would work. I'm a little troubled by that. I'm a little troubled by that because, again, if we look at this government over the past six or seven months and we just cast our eye on the whole eHealth thing, where a lot of money was blown out the door—\$1 billion—what we see are people who were connected to the Liberal Party, to Liberal cabinet ministers. These were people who were not accountable. These were people who were not subject to some sort of accountability mechanism. I think the report that we got from the auditor is that this was rather like a free-for-all—one of the worst examples he has seen.

I'd like to see the mechanism for the advisory council in the legislation: who is going to be appointed, how they're going to be appointed, what they're going to be representative of, what their accountability mechanism is going to be. I don't think anybody wants to see another

repetition, even a minor repetition, of the eHealth scenario, where \$1 billion gets blown out the door and all you can find is a number of people who are well connected to cabinet ministers or well connected to the Liberal Party who made a lot of money. I think that's a problem.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don't believe the matter that the member is addressing has anything to do with Bill 204. I bring to your attention standing order 23(b), which directs that a member be called to order if he or she "directs his or her speech to matters other than ... the question under discussion."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think all members are aware of that, and we all listen closely. I'm sure the member will adhere to that.

Mr. Howard Hampton: As indeed I am adhering to it. I always notice that when you bring up some of these issues, Liberal members are quick to get to their feet out of embarrassment, as they should be embarrassed by it all.

There are a couple of other issues that I think need to be addressed and examined in the context of this legislation, which are reasons, again, why this legislation needs to go to committee. Let me just raise them generally because I believe my colleague from Trinity-Spadina wants to speak about them or at least speak to them.

Again, one of the things the government seems to be advertising is that this bill is also going to do something about animal welfare, animal well-being and the environments in which farm animals are raised. Indeed, there's lots happening on that front. If you look at some jurisdictions in the United States, if you look at the European Union, recent legislation has been passed. If that's the case—and I think my colleague from Trinity-Spadina wants to look at some of this—I believe that we need to be very clear about what exactly the government is proposing here, whom it's going to affect, who's going to pay for it and what the mechanisms are going to be. We believe that's another reason why this legislation should go before committee.

There are real issues of animal welfare. There are real issues of the environment in which farm animals are raised. Again, if the government is advertising that it's doing something on this front, we'd like the government to be very specific about what it is and, again, what the mechanisms are going to be and who's going to pay for it.

Having said that, I said at the outset that I wanted to share my time with my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. I know he has a number of comments he'd like to make as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thanks to my colleague from Rainy River. He has covered a lot of ground, as did my friend Ernie from the Conservative Party. I think they're much more knowledgeable about these issues than I will ever be, so I won't have anything novel to add, except to

repeat some of the things that I have heard and that have worried me about whether or not this bill moves in the direction we hope it will.

The first point I wanted to make about this bill—and, yes, we agree with the whole aim of protecting animal and human health by preventing the spread of livestock diseases and by enabling an effective response to animal health issues. It's really impossible to disagree with the aim of the bill because we share these objectives. We know there is a need to improve food safety for human health. In the summer of 2008, deaths from listeriosis made this abundantly clear. We need to be able to respond more quickly to outbreaks, so it's good that we are dealing with this bill.

I have to say that after so many years of various groups talking about having an animal health act, we are finally dealing with such a bill. We're last in Canada, as a province, in terms of introducing an animal health act. Some might say, "God bless; it's about time." It did take us a whole long time, and one has to wonder why it took so long, and why, when we are the wealthiest province and we're so proud of leading on so many fronts, we haven't been able to lead on this one.

So, one has to say that this is good. It took a long four years to consult various groups about what to include in the bill. Presumably, the ministry had to look to all the different provinces that had various bills so that they would know what to do, because I'm assuming they don't want to break any new ground on their own. They had to be very careful about what was introduced, making sure that we don't go too far to the right or too far to the left but just land somewhere nicely in the middle.

You had a great deal of experiences across Ontario to be able to say, "Okay, we don't have to do a lot of work here. It's already done." Given that so many other provinces have had an animal health act, I say: Why has it taken us so long? Rather than asking that question—it's pointless, because the way Liberals deal with these issues is to say, "We are dealing with it. We're forging ahead. Let's move on. Let's not look back." That's often the response they give you to so many different types of issues. So what are you going to do except deal with what is before you, rather than dealing with problems we've had that prevented us from being able to introduce such a bill? It's before us and we're dealing with it. That's the first point I wanted to make.

The second point is about traceability. As far as I can tell, what we have is a voluntary code of traceability. What exists at the moment and what is likely to exist for a long time vis-à-vis traceability is that it's going to be voluntary. My colleague and friend from Rainy River made reference to the section, section 33, regarding traceability, and I have to admit I am a bit puzzled as well, because I thought that if you wanted to deal with a disease and containing it, if you don't have an adequate system of tracing it to its source, you've got a problemo. But if you don't have a traceability system that's mandatory, that's going to kick in right away so that if an

outbreak does happen you know exactly what to do and where to go, what are you going to do?

1610

Why is it that we are happy to make this an ongoing, voluntary kind of activity? Why are we waiting for the feds? Why is the language so inconclusive and less prescriptive? Why do we say, "The minister may establish and oversee the operation of a provincial traceability system for animals, animal products, animal by-products and any other thing relating to animals that is prescribed"? Why are we doing that?

That I find puzzling, and I know there's got to be an answer. I'm sure Mr. Hardeman has made reference to this already—I missed the entire speech—but I'm not quite sure whether he made reference to why—the member from Oxford. But I suspect that the reason, if you haven't given the reason, was that they're happy to force the government—wittingly or unwittingly, willingly or unwillingly, by design or lack of it, by doing or not doing, by simply standing still—hope that the federal government is going to force the provinces to have a traceability system: force or oblige or simply bring a system in place. The question is, why would they do that?

I suspect—and the member from Oxford might confirm this if he hasn't already done so—that they want the federal government to introduce a traceability system so they pay for it, which I guess is not a bad strategy if that's the argument, except the problem is, if we want a traceability system today—because there may be some unforeseen outbreak that could happen at any moment—if we want the system today, we're not going to have it. We're going to have to wait for the federal government to introduce such a system, thereby freeing the provincial government from any financial responsibility or financial worries.

God knows we, provincially, are going to have a huge deficit. The deficit stands at \$18.5 billion, and we all suspect it's going to be \$22 billion, \$23 billion or \$24 billion. That will be announced shortly; I have no doubt about it. It's going to be huge. The feds have a huge deficit to worry about as well, and people might argue that, relative to the GDP, it ain't so bad, it ain't so big, but it's big.

Given past experiences of the 1990s where New Democrats had a \$10-billion deficit and you're going to have a \$22-billion deficit, I know there's reason to worry. I know. The feds are worried, too, so the feds are not that eager to introduce a traceability system that's going to cost them money. I suspect they're worried about that.

So they're waiting for the province, and the province is waiting for the feds. Who's going to do it first? In the meantime, we have no traceability system except that the bill speaks of it as if somehow it may happen. But it will never happen, because to do so would be to load the government with the prospect and the responsibility of having to pay the costs for traceability. That's why you're not doing it. That's why, I suspect, you are not doing it.

But if that's true, say it. Be bold. Be clear. Say, "We're waiting for the feds to do it." You could even be intelligent by arguing that we'd rather have a national system in place. You could say that. That would sound intelligent. I haven't heard you say it. I haven't heard the minister say it. But say that. Produce an argument that makes you sound intelligent as to why it is you aren't doing it. The minister—well, she might have her two minutes, but the parliamentary assistant would do it.

Minister, I was talking about the whole issue of traceability. I'm no expert on this, understand, but I want you to help me because you have the expertise and the knowledge. That's why I was addressing my comments to you and the parliamentary assistant in terms of why you're not introducing a mandatory traceability system today, so that once the bill is passed, you'll be able to do it as a way of preventing any outbreak, as a way of getting to the source. Minister, that's what I was saying earlier on. Your bill simply says you may do that, and we suspect you're not going to do that or, to use the vernacular, you ain't gonna do that because you have no interest in doing that. That's what I'm saying.

I was saying to the parliamentary assistant, when he argued in his two minutes against what we are saying: Just give me a reason why you're not doing it right away. I'm telling you that, as inexperienced as I am—because I'm not the critic—I am worried about this.

I'm looking forward to a two-minute response to assure me and reassure the citizens that you are keen on this and that you're going to deal with it somehow: today, tomorrow, but not sometime in the uncertain future, because that would worry me.

If we are worried about human health, and if we are worried about outbreaks, and if we know, as indeed we know, that these things are not something you can control, and if indeed they could happen at any moment, we need to worry about this problem of traceability. In your two minutes you might talk about how you're talking to the feds and what they're telling you and what you're telling them. I know that the minister said that somehow you're working on it or you were talking to the feds. I even got the impression that somehow you're kicking in some suggestions or even some money. It made it appear like there was a partnership when the minister spoke in her earlier remarks. But I suspect there is no partnership on this. I could be wrong. That's why I want you to clarify for me whether or not, in your discussions with the federal minister, you both have roles that you're playing separately and/or conjointly, because there's a conjoint responsibility towards this particular issue, at least as it relates to worries that we have. So this was a biggie for me. That was the biggest point that I wanted to make.

The other point that has been touched on is the powers of the chief veterinarian. On the surface, without having too much knowledge about how these things operate, I like the idea that the chief veterinarian has as much power as he or she needs to be able to deal with a problem as it happens. I just don't like the idea that we're

going to have to delay acting in the event that there's some outbreak that happens.

I understand the worries that some people have. I really do. And that's why the member from Kenora–Rainy River talked about the whole idea of having an advisory group of people that the chief veterinarian might speak to, consult with, meet with from time to time. I don't think it would hurt.

Mr. John O'Toole: Have lunch with them.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You know, lunch, over some meat, some good red meat—absolutely. Absolutely. It would be good, in my mind, to be able to do that.

There's no reference to any advisory committee, no reference anywhere. It doesn't have to be in the bill, but there are bills that we have debated in the past where such things are mentioned in the bill, so that the chief veterinarian has a group to work with, giving confidence to all the various sectors that whatever the chief veterinarian decides is based on the advice of people in the field. That makes sense to me.

As much as I like the idea of giving this person such power, as much as I like it—because an outbreak needs to be dealt with expeditiously; we can't wait—I still believe that on a regular basis it would be good for the chief veterinarian to have the advice of experts in the field and to have the confidence of the experts in the field, wherever they are in Ontario. That would make me feel a little better.

We haven't heard the minister or the parliamentary assistant speak to this. I'm not sure how big this might be in their minds; I don't know. But if they have a comment to make, that would be fine with me.

1620

There's a third point, and it's a bit of a serious point with some groups. Some agriculture stakeholders have raised concerns that this bill may lead to the government overly dictating and circumscribing animal production practices in the name of health protection. My colleague from Rainy River talked about that. Industry groups want to limit the scope of the bill and the scope of regulations to emergency situations involving the containment of outbreaks. They do not want handling and housing of animals to be included. I think I understand it.

I know that it worries the Ontario Cattlemen's Association because they've raised this concern in point 5 of their brief under animal health promotion. They say:

“The OCA believes that animal welfare practices should not be included in the proposed legislation. The provincial OSPCA Act was recently updated, which, in our view, has ample authority to deal with animal welfare issues. The beef industry also has a code of practice for the care and handling of beef cattle, a joint effort between industry and agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. We feel these policy tools provide adequate care and handling standards during normal business. Should the legislation focus specifically on the care and handling of animals during a declared emergency, we request these standards be science-based and correspond to already existing protocols. The Ontario Farm Animal Council should be

consulted regarding animal welfare and animal health promotion.”

They clearly have concerns about this. They don't want the government to go too far in this area, so they do want to limit the scope of the bill.

But some groups have argued that the broader animal welfare practices are covered by the OSPCA amendment and by the voluntary code of conduct—but here the OSPCA amendments exclude farm animals—and that, according to many, voluntary codes of practice are insufficient. When you look at how well the industry's self-regulation has worked at the federal level on food safety, you say, “I don't know about voluntary codes.”

There are some folks who are worried about that on the other side of it. Other jurisdictions appear to be recognizing the importance of a more comprehensive approach to animal health, which includes the promotion of animal welfare. We know that the European Union's new animal health strategy recognizes the importance of public health and food safety, economic costs and animal welfare considerations. That paper is entitled “Prevention Is Better than a Cure” and has a key goal of promoting farming practices and animal welfare which prevent animal health-related threats and minimize environmental impacts. Clearly, protecting animal health is about more than controlling diseases. It's about preventing diseases in the first place.

What we have in this particular bill is a government that says to the industry, “Don't worry; we are not going to overstep our power.” What it does at the same time, to those who are concerned about animal welfare as well, is give them the impression that their concerns are being dealt with as well. The problem is that at the end of the day, we don't have a clue who's going to be protected one way or the other, whether the scope of this bill is going to go too far in terms of what the industry's worried about or whether or not those who are concerned about animal welfare are going to feel good about the fact that this bill might indeed put into practice some concerns that they have.

This is a typically Liberal bill where two sides of a particular issue can take two positions, and both think they are right in the way that the bill is written to address or not address their concerns.

This bill is one that many people are going to support because it's time that we have an Animal Health Act before us. It is good that it's going to go to committee. We're going to get the various groups to come, debate and depute, and we're going to get a range of ideas that hopefully will be addressed in the bill. Hopefully we'll go across the province where we need to hear from all the various sectors and all the industries, big and small, in the north, south, west and east. I think and I hope that by the end of it we will have something in place that we can be proud of as a province.

These are the issues that I want to put forth. I know that many others want to speak to this bill. I appreciate many members listening to what I had to say.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Trinity–Spadina did make a number of compelling points. I was most impressed when he talked about the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. I know he probably has to deal with that a lot in his riding. He did mention the idea of red meat, and I know that he does concern himself with food quality. Food quality is important to him, as it is to all of us. In that sense of sincerity, he really is speaking to the issues that he's heard from stakeholders.

I would put on the record too that he mentioned animal welfare as an issue, and I think it's an important issue and quite a controversial issue. If you probe into that whole idea in the broadest sense, animal welfare sounds like a laudable idea. They have legislation on the books, the prevention of cruelty to animals. The OSPCA is engaged in this discussion, I'm sure.

They're kind of pushing the envelope on this whole welfare definition, and so I think it's important to pay close attention to that remark the member from Trinity–Spadina made. I think it's all livestock, whether it's the feathers industry or the livestock industry more broadly. There's certainly the whole idea, when you look at the livestock industry—the PETA group might have an opinion on this. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals is an important voice. I hope the minister, who is here—and I'm glad to see that. That's just one part.

The whole idea of food safety: We know that the federal government, under the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, has unilateral authority on this, and there's a certain amount of duplication. The section I'm most concerned about—the last 15 sections of the bill are all about regulation. Now, who can do what—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: These are all important questions.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to thank the members from Kenora–Rainy River, Trinity–Spadina and Durham for their further comments on this bill. Once again, they are much appreciated.

Much of the focus has been on the traceability issue. The federal government announced in July of this past year that they were moving forward on a mandatory comprehensive national traceability system for livestock, and this province has agreed to work with the federal government, as we've worked with them on a number of issues recently—some controversial, some not. I have a response here from the Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council in which they talk about traceability: "Premises registration for all agricultural operations and full traceability for livestock and poultry movement is a goal to work towards and one the OLPC supports."

This is very important to how this is all rolling out with the bill. This bill is about protecting the food source from the farm to the fork. It's about making sure that the industry is protected and has the safeguards in place so that our agricultural sector is protected when there is any kind of an outbreak or something, so the whole industry

does not collapse because of it. When we look at those issues surrounding food safety, there are concerns about overregulation or overlicensing. Farmers I have talked to and members from the sector are concerned that they are protected, that if something does go wrong, they know that they are protected and able to move forward and that they won't unduly suffer because of an outbreak of disease throughout the system. I believe that's what the intent of this bill is.

I appreciate the comments that have been made and I look forward to hearing more.

1630

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Kenora–Rainy River and Trinity–Spadina for their presentations to the bill.

I just want to point out the point that the member from Trinity–Spadina was making on the connection between the animal health part of this bill and the traceability. Obviously the reason we want to stop an epidemic—that's why we want the ability to identify the area where we have a disease and we want to be able to confine it there. But the benefit of doing that, first of all, is to the spreading. The second thing, and I think this is so important and that's, I think, what the member was questioning the minister on, is that if you can't identify the product and trace it, then the ability to identify where the problem is and eradicate it doesn't help our trading problem. If our purchasers of our product overseas say that we have BSE in our province and we can identify where it's happening but we can't identify the beef we're shipping, then we might as well not have identified where the illness was, because they won't take our beef regardless, because we can't connect the product to the area. That's why I think it's so important, as he mentioned, that we have the traceability in place along with the ability to identify where the disease is and where the problem in our sector is.

One has to question at some point, I suppose, as to, if the federal government is presently working on a traceability program nationwide, why we would have the minister working on a traceability program that would identify the same diseases, only just in the province. Last I checked, we were still part of Canada. We have had legislation in health protection or in traceability; if we have a national program, it applies to everyone in the nation, including all of Ontario. So I think we would be better using our resources to support the federal government in coming up with these answers.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I think it's interesting: The minister has been saying very clearly that in terms of helping our pork producers, there's a long wait for the federal protocols to be put in place so that we have a national program to protect our pork producers here in Ontario. Now we have the member from Oxford there saying, "Well, we should have just a federal program." So he's trying to have it both ways.

But here we're saying that we have a serious interest in helping our animal welfare legislation here in Ontario, with this protective piece of legislation our agriculture stakeholders have asked for. We have some of the safest practices in the world. Our consumers in Ontario have a great deal of faith in our farm products here in Ontario, whether it be our egg producers, our chicken farmers. We have great confidence in them because they've had a track history, a track record of excellent attention to detail, scientific protocols, tried and tested agricultural protocols. So we're doing that in this legislation.

We're furthering that history of excellence, of investment in technology that the rest of the world envies. The world takes this very seriously, the consumers take it very seriously, so this bill is an attempt to build on that foundation that our hard-working farmers and our agricultural producers have been engaged in for generations. They need this partnership to ensure that this confidence is instilled and enriched in our great province so that this great industry will thrive and flourish, because it is one of the safest food-producing entities in the world here in Ontario; we shouldn't forget that. But we can't sit back, like the Conservatives say, and not do anything. We have to be proactive with our partners—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Trinity–Spadina, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock makes a good point, of course, and that is that the feds are working on a mandatory traceability system. The problem for me is that working on it doesn't mean much. If it took us so long to have an Animal Health Act before us, how long might it take for the federal government, whether it's this one or another one, to bring in a system of traceability Canada-wide? There appears to be the confidence that somehow the feds are going to do it, but I'm not totally convinced, not because I like or don't like Conservatives or I like or don't like Liberals, should they get into power, but we are in a very fragile minority situation. If the government pulls the plug and say, "We're going to have an election," and if we've got another government, this whole thing will start all over again from zero. That's my view, because you've got to have a new minister, if there's another government, with new priorities. Who knows where this system might be down the line?

So the confidence you give the feds about creating such a system I don't share, and that's why I say to you that we need to do something on our own, as Quebec did, which I believe has a mandatory system. If they have it, we should have it too. And we should have it, rather than waiting on the possibility that it may or may not happen down the line. That's the concern that I express here today. We know the province is waiting for the feds to do it because they don't want to pay. They don't want to pay for their own system. I don't think that's the appropriate way to deal with an issue as serious as this one. So I'm hoping there are going to be a whole lot of people coming to committee to speak about this and many other issues as well.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that in the name of the Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

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

ANIMAL HEALTH ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SANTÉ ANIMALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Chatham–Kent—no, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you, Speaker. There is some Chatham in my riding, so I don't mind taking claim to some of Chatham.

I actually am very pleased to be able to stand and speak to Bill 204, the Animal Health Act. The member from Trinity–Spadina said that this is long overdue, and I have to agree. I think part of the issue, though, has been the fact that until our government appointed a chief veterinarian officer for the province, there was nothing for the act to actually work with. We needed that chief veterinarian officer, and it took years and years to get that. I'm particularly pleased that it is Dr. Stark. She's very well respected in the agriculture industry and she brings with her a wealth of information and knowledge in terms of not only what happens in Ontario but what happens in other jurisdictions.

As we go through this, I'm going to talk a little bit about what happens on our own farm and what we do right now in terms of biosecurity, in terms of traceability. When we first heard about the avian influenza—my husband and I, and now our son and his family, are involved in the poultry industry. We produce chickens for, in particular, the McDonald's market, the McDonald's restaurants, so the chicken McNuggets and the McFilets—I'm not even sure of the names of them, but—

Interjection.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: McChicken; thank you very much—are from producers like ourselves.

When we first heard of the avian influenza outbreak in BC, we watched very closely to see what was happening and how that province handled it. Our own commodity organization decided at that time that they need to take control of the situation and started a biosecurity, traceability and animal health program of its own.

I know the member from Oxford talked about licences, and he said in his two-minute comment about how maybe as a producer of chicken that I would someday be licensed. Actually, my quota is my licence; I

already hold a licence to do that. My husband and I are joint owners of that licence.

What we did at the time was to take instruction from the commodity board as to how we would act on our farm in order to avoid any further problems and to create traceability. I've heard talk about what this would cost producers. I can tell you what it cost us. It cost us locks for the doors, so that no one can come in and contaminate the area inside the barns. It cost us covers for boots. It cost us dip tanks for our feet as we go in, something we actually already had in place.

1640

The traceability aspect means we had to buy a binder and create forms. My husband spends a certain amount of time doing the work of filling out the forms, and in those forms he talks about when the birds are delivered; what the temperature was in the barn at the time; what he's feeding; what medications, if any, he uses; when they are shipped; and essentially what condition they are shipped in. Those things are all recorded. I know he wasn't particularly happy about having to spend time doing that kind of paperwork, but the fact is, he also understands and recognizes that this is for his own protection. This is part of the traceability aspect of what we do.

He keeps samples of feed, so I guess the cost of Ziploc bags so he can take the feed samples and store them in case something comes back in terms of traceability and he has evidence of what feed was used and what was in that feed.

All those things are intended as much to protect him in a situation of traceability as anything else, and he understands that. That's why he's willing to do that work, and that's why our son continues to do that type of work.

Other commodities have done exactly the same thing. The pork industry is doing that; the beef industry has a tagging system so there is traceability there. All the traceability that we have in place is intended, as I said, as much to protect us as it is to protect the consumer. But most importantly, it is about consumer confidence. If we are to continue to encourage our consumers to buy local and eat local products, they have to know that those products are safe, and in order to do that, we need to be able to trace.

Contamination of a food product can happen anywhere. At Christmas and New Year's we hear continually about how to store a turkey properly and how to prepare a turkey properly. Contamination can happen in the home as it is being prepared. It can happen anywhere along the chain. That's why traceability is so critical. If we don't have it, someone else will. We are in a global market, after all, so we need to be able to assure our consumers that we have the safest products, and traceability is critical to that.

I want to talk specifically about the program the chicken farmers have. The Chicken Farmers of Ontario have a program called Safe, Safer, Safest. In that program there are random audits done, and the farmers within that program accept the fact that there will be inspectors from the Chicken Farmers of Ontario who will

come in to make sure we are doing things according to the protocol. So when someone talked earlier about inspections and the idea of inspectors coming onto the farm, in our situation that is already happening. We have no control over when they come. That happens on a random basis. We need to have our work and our materials ready at all times, as they should be.

We continue to work with that program. If we don't work with that program, then the board has the right to withdraw our ability to produce. We may own the quota and we have the licence, but the fact is that the board can actually take our ability away because of non-compliance, so we wouldn't be producing for a while. There is an incentive to us to make sure we are in compliance with that program, and all chicken producers within the province have to be in compliance with that program.

The chicken board has another program called Call Us First. Call Us First is our response to animal health issues, avian influenza in particular. That is the requirement of all producers, if they suspect they have a disease in their barns, to call the board so that the board in turn can call the chief veterinary officer. The fact is, this legislation is actually just saying that the farmers, instead of calling their respective commodity boards, would simply call the chief veterinarian officer instead. So it's just a change in who we call first. But the fact is, we already are dealing with this. We are now working at a system that will make sure that if there's an issue, it's reported.

There are concerns, and I've heard people talk about what happens with privacy issues. Nobody wants to be known as the farmer with an animal health issue in their barns. But the fact is that as responsible producers, we know that we have to report those things and we have to deal with them quickly. That certainly was evidenced in BC with the outbreak of avian influenza. At that point, there was a system in place in BC that allowed them to quarantine that area and contain it within a region.

That's what we do now, within the chicken board. We get a call—and we've had them on our farm—saying that there's been an outbreak. We are not told who it is or where it is. That's the confidentiality of that farm operation. But we are told that it is within a radius of a certain area, and we know that within that area we are essentially quarantined until there is some resolution or identification of the problem. As I said, we've had those calls. Upon further investigation, it was found that there was no problem, but for the time being, everything was frozen. Chicken producers and other poultry producers do not travel to each other's farms for fear of spreading anything, and everybody is sort of battened down in terms of what they're doing, to make sure that the crisis has passed or at least has been identified as not being a crisis. That's what we're doing right now.

All of this is exactly what this bill is trying to do on a province-wide basis. This bill is doing essentially the same thing, not just within commodities—because as I said, many commodities already are doing things within

their own commodity. This is going to make it continuous throughout the province. It is going to make sure that everybody is working essentially on a level playing field.

Actually, I'm hoping that what we will be able to say at the end of the day is that we have a better standard than most, because that's what we need to have if we're going to be globally competitive. We need to have a higher standard. We need to have the gold standard. That's very important for our industry in terms of the economy of agriculture in the future, because we are competing with other jurisdictions, other countries which can produce products too but may not be able to assure our consumers that the quality is there or that the food safety is there.

We've seen that in the past. We have seen recalls of products that came from other areas because food safety issues were identified. We want to make sure that that never happens to an Ontario product. We need to be sure that all the products that we have are not only safe but can be shown to be safe, and that's the critical part of this.

As I said, I really believe that this bill is in some ways overdue, as the member from Trinity–Spadina has said. I'm certainly very pleased to support this bill. I see it as being able to deliver to agriculture the assurances we need that traceability in animal health systems, procedures and protocols are in place. But as I said earlier, it also confirms for our consumers that there is a system in place that they too can trust; that all our food is produced in a safe way; that if there is a crisis or an issue with it, there's a traceability system in place so people will find out where it is.

As I said, I know people talk about it as if this is going to trace back to the farm. It doesn't always trace back to the farm. But by having this system in place, farmers will be able to defend themselves. On our farm, we have the records that show what happens to the birds as they go through our barns. We have records that show what they're fed, if they're given any medications, when they're given medications, when those medications are withdrawn. All of those things are recorded and there for anyone to see.

I'm very pleased to be able to speak to this bill, and I thank the Speaker for the opportunity.

1650

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for her presentation. I did also want to quickly mention that in my presentation I expressed grave concerns about some of the licensing authorities in the act, and it was mentioned to me in the responses that, in fact, the issue of the licensing and the ability of the minister to set fees and the right to warrantless entry onto the premises were related to the repealing of the sales barns act, the Livestock Community Sales Act, and that's why that would be in there, to deal with that act.

But in fact, when I looked at a copy of that act, the powers that are related to that act are not as wide open as what we're putting in this new act. I guess I would just caution the government as we're proceeding with this that if we are just replacing an act, we do need to put in this new act an ability to license the premises for the sales of livestock, because that is where a lot of animals who are not feeling too well today might very well end up, because the farmer or the individual or the producer didn't want to keep them in the barn, regardless of whether there was a problem with them or not. So there is a need for that to be surveyed.

But the ability to get warrantless entry to the property and particularly to the documentation that's being stored on that property is not in the act. The ability to have the vet make sure to check the livestock is in the act. They must have it approved. If there's an animal that doesn't look of the quality that it should be in the sales barn, a veterinarian can refuse to accept it and they go back out. This new act is giving more powers to the inspector even in those establishments. I think it was implied that the reason it was in the act was just to cover it off because of the repealing of the sales act. I would just caution that that's not totally the case.

With that, I want to thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just a comment to the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I think she's saying and understands, given her experience in the field, that traceability is a big part or ought to be a big part of this bill, as I understand it. The only point that I wanted to make on that is that there's only one paragraph on that in this whole bill. I'm assuming that in the context of all the consultations that were had in the industry, they had assumed that traceability was going to be the big part of the bill. Lo and behold, we get this bill and there is nothing on traceability except one paragraph that says that they may introduce a traceability system.

I do find it puzzling. I know you said that we need to have a traceability system, but we're not going to have one—not based on the bill. The bill doesn't say we're going to have one. What I understood from the parliamentary assistant and the minister on this is that we are waiting for the federal government to introduce one. That's what I understood. Correct me if I'm wrong. Are we waiting for the federal government to introduce a traceability system or not? Is it the point that if the federal government doesn't do it, we then do our own? I presume that's why you have this section 33 that says that we may have a traceability system. But I have to tell you, member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, it's just strange politics that we're waiting for the federal government, and if they don't do it, we'll do it, but in the meantime we've got nothing. I don't know. Please comment. You've got two minutes.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to respond to this. I think I'll carry on where the member for Trinity–Spadina left off. Ontario, in fact, does have traceability systems for many of our livestock products, and Ontario has gone about as far as it can go on its own. The issue is that if you look at this from an export point of view, if you're a consumer in Japan and you want to know about beef and whether you should import it from Canada, you actually don't care about an Ontario traceability system because what you recognize is Canada; you want to know that there's a Canadian traceability system. Furthermore, with many livestock categories—for example, beef—it actually is required that we have a national system, because in many cases calves that are born in the western provinces are shipped to Ontario to be fed out. You actually need national traceability in order for traceability to be meaningful. So we do need a national traceability system on top of what we already have in Ontario. That's one point.

But that's not the major thing that this bill is about. What this bill is about is outbreaks of animal disease and how you manage outbreaks of animal disease. In fact, the questions at hand here are: How do you control the disease? How do you look at an outbreak of a disease on a specific farm and make sure that you confine it to that farm or to its neighbours? How do you have the authority for the chief veterinarian to go onto the surrounding farms and investigate? That's what this act is about.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I think it's important to keep track of the most obvious parts of this in the purpose clause, as the member from Guelph had just stated: regulating activities related to animals that may affect animal health or human health or both. I think food quality and food safety is—again, as our critic the member from Oxford has said, we're in support of all those obvious goals of this legislation. We would be on the record as supporting food safety in the very broadest sense, which would include the animal health component, and which would include the livestock as well as the feedstock component.

Identification: What we also should know too is that the COOL program, the country-of-origin legislation, is also an impediment to fair trade. I agree with the point that's been made that we do need a federal standard. While we laud this bill about livestock identification, there is in the livestock industry today, for the most part, a clear tag or some other kind of identification even in the feed itself. We don't want to be creating more red tape for agriculture.

We want to fairly compensate agriculture. On this traceability discussion, who is going to pay all the infrastructure costs? This isn't clear here. If you're going to, for the good of all the people, why should the farmer have to pay? That's the issue here. They aren't getting the right price at the supermarket today, and we keep downloading to agriculture, whether it's the greenbelt or source water protection, with no compensation. Ulti-

mately, we're not opposed to the goal; we're opposed to how this government is getting there. I'd be cautious that buried in this bill are more taxes and more regulation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, you have up for two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to thank the members from Oxford, Trinity–Spadina, Guelph and Durham for their comments on this particular bill. The member from Durham talks about infrastructure costs, and I'm not quite sure what he means by infrastructure costs. As I indicated earlier, on our particular farm the infrastructure costs included things like plastic covers for boots and footwear as people come into the barns and locks to keep people out so that only the farmer has the ability to give them access. In a lot of ways, these have been practices for many, many years in terms of biosecurity. So I'm not quite sure what he's talking about in the sense of what he means by infrastructure costs.

The member from Oxford talked about the Livestock Sales Act and the whole issue of the updating, and I agree. One of the things we have to be very careful about is livestock yards, because if there is ever a dumping ground to get rid of an animal, especially a large animal, that's where they sometimes come up, especially if someone is trying to avoid a problem or trying to rid themselves of something.

1700

But still, I think on the whole, when we talk about traceability—and the member from Trinity–Spadina was talking about the traceability issue—we have, within the province, traceability systems already in place among specific commodity groups. But as the member from Guelph reminded us, a lot of our products move inter-provincially, and we cannot go much further with traceability in this province without some co-operation from the national level. We need that in order to make this thing work and come together properly. As we all know, many other provinces already have such acts in place, and we need to be up to date on this.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It gives me great pleasure today to rise and speak to the effects of Bill 204 and its shortcomings perceived by our caucus.

Just by way of introduction, agriculture in Sarnia–Lambton is the second-largest industry in my riding. It contributes many hundreds of millions of dollars to the local economy, second only to the petrochemical industry, followed by the tourism industry after that. So it's a very large and important income generator for my riding, and I have many farmers in my riding who have spoken to me on this issue.

However, in our reading of this bill, the bill would allow for a new system of permits and licences. It would create, in our opinion, more red tape and expense for farmers without improving animal or human health.

It limits the people eligible for the position to public service employees and fails to establish a requirement for

years of experience. In comparison, the chief medical officer of health is required to have five years of service as opposed to this Chief Veterinarian of Ontario, something that stakeholders have requested.

The bill is very heavy-handed on how it deals with farmers, including allowing inspectors under the bill to enter premises other than dwellings without a warrant in a wide range of circumstances, including to determine whether the farmer has the appropriate licences—more red tape.

The PC caucus would require substantial amendments to this bill before we would be in any position to support it. In our opinion, this bill goes far beyond what is required to protect animal and human health. It creates a system of permits and licences—more red tape and costs for our farmers with no compensation for the time, paperwork and expenses involved.

Number two, stakeholders were asking for a traceability system, which, in our opinion, is largely absent from this legislation. There is, however, a small section that allows the minister to set up this traceability framework by regulation, meaning it will all be done later and behind closed doors.

While we all agree with food safety, this bill goes too far in removing the rights of individuals, in many cases without any foreseeable benefit to either animal or human health. For instance, it would give inspectors the right to enter premises without a warrant to see if proper permits are in place. This is not a circumstance in which there is enough urgency to justify entry without proper process.

Possible amendments that we would like to see to this legislation, however not limited to this, would be: to amend the section which will allow the permits and licences. In addition, the bill should be amended such that consent of the owner or a warrant is required to enter private property in all but the most urgent of circumstances.

There could also be an amendment to strengthen the section on compensation and remove discretion, unless there were extenuating circumstances, such as fraud or negligence.

Agricultural organizations are generally in favour of the traceability system, but many of them have said to us that they thought there would be more emphasis on this part of the bill.

This summer's federal-provincial-territorial meeting committed all agriculture ministers to setting up a traceability system by 2011. They believe that the government needs more tools in order to deal with disease outbreaks and ensure animal health. They also believe that animal health legislation and a traceability system in place will allow them to demonstrate the high levels of food safety required to be globally competitive.

I would read into the record some communications we've had from numerous stakeholders. The Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council says:

"Currently in Ontario, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is the only entity with legal powers to control the

movement of animals and order eradication actions in the event of a reportable animal disease and, only then, once the disease has been confirmed....

"Many of the supply-managed commodities have built food safety and animal health policies around quota licensing. A clause in the Farm Products Marketing Act empowers them 'to direct and control, by order or direction either as principal or agent, the producing or marketing of the regulated product, including the times and places at which the regulated product may be produced or marketed.'

"For example, if poultry producers do not abide by the on-farm food safety or isolation policies, then they will not receive a new licence to produce. In dairy," the Dairy Farmers of Ontario "can refuse to pick up the milk. This process only applies to those organizations who have the authority to market farm products and is limited to the selling aspect. For example," the Dairy Farmers of Ontario "cannot control the movement of animals, and the onus is placed on the poultry producers to self-report for diseases other than those which would be diagnosed and reported" by the Canadian food inspection veterinarians.

"For unregulated commodities, there is no mechanism to act upon a suspected disease outbreak. They have no control over marketing and some associations do not have contact information for all" their producers. The "most important factor that must be addressed in effectively responding to an animal disease outbreak is the current inability to stop all animal movement within the province or within a specific zone of the province until laboratory confirmation of a reportable disease or, in cases of non-reportable diseases, to act upon the situation...."

I have a letter here from Ontario Pork to the Minister of Agriculture and Food:

"Ontario Pork represents the 2,800 farmers who market hogs in the province in many areas, including hog marketing, research, government representation, environmental issues, consumer education.... The pork industry in Ontario accounts for some 33,000 jobs"—directly—"and it is estimated that total industry output from farm-gate sales" is worth \$4.5 billion to the Ontario economy.

"Ontario Pork"—to shorten the letter—"sees a need for further clarification within the act regarding mandatory reporting in order to differentiate between notifiable and reportable hazards.... Producers should not have to report hazards that do not jeopardize the health of the animals outside the herd/flock or of humans. All listed hazards plus reporting requirements would need to be consistent with other jurisdictions ... the list of reportable diseases for the province must be compiled with care and only after open consultation and agreement by industry stakeholders. Additionally"—to quote them further—"if there is mandatory reporting of risks other than animal diseases, we insist that industry is extensively consulted on the specifics, including indemnification and implementation protocols."

They further go on to say: "The proposed legislation must work towards reducing the regulatory burden on the

livestock industry and its ancillary industries. This legislation should include provisions to revoke and replace other legislation, and further, if there is discrepancy between two pieces of legislation, this act, on issues that pertain to farmed livestock, will clearly take precedence. It should also be clear within the legislation that areas that are not directly related to animal health will be excluded.”

They go on to say: “One example of this is animal nutrients, which are already regulated under two existing pieces of legislation. Duplication must be avoided in all areas, including the administrative level, in order to keep requirements for documentation from becoming yet another burden on producers....”

“We must be sure that as we build legislation, pass regulation, and put procedures in place, that all those who will benefit from the desired outcomes should” also “have to bear the costs associated with those outcomes. Ontario’s livestock commodities alone cannot bear the cost of regulations that put them at a disadvantage to imported products that do not have to meet the same standards. In order for domestic regulation to be effective in providing protection for all, Ontario must have a strong and vibrant domestic market, not one that is at a competitive disadvantage due to excessive and burdensome government regulation. Imports”—of course—“must also meet any proposed legislation.”

This same organization, Ontario Pork, would “request the development of a regulation relating to fair compensation or indemnification policies for direct and specified indirect losses for any producers whose animals have been ordered destroyed by government or whose income has suffered as a result of a disease outbreak. This could include but not be limited to losses from quarantine, extra-feeding costs, lost market value due to weight or age discounts, testing costs and disposal costs.”

The Ontario industry needs to be competitive: “There needs to be compensation for those affected and not just those infected.”

1710

Ontario Pork goes on to say that “industry stakeholders must be afforded the opportunity to review the exact wording of the legislation and resulting regulations prior to them being enacted in order to confirm interpretation and ensure clarity that will reduce the risk of wording changes significantly altering meaning and intent”—all the more argument for this bill to go to committee, as the member for Oxford and others in this House have asked for.

In closing, Ontario Pork also said that they “would also like to be clear that only through in-depth consultation can industry acceptance of this legislation be achieved. Rushing legislation to achieve short-term goals or objectives is not always in the best interest of Ontarians or the affected industries.”

That’s signed by Keith Robbins, the director of communications and marketing.

I have some other comments from some stakeholders in this important branch of the agricultural industry. This

is from the Ontario Cattlemen’s Association. This is addressed to the Minister of Agriculture and Food:

“The Ontario Cattlemen’s Association (OCA) is a grassroots organization that represents the 19,000 beef producers in the province of Ontario. The OCA advocates on behalf of its members in the areas of government lobbying, policy planning, industry development programs, promoting beef and developing domestic and export markets.”

To go on, under “Traceability,” they say, “OCA appreciates that traceability is a valuable component of a strong animal health system.... OCA would not oppose mandatory premise ID, however, we request that registration be captured in the already existing CCIA database, and not through another registry. We would insist that the system be designed in an efficient and cost-effective manner.”

They’ve got concerns that any legislation that is brought in for traceability of cattle “should be developed to ensure that:

“(1) It does not impede or delay commerce;

“(2) Costs of the system must not result in the industry becoming non-competitive;

“(3) The technology must be capable of reading identification at a rate which accommodates normal commerce;

“(4) Tolerance ranges for the readability must be acceptable to the industry standards;

“(5) Producer information must remain confidential.”

The Ontario cattlemen say, “While we acknowledge that Quebec has a mandatory traceability system, Ontario needs to be competitive with the western provinces as our supply chain is integrated with the west. We request that no additional costs be placed on Ontario producers.”

They go on to say, under “Mandatory Reporting,” that “the list of reportable diseases for the province must be compiled only after open consultation and agreement by industry stakeholders. Additionally, if there is mandatory reporting of risks other than animal diseases, we insist that industry is extensively consulted on the specifics, including indemnification and implementation protocols.”

Under “Disease Prevention, Control and Monitoring,” they also have some comments: “We request that any biosecurity standards are determined by the commodity groups in conjunction with government and other industry stakeholders. The standards should be science-based and consider the economic impact on the industry, and must not result in the industry becoming non-competitive when compared with other jurisdictions.”

The Ontario cattlemen also believe that this legislation “needs to facilitate access to farm veterinary service in underserved areas of the province, including financial support where necessary, to ensure that all areas of the province have the same adequate veterinary disease surveillance network and so that producers have access to pharmaceuticals for animal health.”

Under “Animal Health Promotion,” the Ontario cattlemen believe that “animal welfare practices should not be

included in this proposed legislation. The ... OSPCA Act was recently updated, which, in our view, has ample authority to deal with animal welfare issues. The beef industry also has a code of practice for the care and handling of beef cattle, a joint effort between industry and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. We feel these policy tools provide adequate care and handling standards during normal business." For the handling of animals during a declared emergency, they would request that "these standards be science-based, and correspond to already existing protocols."

They also would "expect and support the development of both emergency humane slaughter and/or disposal policies for livestock and the development of a comprehensive mass carcass disposal contingency plan as part of this legislation."

In closing, regarding compensation and indemnification policies, they request "the development of a regulation relating to fair compensation or indemnification policies for direct and specified indirect losses for any producers whose animals have been ordered destroyed" by this government, or any government, "or whose income has suffered as a result of a disease outbreak. This could include losses from quarantine, extra-feeding costs, lost market value due to weight or age discounts, testing costs and disposal costs. Adequate compensation for producers who experience ongoing prevention and detection costs that cannot be recovered from the marketplace as well as for quick response costs are essential to keeping the Ontario cattle industry competitive."

That's signed by Gord Hardy, the president of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association.

I see, Mr. Speaker, my time is winding down.

This is from the Ontario Farm Animal Council, OFAC, and they thanked everybody for their opportunity to have input. To sum up, they are of the opinion, however, that the proposed legislation oversteps its mandate.

"The intent to regulate the handling and housing of livestock as described under the animal health promotion proposal must be restricted under the act to emergency measures and situations involving the containment and remediation of animal disease outbreaks and contamination. This proposed legislation should not include general animal husbandry and care within its scope.

"Wide-sweeping handling and housing regulations, as currently proposed, would be problematic from various perspectives that have previously been outlined by OFAC and other industry groups. Additionally, it would be deemed as duplication given the recently updated Ontario SPCA Act requirements and unnecessary given the various commodity-specific codes of practice and programs....

"OFAC also sees a need for further clarification within the act regarding mandatory reporting in order to differentiate between notifiable and reportable hazards.... Producers should not have to report hazards that do not jeopardize the health of animals outside the herd/flock or of humans. All listed hazards plus reporting requirements would need to be consistent with other jurisdictions."

They go on to say they would wish to highlight that a fair and adequate compensation system, as well as an appeals process, should be part of this process.

Under animal care regulations, they say that "standards on farms should be limited to extenuating circumstances and clearly stated within the act. Specifically, such standards should be restricted to emergency measures and situations involving the containment and remediation of animal disease outbreaks and contamination."

Mandatory reporting: "... the list of reportable hazards for the province must be compiled with care and only after consultation and agreement by industry stakeholders."

Under compensation, they go on to say, "Adequate compensation for the costs associated under this legislation is crucial. This must include the direct costs of quarantine, removal, testing, disposal or storage of animals and/or animal products as well as coverage for site cleaning and disinfection."

Under the appeals section of this, they go on to say, "An appeals process for decisions related to compensation or licences prescribed in the regulations, similar to those provided under the Alberta Animal Health Act, should be written into the proposed act."

The head of the Dairy Farmers of Canada, Mr. Laforge, who was just recently elected to his fifth term, says, in part, "As we build legislation, regulation and implement systems to achieve improved traceability, we need to ensure that public and market access benefits from traceability are aptly supported."

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has a couple of comments. I'll work these in here too.

Under mandatory reporting, they go on to say that producers are already subject to considerable administrative reports.

1720

Under traceability, the OFA insists that farmers not be forced to bear the total cost of regulations that result in a public benefit. They say, "Although we are not aware of a definitive cost-benefit analysis, we believe trace-back systems will provide more benefit to the consumer than the farmer....

"Traceability initiatives should be specific to and designed compatibly with individual commodity circumstances. They should move forward so as not to put Ontario animal producers at a competitive disadvantage relative to other national or international producers. Legislation must recognize only certain sectors will benefit from provincial level traceability programs, while other sectors would benefit from being organized under national and perhaps international traceability."

In summing up, as I said, we support the idea of improvements to food safety and anything we can do towards that, but we've got a lot of concerns about this bill. We want to see it go to committee so that the stakeholders and many other people who have ideas to improve this bill can be heard at that time.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his comments on the bill. There has been much said this afternoon about this bill as it moves forward, and I've appreciated the comments. As I said earlier, I'm taking lots of notes about it and relying upon the experience in this room.

Bill 204 is primarily about trust. It's about having the trust in our food system so that, as our food comes through, people have confidence. I think this is going to benefit Ontario food products as they go out onto the world market. I appreciated earlier the member from Guelph talking about the fact that when people are looking at food products, they often look upon them as, "This is from Canada" and not necessarily from Ontario.

As I said earlier, the federal government announced this past summer that they were beginning the process of a national traceability system, which I think is crucial to our industry. A couple of members have stated that there's some vagueness around traceability. It says, "The minister may establish" regulations surrounding traceability provincially. There are two things that'll happen with that. One is, if the federal government doesn't get around to doing it, we will have a system in place where we will be able to stand up and say, "Ontario food products are there and they're safe and we can trace them." I think that's incredibly valuable for our farmers and for the agriculture sector in general.

Right now, as one of the members stated earlier—the riding just escaped me, sorry—it exists for the beef industries. This will also be extended into poultry and other areas so that it can be traced, and we can make sure that it is safe. It's a great message to send to the world, that Ontario's products are safe and that if another province or another country decides not to do traceability, they do so at their own peril. I think that what we'll find is that if the federal government decides they don't want to go there or they don't get around to it, we will be there, and we will have a system in place.

This is enabling legislation which will allow the minister to set the wheels in motion to make it happen. I think that's of prime importance here so that we can have those systems in place. That's why I speak in favour of this bill.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I, too, want to commend the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his presentation and for, first of all, coming forward with not only his concerns about the bill but his recommendations of where the bill may be improved and some of the amendments that could be made to make it a better bill. I want to thank him for that and also for the fact that he went to quite a length to point out to those assembled here and those who are watching at home the concerns or the comments that came forward from the stakeholders who will be affected by this legislation, and to point out, again, how that relates to the parts of the bill that he

recommended be amended to accommodate those concerns expressed by the cattlemen and the other groups that he mentioned.

One of the other things that I hadn't given much thought to was the issue of food safety and the systems that we presently have in place, particularly in those areas of our agricultural community where we have an orderly marketing system—in fact, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario have exclusive jurisdiction over regulating, monitoring and looking after the production of the milk and the transportation of the milk into the food chain—and how that relates to this act and whether we are going to duplicate that process in those sectors where we already have the system, or whether we can accommodate those into the system that the minister is going to design for traceability. Incidentally, it was mentioned about tracing the feather industry, shall we say, or the chickens, the boilers that are going to market—that, again, along with the beef cattle, that is traceable today. They can tell you which farm they were grown on, they can tell you which feed they ate while they were there, and they can tell you which plant they were processed in, and the label will show you, when you're in the store, where it came from. So I think we already have a lot of that in place. I think it's very important that we point out just how that is going to be affected by what's being proposed in this bill.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: My colleague the member from Sarnia–Lambton did make a couple of very good points in terms of the detail in the bill. We go back to first principles when we say that everyone here, I would presume, is in favour of taking actions that would support food quality and the integrity of the system, as well as the welfare of animals in a general sense.

I think he points out that there are still overlapping jurisdictional issues that are—that's the problem with this bill. It's 60-some pages or so. He talks about some of the supply management issues that have established criteria for quality, safety, reliability, identification and all these regulatory issues, and most of the livestock industry—the beef industry doesn't have it, but they still have a traceability system with the ear tags, RFID tags. There are responsibilities that are outlined federally, and I think we have all agreed here today with the minister that we need federal regulation because of the movement of livestock to the west or even indeed to the States.

There are a lot of powers in the bill. If you look at that section, the one that I want to talk about at page 56, the regulations in here are just outstanding. There's a whole section. When it comes to traceability, there's only one section, section 33, a very short section, but the rest of it is all—the devil is in the details.

We're not opposed to the goal of the food safety issue. What we are opposed to is more red tape at a time when the livestock sector is just struggling. Bring some humanness to this debate. Is this going to help them and are you going to provide the money, or is this just

another tax grab, sort of like the eHealth and the whole HST debate? Do you understand? I'm concerned that we're downloading to agriculture—

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I want to say that I am very impressed with the discussion that has taken place in the assembly today. There's obviously a good deal of work that has gone into reading the bill and understanding—maybe not understanding so well, but I think it will come. I think it will come, and we'll help you do that. But I am impressed with that.

Some of the comments that I have heard, though, particularly from the official opposition, I'm having a little bit of difficulty appreciating, from the remarks that have been made: On one hand, there is a sense that the traceability piece particularly is a little bit light on details or that we really need to get out there and be very plain about this, but on the other hand what they're suggesting is, "Well, you've indicated that the federal government is going to move forward on traceability, and we don't want to see duplication."

I guess it's important for me to clarify that we have traceability in this bill because we do have a commitment from our federal partner, and we have it, to their credit, I believe, because our industry partners have said that this is important if we are going to be able to market our food products internationally, that a traceability system gives us a tremendous advantage. So what we are doing with the traceability piece we've put in our bill is that when the federal government moves forward with their national traceability strategy, we will have a framework in place to build on that strategy. That's the purpose of this.

I look forward to the opportunities we will have in the future to discuss this with our stakeholders and members of the opposition and to provide even more detail around that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Sarnia–Lambton, you have up to two minutes to respond.

1730

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to thank at this time the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the parliamentary assistant to the minister, the member for Oxford, the member for Durham, and of course the minister herself for those remarks.

I was merely reading both from constituents of mine and some of these representatives from the industry who I know personally. I won't go into detail about who they are. Anyway, I've met them a number of times over the years. What I wanted to impress upon the minister and other people here today is that there are concerns within the industry out there. They've got questions themselves. I think that only begs the question, and we are still waiting for an answer from the minister on whether we will have hearings and be able to have these stakeholders come here, state their cases, as they have in writing, and have the public hearings.

At the end of the day, those stakeholders, those individuals make their living from the agricultural in-

dustry, whether they're in the supply industry, whether they're in the feed industry. I've met with some of them. I toured one of the Parrish and Heimbecker institutions the other day, in the grain industry, that provides feed grain, and they were showing me all the steps they go through now to make sure they can cover their assets if anything goes wrong with food or anything like that.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I think that's okay.

Anyway, they showed me all the hoops they have to go through right now to meet certain standards, in case there's an industry where somebody has something wrong with their feed. So they said that they don't need anymore—they don't mind doing what they're doing today; they're living with that, and they've learned to deal with it. But any further regulation and red tape will only impact upon their businesses.

I think a number of other members have already said that the devil will be in the details. When you write bills or when you're drafting legislation—the minister, I'm sure, has the greatest of interest in the agricultural community and mine, but when they draft a bill, we need to know how it's going to affect everybody.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I want to first start off by thanking the Minister of Agriculture for the due diligence she has done on this particular bill. If one were to listen carefully to what has gone on in this House today, one would almost believe that this is a surprise to people. The stakeholders have actually been really spoken to well by her staff, by her, and by the parliamentary assistant. The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has done a great deal of homework already and has given us the impression that he will continue to do so. He never left his seat and basically has been taking copious notes. I've got to remind him that in terms of where you're headed with this, you don't have to write everything down. It's just a matter of making sure that the salient points that come to you are used in your deliberations with the stakeholders, and I'm sure you're already starting to set up that meeting. So I start by saying, both to the minister and to the parliamentary assistant, a very large thank you.

Someone in the opposition had said earlier—and I really thought it unfortunate; I really did. I thought it was below that person. I thought they were above that, and to impugn somebody's attitude—that because they live in the city, they don't know what's going on and they don't care. I really thought it was going a little bit too far for even that member to imply that the people on this side of the House, as he said, live in the city and don't really care too much about this. I know he knows better, and I think that at second sober thought, he would have recognized that it was probably a statement that was given in the heat of the moment to try to paint a picture that didn't exist. I'll leave it to him to decide whether or not he thinks that that's an appropriate way to talk about any member in this House on any issue.

As a matter of fact, I would say that the member from Trinity–Spadina may have taken offence to that, simply because he’s such an urbanite and has a passion for the people in the country as well. As a matter of fact, I think all of us would have taken umbrage. But I digress. I’ll talk specifically to Bill 204.

To come back to my earlier point, that the minister has been working very strongly on this particular bill, along with her staff, whom she compliments on an ongoing basis: Let’s talk about what they’ve done. The ministry has had 34 written comments that were requested on July 20, 2009, and of those written comments that were received from stakeholders, organizations, and the general public, all of the submissions were generally supportive of the legislation, while raising specific concerns and issues, as has been reported to this House. Ministry staff, through the minister’s directions, have incorporated consultation feedback into the proposed legislation where it was possible. So that beginning set the tone for what the minister has been trying to accomplish here.

Unless I’ve missed something, and I’m sure that the members understand this, recently there have been some concerns worldwide about how we handle our food. I want to come back to the specifics of what I’ve learned in my riding and some of the several other ridings I’ve visited during my years here. That is that the Ontario farmer is pretty well second to none when it comes to food safety. They take pride in that level of confidence and that standard that they set, along with—and I say that carefully—along with governments of all levels that say, “We can work with you in your regulatory streams. We can work with you to make safe food. We love to compete with them as long as the level playing field exists.” One of the things that I think is being missed in some of the debate is the fact that the farmers have said that proudly. “We can compete with the world, and we do compete with the world, and we have”—and they’re proud of it—“some of the safest food on the entire planet” because of the way they conduct themselves.

What this bill is not doing is saying that they’re not doing the job. This bill is very clear in its concept. The concept is to create a system that allows us to make sure that diseases are reported and that, if anything happened to the animals and/or the human beings during consumption, we would be aware of it, trace it and be able to deal with it as quickly as possible.

What we need to do is step back from the brinkmanship that seems to be prevalent in some of the members’ comments. I agree with the minister that most of the conversation has been based on some of the concerns they raised, but I want to make sure that people understand that the proposed legislation will, if passed, provide measures to assist in the prevention—not responding or reacting, but being proactive—and the detection and the control of animal diseases and other hazards that are now known to be found.

They’re not saying it’s just on the farm, which also seems to be missed. Some of the debate going on is trying to rabble-rouse to the point of, “Oh, you’re picking

on us again. Our personal rights are being affected. They’re picking on the country again, the farmers, rural Ontario.” That’s not the fact. The fact is, it would require individuals to report animal diseases to the Chief Veterinarian of Ontario. It gives the government the authority to issue quarantine orders and surveillance zones and control areas to help control the spread of the detected disease or hazard. If somebody believes that their rights are being thrust upon and somebody is going to come down and shut them down for no reason at all, the control mechanisms are built into the bill. If you want to tell Joe Public out there, “We think it’s okay for you to do whatever you want on your farm or your factory or your agri-business and not have some kind of control mechanism in there to be reported, and for that sake we’re going to stop doing this,” I think you’re sadly mistaken. Quite frankly, that’s not what the bill is trying to say. We’re not removing personal rights. What we’re trying to say is, it’s for the sake of all of us, and we’re not the only jurisdiction giving that consideration.

By the way, the minister is also correct on the other point that she’s making, that there is a co-operative nature at this particular moment with the federal government to do what it’s supposed to do. Many of the farmers I’ve spoken to in my riding continually talk to me about the border issue: the produce and the products that are coming in from other nations that don’t have the same quality assurance that’s built in and the pride of the farmers of this zone, this area. That’s not a level playing field, so I’m saying that my support of this bill is based on the particular issue and that the minister has done the consultation and the stakeholders are making some comments.

The bill would also enable us to compensate, to help the farmers with costs associated with animals that may be ordered destroyed in order to control the disease. Farmers know what that’s all about. If you ask the farmer, they know all about getting rid of diseased animals. They don’t want them on their farm, either. I think there’s a little bit of bluster going on to assume that the devil’s in the details, so there’s going to be some mischief being played by this legislation. My goodness; the stakeholders know what the bill is. The stakeholders have seen the bill. We’ve had the discussions with the stakeholders, and the stakeholders are telling us, “We like the direction you’re going. We need to continue to talk.”

1740

This brings me to my next point, which I’ll say again. I think for me it’s the first time, but many of my colleagues on this side of the House have said it a few times. We will take this to committee. It’s going to go to committee. The stakeholders will present and discuss and advise and recommend, and the opposition will have the same opportunity time and time again, as these bills have been, to have their points made and lay it on the table. In some cases, there will be amendments offered, and I’m hoping that if the amendment is to make the bill better and it speaks to the issues that have been driven by the

grassroots and the opposition, the government will analyze it and see fit to introduce it as part of the bill, because this is about safety.

We drive it down to its brass tacks and we strip away the onion skin, and we see that in this world we live in today there's a very large concern about what we're consuming. It provides us with another opportunity. In my conversations—again, I refer to this a second time—with farmers in Ontario, they are very proud theirs is considered one of the safest products that people consume. Farm safety and food safety are considered top-notch here. They have associations that work together to continue at the grassroots level to make it better. The government's intervention here, as it's sometimes characterized, is not much of an intervention when the associations are saying, "We like where you're going."

They have questions, and, yes, they are going to get answers. They have every right to ask the questions. OMAFRA will continue to consult with the industry partners as we move forward with this initiative and to work with the federal and provincial colleagues from across the country to ensure that provincial-level traceability initiatives complement the proposed national traceability system as it evolves.

There is a thought that I had about this national issue of traceability. First of all, on a national level, in the scope across the breadth of the country, there will be varying implications in each of the provinces. I think the provinces have a strong right to take a look at this and ask, "Are there traceability programs that we can offer here that complement or accelerate or go even higher than the federal?" Quite frankly, I would welcome that. The standard or the regulatory stream doesn't necessarily mean you can't go even higher. I'm convinced, as have been the people I've met in my riding and others, that the farmers would accept the challenge and do so because they're proud of the fact that they've got a very high level of food safety record. It is well known.

We're being myopic if we think that nobody else is watching what we're doing here. I know of several examples. Some of my colleagues are involved in the production of food, and I know through conversations with them how seriously they take that portion of their job and what they have to do in order to comply.

So I welcome this bill. I think that what the government is attempting to do is to work with everybody, and everybody's getting a say. I think if anyone tries to characterize the government as trying to slip this one through and pull a fast one on them or whatever the case may be, they're sadly mistaken—quite frankly, more than sadly mistaken. They're playing a little mischief with it because the stakeholders have already indicated that they're willing to participate in this discussion.

I think that what we need to do is to acknowledge that there isn't anybody—and I say that respectfully of all the sides of this House, and I repeat what somebody else has said, and I know they did—in this room who has not said that they wanted to take a look at ensuring that the safety is there and that the traceability is there. But prevention is

included in that, and detection is included in that. I compliment all the members who have acknowledged that and have made it clear that their intention is not to interfere with that component. I respectfully suggest that they have made some good suggestions as to making sure that certain questions get answered.

I think the industry partners that have sent us written support and comments on the initiative include some of the major livestock groups: Ontario Pork, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Inside of that, with what the opposition has said—and I'm in agreement—there may be some questions. There may be some legitimate concerns that need to be raised to help them understand the depth of what the regulatory stream would look like. But the comings and goings of the regulatory stream will be inclusive of something else this government tends to do, and that is to include the stakeholders in that round of discussions. We're going to have hearings. We're going to have deputations from stakeholders. We've done stakeholder consultation.

It's not a big surprise; we're not springing anything on anybody. The general public is in the mood to see even further consideration given to food safety. Governments of all stripes have in the past, continue to and will in the future offer legislation or regulations to keep our people safe. "Recently," the general public is saying, "something is going on with the food. It's making us sick and we're getting these stories out there. Let's continue to analyze what's happening." With investigation, we found that some people have been culpable for the actions and have cleaned it up. I remind again that that's the other point to this: This bill is not designed specifically for farmers—although that's the key component. This goes into the produce side, the production side. It's the agri-business side. They're on notice as well that the food safety coming from their operations is going to be evaluated.

The creation of the chief Ontario veterinarian is a good idea because it zeroes in on the reporting. Now we'll have a consistent statistical analysis of what's been happening out there for disease control. We may find—which I'm suspecting we will—there's a certain amount of pride that can be added to the farm community because it will turn out in the stats that because of the system we've employed right now, we're doing a pretty good job. But we should not be resting on our laurels, because all you have to have is one incident to get reported and traced back, and then all of a sudden we find out that maybe there was a little glitch over here and we didn't report this, this didn't get spoken of or this didn't get fixed after the report. Inside the bill, it also talks about consequences for not doing that.

So the bill is fulsome. It changes several pieces of legislation that require us to re-evaluate how we've done business. In three of the pieces of legislation, it's almost like piecemeal, and they actually don't hook up together. I think the ones we're talking about are—it repeals three acts: the Bees Act, the Livestock Community Sales Act

and the Livestock Medicines Act. As a result of such, those three acts get put aside and the content of this particular bill makes a better connection of those three pieces of legislation, provides us with a more in-depth review and the capacity to report this to the chief veterinarian—and that's an important key to the process that we're going to implement here.

As I said, I wanted to come back to this point: The bill will enable compensation for farmers, to help farmers with costs associated with animals that may be ordered destroyed. Inside of that, as we've seen in the past, particularly in the chicken, pork and cattle industry, once you start a cull, it's extremely devastating.

Now, I would respectfully suggest to you that there have been very few incidences in Ontario's farm history—very few—where farmers, albeit reluctantly, have agreed to do the culls because of the overall value and benefit to not only the industry itself, but the constituents of the entire province of Ontario. I can't say enough of what I've learned over the last 10 years about rural Ontario regarding how farms operate, how farmers make it, how they proceed to evaluate what they provide as a commodity for our consumption, particularly when we consume it, for us, as all Ontarians.

1750

As an educator for 25 years, I used to spend a lot of time teaching my urban kids that milk didn't come from a plastic bag. I had kids in my schools that didn't go more than four blocks away from where they lived. They literally did not go anywhere, and they lived within four blocks of where they went to school. I always made it a point to take them on a trip to a farm, to the dairy program, to have farmers come in and talk to them about their lives and what they did so that they would appreciate deeply the two things that I've been learning to do more of, and that is to educate kids about Farmers Feed Cities!, a program that was very successful, and the second one that I think is important for us to get a hold of—and it's been led by the grassroots, and I'm proud to say it is a grassroots' movement—is to buy local. The buy-local programs will help us with this particular need in our bill today. Buying local is an awful lot easier to trace. It's an awful lot easier to know that the farmer down the road is feeding me. Do you think for a minute a farmer wants to serve anybody anything but the best? They're feeding themselves. They're feeding their own families.

So I say thank you to the farmers for what they've done to this point. I say that I know the stakeholders are on our side. And I personally say to the people in the riding of Brant: a deep appreciation for the work that they do day in and day out to provide us with our needs on the local level. I look forward to continuing to buy local.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, I have a comment on the presentation by the member from Brant, and it describes some of the rules and regulations inherent in this legis-

lation. The red tape and the forms you fill out can be taken too far.

One thing that does appear to be missing in the actual legislation is the whole issue of traceability, and I think we're being asked to operate on faith and expect this to come forward under regulation. We don't get involved in the deliberations with respect to regulation, and that is of concern because many stakeholders, and the member for Brant has spoken with farmers up in his area, recognize the importance of a traceability system—we know this in the broader industry—and they realize how important this is, and they also know that this is largely absent within that legislation.

I think the member for Brant made mention of border issues and trade. To date, with many of our livestock commodities, we are far and well ahead of the United States, for example, with respect to traceability. We seem to be the Boy Scouts in this business. The goal would be, also for consumer confidence, full traceability, from gate to plate.

We have to get the support of the federal government. It would give us an additional competitive advantage, especially in the hog industry. This was a briefing that was sent to me by Wayne Bartels very recently representing the 100 young hog farmers that are going out of business. They realize that the government has to do a lot more to enhance our export of hogs not only to the United States but around the world, and traceability would play a very large role in that.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to say that I appreciate the sincerity of the remarks made by the member from Brant. I want to comment on two aspects. One, he says that the stakeholders are quite happy with this bill, and one can only hope that that is the case. I got the impression that the stakeholders were consulted on some matters which they thought were going to be reflected in the bill, and I think that, while some of it is in the bill, a lot of it is not. So we'll see. If they're happy, great; if not, we'll hear from them.

The second point I wanted to make is that so many agricultural stakeholders have raised concerns that this bill may lead to the government overly dictating and circumscribing animal production practices in the name of health protection. My colleague from Kenora—Rainy River talked about Turkey Farmers of Ontario, which recently passed a regulation restricting turkeys from going outdoors, on safety grounds. We know that this regulation conflicts with the requirement that turkeys have access to the outside in order to be certified as organic. There is a debate about whether the outdoor requirement is a health concern, but what is clear is that the Turkey Farmers of Ontario were able to basically strike out organic turkey production on farms with more than 50 turkeys with the stroke of a pen, with only questionable health benefits. So the efforts made by organic farmers' organizations to suggest a compromise—such as the one reached in Quebec, where

feeding was outside—were scuttled, as far as we understand.

The point to be made here is that sometimes the protection of health can be used as a pretext to marginalize alternative farming methods and methods such as organics and biodynamics.

My understanding is that the ministry officials have assured stakeholders it is not the intention of the ministry to impose a monolithic approach to production with this bill. If that's true, it would be nice to put that language in the bill so that we could all be assured that that's not the intent. I wonder—what do you think?

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: The whole purpose of this bill is to confirm that the livestock and poultry industries are vital contributors to Ontario's economy, and because of this, we've taken steps to introduce this bill.

Protecting livestock and poultry is not just important for the economic well-being of the industry. We know that there's a link between animal health and human health, and protecting our food animals can help us better protect our people.

In recent years the government has taken many steps to do this: by establishing the Office of the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario, investing in the Animal Health Laboratory, and helping provincial livestock and poultry organizations develop their own traceability programs, biosecurity protocols and emergency plans.

As we have said over and over this afternoon, the whole traceability piece—we're in discussion with the federal government on this. It's disappointing that members of the opposition don't seem to have faith in the federal government that they will deliver on this. We have continued to work with them. There's no point in reinventing the wheel. If it's going to come from the federal government, it will come; if it doesn't, this bill enables us to take the steps that are necessary so that we can have our own system in place. I do still have trust in the federal government that they will deliver on what they have promised.

As we move through this, it was great to hear the member for Brant talk about all of the issues that he has with the farmers in his area. They truly are doing great work. Having those proper regulations in place to guarantee and protect their industry is what this is all about. It's making sure that we have a stable food supply. As we follow the food from the farm to the fork, it's so important that we have these proper protections in place to protect the industry.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Brant did make a couple of points, and one of them that I heard was that he generally implied that stakeholders have commonly agreed with this. I think he would be wise to speak to Wayne Bartels and other members of the hog industry, because they are waiting for and in fact perhaps expected the minister today, in the context of this bill, to come to the table with the federal government.

In my statement today, I spoke on behalf of an agricultural business in my riding. I spoke of a specific case. I've spoken directly with and written to the minister, and I have several responses as I speak here.

Regarding the industry at this time, outside of the pertinent issues that we agree with—food quality and food safety—the Ministry of Agriculture is missing from much of the debate in agriculture and the livestock sector today, missing from the point of view of stepping up and showing real leadership in making sure that there is cost recovery in all of the challenges facing agriculture. I don't think they disagree at all with doing the right thing. Anything I've heard from my riding of Durham is that food quality, food safety, the 100-mile diet and all those things are highly championed. In fact, agriculture would be arguably the first, largest business in Durham. We always said it was the auto industry, but now we're seeing that perhaps it is agriculture. In fact, for our own health and welfare generally, it is the first industry, using the principles we're talking about. But what's missing here, again, is the integrity or the clarity, if I could say, to make sure that they're not just downloading more red tape to farm businesses.

I have a case that I mentioned. They are the largest hog producers in Durham region, finishing over 7,000 finished hogs in 2007, yet they did not qualify for the cattle, hog and horticultural payments because of some red tape interpretation of some of the input costs.

There's a lot of work to be done—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: —as long as we work together.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Brant, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'd like to acknowledge and thank the members from Haldimand–Norfolk, Trinity–Spadina and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—that's only one riding—and the member from Durham.

The member from Durham loves to raise the boogeyman of the red tape, and I'm wondering if the meat inspectors they fired were red tape. I wonder if the boogeyman came back and haunted us when they got rid of the water inspectors. So, please spare me the ask of being wise when it comes to red tape.

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock offers the sound advice of a parliamentary assistant who's doing his job. So I thank you deeply and will listen carefully to your advice as you seek that from the stakeholders.

The member from Trinity–Spadina: Yes, we will hear them. We will listen. We will be participating in the debate. You asked us about the organics. I'm not versed in the details of what you're asking, but my understanding is that the bill, or the implementation of what you're talking about, was not designed for that reason. There is no kind of conspiracy here to get rid of organic turkey farmers. It's basically something that needs to continue being discussed, and I'm told that that would be happening. I don't know enough of the details, but I can assure you, from my understanding, that that is not the case.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk has a tremendous influence on the federal government, and I hope he exercises it. I hope he exercises it with his federal colleagues on the border issue, because he knows just as much as I do that it is absolutely germane to the discussion about the feds getting Health Canada people in there, making sure that we don't have those apples from China that are coming in with DDT on them. It's a federal issue. So pick up the phone, my friend, and use

that wonderful influence you have with the federal government—and while you've got them on the phone, talk to them about the traceability. I would appreciate it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being a couple of minutes past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	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
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, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
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

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

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

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Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Eric Hoskins, Pat Hoy
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Charles Sousa
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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, Reza Moridi
David Oraziatti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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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

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Leeanna Pendergast, 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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
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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

Continued from back cover

Hellenic Community of Ottawa

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 7967

Poag Jewellers

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel 7967

Habitat for Humanity

Mrs. Laura Albanese 7967

MOTIONS

Committee membership

Hon. Monique M. Smith 7968

Motion agreed to 7968

Sign language interpreters

Hon. Monique M. Smith 7968

Motion agreed to 7968

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

**Women's History Month / Mois de l'histoire des
femmes**

Persons Day / Journée de l'affaire « personne »

Hon. Laurel C. Broten 7968

Mme France Gélinas 7969

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer 7969

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Doctor shortage

Mr. John O'Toole 7970

Diagnostic services

Mme France Gélinas 7970

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell 7970

Taxation

Ms. Sylvia Jones 7970

Tom Longboat

Mr. Jim Brownell 7971

Taxation

Mr. John O'Toole 7971

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell 7971

Taxation

Mr. Ernie Hardeman 7971

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell 7972

Wind turbines

Mr. Toby Barrett 7972

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell 7972

Taxation

Mr. John O'Toole 7972

Tom Longboat

Mr. Jim Brownell 7972

Taxation

Mr. Toby Barrett 7972

Taxation

Mr. John O'Toole 7973

Taxation

Mr. Bob Delaney 7973

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Animal Health Act, 2009, Bill 204,

**Mrs. Dombrowsky / Loi de 2009 sur la santé
animale, projet de loi 204, Mme Dombrowsky**

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky 7973

Mr. Rick Johnson 7975

Mr. Ted Arnott 7978

Mr. Howard Hampton 7978

Mr. Pat Hoy 7979

Mr. Norman W. Sterling 7979

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky 7979

Mr. Ernie Hardeman 7980

Mr. Howard Hampton 7989

Mr. Rick Johnson 7989

Mr. John O'Toole 7989

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel 7990

Mr. Ernie Hardeman 7990

Mr. Howard Hampton 7990

Mr. Rosario Marchese 7993

Mr. John O'Toole 7996

Mr. Rick Johnson 7996

Mr. Ernie Hardeman 7996

Mr. Mike Colle 7996

Mr. Rosario Marchese 7997

Royal Assent / Sanction Royale

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier) 7997

Animal Health Act, 2009, Bill 204,

**Mrs. Dombrowsky / Loi de 2009 sur la santé
animale, projet de loi 204, Mme Dombrowsky**

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel 7997

Mr. Ernie Hardeman 7999

Mr. Rosario Marchese 7999

Mrs. Liz Sandals 8000

Mr. John O'Toole 8000

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel 8000

Mr. Robert Bailey 8000

Mr. Rick Johnson 8004

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8004
Mr. John O'Toole	8004
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky.....	8005
Mr. Robert Bailey	8005
Mr. Dave Levac	8005
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	8008
Mr. Rosario Marchese	8008
Mr. Rick Johnson.....	8009
Mr. John O'Toole	8009
Mr. Dave Levac	8009
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	8010

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 19 October 2009 / Lundi 19 octobre 2009

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	7953
Mr. Jim Brownell	7953
Hon. Deborah Matthews	7953
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	7953
Mr. Rick Johnson	7953
Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde.....	7953
Hon. John Milloy	7953
Hon. Jim Watson.....	7953
Hon. Donna H. Cansfield.....	7953
Hon. Deborah Matthews	7953
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	7953
Fire in Legislative Building	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	7953
Use of question period	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	7954

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Electronic health information	
Mr. Tim Hudak	7955
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	7955
Electronic health information	
Mr. Tim Hudak	7956
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	7956
Health care funding	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	7957
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	7957
Employment supports	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	7958
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	7958
Hon. John Milloy	7958
Electronic health information	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	7958
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	7958
Children's aid societies	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	7959
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	7959
Taxation	
Mr. Dave Levac.....	7959
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	7960
Electronic health information	
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	7960
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	7960

Smoking cessation

Mme France Gélinas	7961
Hon. Margaret R. Best	7961

Municipal government

Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....	7961
Hon. Jim Watson.....	7961

Cancer treatment

Mrs. Joyce Savoline	7962
Hon. Deborah Matthews	7962

Manufacturing jobs

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	7962
Hon. Sandra Pupatello.....	7962

Food safety

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	7963
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	7963

Assistance to farmers

Mr. Toby Barrett	7963
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	7963
Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	7964

Employment supports

Mr. Howard Hampton	7964
Hon. John Milloy	7964

Health promotion

Mr. Yasir Naqvi	7964
Hon. Margaret R. Best	7965

Premier's wedding anniversary

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	7965
--------------------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Driver examination centres

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	7965
--------------------------	------

Road safety

Mr. Bob Delaney	7965
-----------------------	------

Assistance to farmers

Mr. John O'Toole.....	7965
-----------------------	------

Services for the hearing impaired

Mr. Michael Prue	7966
------------------------	------

Services for the hearing impaired

Mr. Jim Brownell	7966
------------------------	------

Credit unions and caisses populaires

Mr. Norm Miller.....	7966
----------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover