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Thursday 5 November 2009

Jeudi 5 novembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 November 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 novembre 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND SAFETY
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 2009, on the motion for second read of Bill 187, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 187, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité et la Loi de 1996 sur l'application de certaines lois traitant de sécurité et de services aux consommateurs.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit surprised nobody else got up. Good morning, everyone. I hope you are all having a good morning.

I just want to put a couple things on the record in regard to the technical safety amendment act. I first of all would say that this whole concept of moving the responsibility for—oh, thank you. That's why I have friends in this Legislature. They make sure that I look good. They can dress me up, but they can't take me out; that's the problem.

Anyway, as I was saying, part of the problem in this province is that this whole issue of taking responsibility for the inspection of construction sites etc. used to be something that was conducted by the province. When it came to the people who went out to make sure that the people who service elevators were doing their job according to the rules, and the people who do the actual maintenance on boilers in everything from apartment buildings to industrial plants or mines or mills were doing what they should be doing, that used to be within the ministry itself.

One of the reasons the crown is normally the one to do that is that the crown answers to the public. If you are a civil servant and work as a Ministry of Labour inspector or an inspector within what used to be the old inspection branch of the ministry that took care of this, if there is some question of public safety, there's always somebody who is accountable, because in the end they work for the

crown and ultimately there's a minister and a government that's responsible.

Some years ago, the Harris government decided they would privatize the delivery of those services in a sort of private setting. So what they did was shut down what used to be the inspections branch within the ministry that was responsible for these types of inspections and put it into a sort of private sector model by creating the TSSA. I've got to say that right from the beginning it was not one that I welcomed. I've had experiences of having to deal on issues that are under the authority of the TSSA, on behalf of constituents in my riding, and I've got to say that it is not exactly the most user-friendly agency to deal with.

For example—and I think a whole bunch of other people would have got the same thing—on the issue of electrical contractors, the TSSA decided that you had to have a master electrician's licence in order to be a contractor in the province of Ontario. I understand the logic of what they were trying to do: They wanted to eliminate from the marketplace those people who do what they call fly-by-night or moonlighting work out of their basement, the electrician like myself, who work at the mine and say, "I can make a few extra bucks by wiring a house."

I guess there's an argument for that, because the contractors are the ones who pay the taxes and have overhead, and you need to protect their area in some way. I understand the need to want to do that. But the problem was that once they started to set up the master electrician's licence, they didn't want to grandfather any of the people who were in the business before. So I had contractors—we in this Legislature all had contractors—who had been in the business for 20, 30 years, and they were made to challenge the test.

Now, they could challenge the test, and all the ones I know who wrote it and who were opposed to the test, passed it. But the point was that they were not given any credit for all the work they had done up to then.

Imagine you're an electrical contractor—you're Eric's Electric or any of those contractors who were involved in this particular process—and after 20 years of being in business, paying your taxes and building a reputation in the community as a legitimate contractor and somebody who does quality work, you're told all of a sudden by the TSSA, because they have authority under the crown, that you have to go out and get a master's licence and you have to challenge the exam.

Well, these guys were really upset. They were saying, "Listen, I've been in the business for 20, 30 years, I served an electrical apprenticeship, I worked in the fol-

lowing fields before I started up my own business, I've had my own business for 15, 20 years," whatever it might be, "and I'm having to do this thing over again." They asked, "Why is there not grandfathering of the contractors who have been out there for a certain period of time?" So there would be some sort of criteria established that you have to be a contractor in good standing for five years, having done it full-time, or whatever regulations you want to tie around it.

My point is this: It was virtually impossible to get the changes to apply grandfathering to these people as a result of the way the TSSA was set up. They were extremely frustrating to deal with, I must say. Yes, they always returned my phone calls—I'm not going to say for a second that they didn't—and the people I dealt with were certainly trying to be accommodating to me. But the end result was that they were not trying to accommodate in any way the request that the contractors made.

We ended up having meeting after meeting and conference calls. I remember that at least once or twice we had meetings of contractors who came to my office and people from the TSSA came down. The arguments were made, and it was a bit embarrassing because the case was made but at the end of the day they decided they were going to do what they were going to do. Therefore, the contractors in my community, like everywhere else, were forced to write the exam. Now, they all passed the exam, and we said that from the beginning. It's not a question of these people not being competent; they had been doing it for 20 years. Of course they could pass the exam; they could pass it with their eyes closed. But it was a question of respect. Do you respect the work these people have been doing for 10, 15, 20 years, and if so, why not find some way to accommodate that?

We've recently had the same situation on the Mining Act with prospectors. Prospectors are expected to take a course in order to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations under the Mining Act and what their responsibilities are vis-à-vis the act. Again, we did say, "Well, there have been people in the business for a lot of years, they understand this, they're professionals, that's what they do, so let's grandfather people over a certain amount of time." The government ended up saying no. I just say that it's been an extremely frustrating process to try to get amendments for these types of situations.

0910

Now, as for the TSSA and what's in this bill, what really is a bit shocking is that the reason we have this bill—I would imagine—is because of the propane explosion that we had a year ago. That's why we're here. One of the things that is really sort of interesting, as you read through the bill, is that the bill makes sure that the crown isn't liable for any of the omissions made by lack of inspection or faulty inspections on the part of the TSSA. I think that's rather regrettable, because what we're basically saying is that we want to make sure that the government, at the end of the day, and the crown generally—because the government could be any of the political parties eventually after the next election—the

issue is that the TSSA will find itself in a position with this particular legislation that its officers, directors and employees are not agents of the crown, and the crown is not liable for any act or omission by persons who are not agents of the crown.

What we're going to be doing is lessening the liability of individuals acting on behalf of the TSSA and also lessening the liabilities that the crown has when it comes to lawsuits arising from situations such as we've seen with the gas explosion that we had here in Toronto last year.

There's another thing that's of concern, and originally, when I heard it the first time, I thought, "Well, it can't be. Why would the TSSA say that?" But if somebody calls, let's say, an employee, and says, "We think you need to come and take a look at this boiler"—or "this elevator," whatever it is—"because we think there's some shoddy maintenance going on," or whatever, one of the first things that the TSSA asks is, "Who's going to pay for the investigation?" Wow.

I can tell you that if I call the Ministry of Labour as a worker and say, "There's an occupational health and safety concern at the mine"—or the forestry plant or the car plant, or whatever it might be—I can guarantee you that the Ministry of Labour doesn't say, "Who's going to pay for the investigation?" They just go out and they do the investigation.

One of the concerns of the TSSA, because they are in a private sector model, is the cost of doing the inspections. So they're much more reluctant to do inspections, on the basis that it might cost them money. Something that they might think, "Well, you know, this is not too important, this is just some person grumbling about something, and they're mad about their employer, so let's not send out an inspector," puts the public at risk, because one of the things that I think we need to follow is the idea that if there is a complaint, it should be followed up on.

I'll give you a story. When I worked at McIntyre mine some years ago, there was a complaint made by a worker in regard to a particular problem having to do with air-lines underground. I think it was on the 3,700-foot level. Anyway, the long and the short of the story is that the Ministry of Labour sent an inspector in, and because at that time I was the health and safety committee person within the Steelworkers Local 4440 on the maintenance side, as an electrician, I was asked to accompany the inspector.

Well, the inspector came out and inspected the situation and looked at what needed to be done—and in fact, there was an infraction that needed to be fixed—but decided, as a result of something he heard two guys talking about—I believe it was the 3,700-foot level where the 12-shaft hoist was; yes, the deck was at 3,800, so the hoist was up on 3,700. Anyway, as a result of that, the inspector decided to go and check both the deck and to take a look at the cage itself, because a couple of people had mentioned something about the pin that goes across the top of the cage that's tied to the cable, that's tied to

the hoist—that the bushings that were holding this large pin that secures it so the cage stays tied to the steel wire cable were worn out.

To me, it sounded preposterous because I know that that thing was inspected every week and that the people who inspected it knew what they were doing. So the inspector decided to shut it down and take a look at it, and lo-and-behold, what did he find? He found out that there were no more bushings; in fact, the bushings had been worn out. What had happened is that over the years, because of the way this thing had been constructed, the maintenance people didn't actually have physical access to see that particular part of the bushing. It looked normal when you looked at it, but there was a real potential that one day if the shaft conveyance was going down the shaft, down to 6,800 or back up again, what could have happened was that that whole bar, that pin that runs across the cage that the rope is tied to, could have shoved over to one side and just unhooked and let the cage fall down to the bottom.

What was worse was—on a cage you have something called “dogs.” Dogs are simply a mechanism. You have shaft guides that come down, which are BC fir, and then you have a guide that comes on the cage, like an H-beam type of construction, that guides the cage down so that it follows these wooden shaft guides. And if the spring that holds the steel-wire rope to the cage loosens, it engages a spring that throws sort of like knives—these are called dogs—into the wood to stop the cage. Because of the way that these bushings had been worn out, that system didn't work at all. So we were potentially in a situation of losing one or more people as a result of a shaft conveyance accident. This would have been back in the 1980s or late 1970s sometime.

My point is, the Ministry of Labour inspector followed up and was not concerned about who was going to pay, how long it was going to take or whether this was inconvenient to the employer or the employees. His sole concern was, “I'm inspecting something, and I want to find out if it's safe, yes or no.” When he found out it was unsafe, that part of the mine was shut down for I think a period of three or four days, until they were able to reconstruct that whole assembly system to make it safe for workers.

I can tell you, that was a really serious accident waiting to happen. Thanks to the Ministry of Labour inspector who happened to be there—I think Mr. Connelly was the inspector at the time and prevented what could have been a tragedy at that mine.

My point is that for the TSSA to ask somebody, “Who's going to pay for the investigation?” and to sort of pick and choose what you're going to go out and investigate, eliminates the possibility of inspecting something that might be quite dangerous but that people haven't twigged to, for whatever reason.

I think it's like the police. If there's a crime being committed, you dispatch the police and the police go and check. If they get there and find out it's a minor thing, they just tell people to calm down and they leave. But

they go there and they find out, because it might be a serious situation. It should be the same thing with the TSSA. I'm not saying they should be the police and come in and kick the door down, but to come and inspect the situation to find out if there is something that's dangerous that should be dealt with.

I would be much more comfortable having those services that are provided by the TSSA moved back to the crown, because at the end of the day, you know that if you have an inspector who works for the crown, they're not going to be concerned about, you know, “Should I or shouldn't I go and inspect this?” because it's a question of cost or whatever. They go out and make sure that people are safe. I think there is no cost, when it comes to safety, that is too high. If it's unsafe, it's unsafe. Don't use it. We're talking about people's lives.

I worked in an industry in which it was very normal for people to get killed at the mine where I worked. We were a group of five or six mines. It was very normal—when I first started working in the mining industry—to hear once, twice or three times a year of somebody dying in some tragic accident because of some unsafe condition, and sometimes it was because workers were cutting corners and the equipment was not set up properly, and other times, it was because they were instructed poorly on how to do their duties.

I always remember Mr. Hale, who was one of the most tragic ones. His son died. Mr. Hale was a mine captain. His son was working at the Pamour mine. He wasn't properly trained, and he stood on top of an ore bin in which, as we say, the muck was frozen. The rocks that come up from underground are called muck, and when the muck came into the bin on the surface, it sort of congealed and locked itself up by pressure. That's what we call “frozen.” For whatever reason, poor young Mr. Hale—and I have to believe it was because of improper instruction—tried to unjam it using a blowpipe—that's a great big steel pipe about 20 feet long—and blowing air into certain areas and cavities to get it to start flowing freely. Unfortunately, he was standing on top of the muck pile when it did unjam. It was a pretty tragic way to go. Poor Mr. Hale and Mrs. Hale lost their son, the brother of Kim and Paul. I have to say it was one of the most tragic things I've seen. We would see that on a regular basis.

But my point is this: You look at the mining industry today and you don't see the amount of tragedy as far as accidents that we used to see back in the 1970s and, I would argue, into the 1980s. Why? Because governments of the day passed the Occupational Health and Safety Act and said to workers, “You have the right to refuse unsafe work.” They hired Ministry of Labour inspectors—not TSSA types but people who worked for the government—to go in to make sure that employers had health and safety training going on within their employ.

For example, if I wanted to go back and work underground now, after having worked for years underground, I couldn't work underground legally because I have to have common core. There's a whole bunch of training that I have to do before I can go underground and work

as an electrician, including understanding what's going on in my environment around me as far as what happens with the drilling, the blasting, the mucking and all of the various stages of mining.

0920

The result of all of that is that companies have become much more safety-conscious, because they understand this is just good business: If I don't have accidents, I don't have an increased workers' compensation assessment and I can make sure that those employees that I invest in and train are going to be with me for a longer period of time and they're going to be more productive. That has been the example and the result of what happened when we decided to do occupational health and safety in a real way, not only in the mining sector but across the various sectors of our economy—for my particular case, the mining sector. It's not to say that we don't have tragedies in mining today. But I can tell you, for the number of hours worked today, in 2009, there are far, far fewer accidents and far, far fewer tragedies as far as deaths in the mining industry than there were 25 or 30 years ago, and the reason for that is that we understood that the crown has a responsibility to make sure to inspect those things that are called in and are said to be unsafe, that workers are trained and employers are sensitized to the need to train workers and doing the things that make our workplaces safe.

One of the things that is sad about the TSSA is that they have the ability to do what are called variances to orders. They're able to take, for example, certain equipment that may not be safe on a particular worksite—like some piece of equipment that has been used for a long time, and if you use it properly it's safe, but it has some issues around the way it was constructed. They have the ability to say, "Okay, you can go ahead and use that equipment." Unfortunately, we've had a number of tragedies on construction sites as a result of the TSSA having the ability to issue those variances.

One of the ones I'm concerned about is what they're doing with boilers. You know, in mines and sawmills and paper plants, various types of industrial settings, you have to have steam. The steam is created by way of boilers. One of the things they've done under the TSSA is to give companies the ability to say, "Your boiler will be scaled down from being class"—I forget what the classes are; class A to class B, or B to A, whatever. The point is to lessen the standard by which you have to have qualified personnel to run it in regard to what goes on and in regard to the maintenance on it. I think that's a bit of an accident waiting to happen, because I can tell you as an electrician who worked on boilers, they're a pretty dangerous thing if you don't know what you're doing. If you go into a boiler and start working on a control circuit and happen to not know what you're doing and do improper maintenance on it, or improper repairs, you could end up bypassing or shutting down some limit switch on the pressure or temperature or whatever it might be, and have a ticking time bomb sitting in the middle of the plant ready to blow because somebody didn't know what they were doing.

We've had a very good system of making sure those people who touch boilers are qualified. I wasn't allowed to touch a boiler until I became a journeyman electrician. It took five years before they allowed us to get near those things to really learn about them, because they're quite dangerous pieces of equipment if you don't know what you're doing. The TSSA is allowing employers to downgrade the classification of those boilers so that lesser-qualified people can run them, and I think that's an accident waiting to happen.

With that, those would be my comments on this particular bill.

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

Mr. Eric Hoskins: Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate today on Bill 187 and in particular to respond to some of the comments made by the member for Timmins–James Bay. I want to also appreciate the experience he brings to the issue of public safety that he has outlined this morning.

I believe it's important to recognize that Ontario's public safety system is among the best in the world. It works well to protect Ontarians every day, and there's nothing more important to this government than the safety of all Ontarians. It's also important to continue to find ways to improve the system. Bill 187 would improve accountability and it would improve transparency of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. Overall, it would further strengthen Ontario's public safety system.

Someone said that the TSSA should be brought back into government. I disagree. Safety is the McGuinty government's first priority, and having industry and safety experts ensuring a strong public safety regime is in the public's best interest.

Bill 187 provides clear powers for the minister to guide the strategic focus and activities of the TSSA. This guidance comes through policy directives and an annual mandate letter to the board of the TSSA. This would increase the transparency and visibility of the minister's oversight role.

Importantly, Bill 187 also creates a chief safety and risk officer. This is an independent officer, a safety advocate who would report directly to the board. Some here have also made the claim that the chief risk and safety officer will not report publicly. That also is not true. The officer will provide systemic oversight, and his or her reports to the board will be made public.

Bill 187—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Sorry, that was questions and comments.

Are there any further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I think the member from Timmins–James Bay outlined the complexity that all these various trades and professional bodies deal with in terms of providing for our safety. It's something we don't see. We assume that someone is watching over all these boilers and propane operations, and I think it was a rude awakening that the system we had to sort of supervise the safety aspects had some big holes in it. Like the member from

Timmins–James Bay, I had grave misgivings about this type of self-regulation; I totally agree with him about that. In this bill, we're at least trying to tighten up some of the most gaping loopholes in that self-regulation and trying to make it more responsible.

I know that the bill before us was brought to us because of an incredible, tragic explosion that occurred. I live a couple of kilometres from where the explosion took place, and I can still remember all the windows in my own house rattling and shaking that morning. I thought it was a storm. I came downstairs, went outside, looked in the sky and said, "It must be a thunderstorm or something." I turned on the TV—nothing; I turned on the radio—nothing. I went back to bed—another rattling.

I remember that I got on the phone later that morning with Rick Bartolucci, the Minister of Community Safety, and said, "Listen, something horrendous has happened. You had better make sure your guys are there on the job."

I just want to mention that this bill is also a good memory of the district chief of emergency planning, Bob Leek, who went to the site on his day off and died—we can't forget that—and of Parminder Singh Saini, who was a student at Sheridan College studying manufacturing and management, who also died. Let's not forget those two great people.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Timmins–James Bay for his presentation on this bill. I appreciate his comments and his knowledge about apprenticeship and about the training that the people who are responsible for the operations of the TSSA have. But as I was looking at the bill and recognizing why this bill was introduced—it was the big disaster, the big event that took place in Toronto with the Sunrise Propane explosion. But when I look at the bill, it really doesn't do much to solve any of those problems. I'd be the first to admit that in my experiences with the present act, there are a lot of things that need to be changed to make it work better, and yet none of that seems to be in here.

This just seems to be a bill that was brought forward because the minister said, "I'm going to do something," and then he spent his time on something else and didn't get back to it, and all of a sudden somebody said, "How come you haven't done anything?" And so he did; he wrote this bill.

It talks primarily about how he's going to structure the board differently and give the minister more powers to tell them what to do, but so far, he hasn't decided on anything or hasn't been able to figure out what he's going to tell them to do differently than they've done before.

I think it's rather a shame that we're spending so much time debating a bill that could have been so much better but does so little for us.

0930

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

Mr. Dave Levac: The member from Timmins–James Bay offers us some sound advice and practical experience that he has had and that has been translated into some of the concerns. I noted very clearly that he was talking about the safety, and I respect that immensely. He knows that I have deep respect for his past life, shall we say, and experiences in his community.

What an interesting comment one of the opposition members made, to try to say this is fluff. Quite frankly, it's disappointing to hear that, and I'm rather interested to see how they plan to vote: whether or not they don't want improvements to be made to the bill. What's rather interesting is that it was their bill that created the TSSA in the first place. One of them trumpeted this fantastic thing when 50% of the people who were supposed to investigate amusement rides were not even qualified or certified to investigate the rides. In my riding, unfortunately, some tragic events took place. So I really dismiss this attitude of always finding a reason to say no. In opposition, it's not always to oppose; it's to propose, and I haven't heard that from one of the members over there.

This member, on the other hand, has made some interesting challenges for us to consider, and I think that's the way in which debate brings out the best in a bill; instead of just sitting there saying, "Government bad, opposition good." So I want to thank the member for his sound arguments and his sound observations through his personal experience. The more we use this place to enhance the bills that we put forward, the better it is. I still maintain that this is a fluid place, this is a place where we continually move in a positive direction that offers us opportunities to do things differently and to move us into the next century etc. So the days that the people hear nothing but negativism—they're done. We want to move forward, and I thank the member for his sound arguments and his proposals to this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Timmins–James Bay, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thank Mr. Levac from Brant for his comments. I try, as much as possible, when getting into debate or getting into committee, to make some proposals. The real test is—I think all of us will agree, because we've all been in government and we understand, unfortunately, how government sometimes doesn't work. I think one of the real tragedies around this place is that the committee system has been really weakened over the years. I take the comments that you made at face value, that debate is about positioning what the amendments should be when we get into committee, so that we're able to take a bill and improve it. Once you get into committee, you have an opportunity to have the public come and make comment, and members are able to further discuss it and hopefully come out of the committee process with a bill that achieves the objectives the government wants, but in a better way.

The unfortunate part is—and I'm not going to put all the blame on this government, because it has been a problem for a while—that members are less and less able

to do the work they are sent here to do when it comes to amending bills. Why? Because the cabinet, and specifically the Premier, decides that if we show any type of movement on a bill, it's somehow a question of weakness for the government. I say quite the opposite: The style of leadership that I like is somebody who says, "Oh, you've got a better idea? Let's move forward." I just hearken back to the Second World War and Operation Overlord with Dwight D. Eisenhower. If people go back and read what Dwight did, it wasn't his brainchild. He wasn't a megalomaniac who wanted to have control of everything that happened and have control every facet of the operation. He went out and found the best people he could. He put together a team, they planned, they did the best that they could, and then they left it to the soldiers and their leaders to implement that plan. As a result of his leadership and allowing people to rise to the occasion, we were able to successfully invade Normandy on June 6, 1944. My point is, we should be doing the same here.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 187, the Technical Standards and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act.

I just wanted to mention the government's comments on the presentation made by the member from Timmins—James Bay. It's helpful when you have a debate about something that you not only point out the things that are not quite right—which, of course, in this place is the opposition's job. We're not called the "government's cheerleaders"; we're called the Queen's loyal opposition, to make sure, when government introduces legislation, that what we propose or what we see as failing or short in the legislation is brought forward so the people of Ontario will know what it's going to do.

I always—I shouldn't say always, but invariably, when the government introduces a piece of legislation, the first thing I look at is not the legislation; I look at what they call the compendium. It usually points out what the minister is proposing to do with that piece of legislation. Then you go through the bill and see whether it actually meets that.

In this case—and that's why I brought it up in my short remarks—that isn't what is happening. The bill that is before us—I don't like to use the word "fluff"; I don't think anything we do in this place is fluff. But it has very little impact or will make very little difference in the things that took place during the Sunrise explosion or after the Sunrise explosion. It was mentioned that there were some shortcomings in the training of the people who were involved, and it has been mentioned, as I read the news reports of it, that there were instances where the inspections had not taken place. But there was nothing ever mentioned in those that in the present legislation the inspections were not supposed to take place or that the authority to do those inspections was not in place. It was all there; it just wasn't being done.

I would hope that this legislation would have come forward with something that would have done that, to

say, okay, self-regulation works, but there has to be some teeth in it when the organization doesn't do it, and obviously that's what happened here.

It seems that after the explosion there were quite a number—in fact, the government came out, first of all, to say that all propane facilities must be inspected as quickly as possible. They went through them all, and there were quite a number of them that were actually shut down because they had shortcomings that had to be corrected before they could continue operation. That wasn't because the legislation wasn't strong enough to do that; it's just that the organization was not thorough enough in keeping up the inspection process.

As I said, I was hoping that this legislation would come up with some direction on dealing with that, as to mandating what they must do, as opposed to allowing the minister, by regulation, to do things that, at this point, as we stand here and debate this bill, we don't know what that might be, and it would appear, because of the way the bill is written, that the minister doesn't know that either.

As I read the first three or four pages of the notes and the bill, it is primarily the reorganization of the TSSA as it's presently structured. I would just point out that the act is amended by adding section 3.1, which "changes the status of the authority from a designated administrative authority under the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996 to a statutory corporation under the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2002." I'm not sure that that is going to—in fact, I am sure that it is not going to have a great impact on the safety of the industry or the work of that organization. I don't think in the aftermath of the Sunrise explosion that there was anything there that said, you know, if you could just change the status of the organization from one type of status under the arm's-length from the government to another status, somehow things would have worked out differently. It goes on doing that same thing; it talks about making changes for the sake of making changes, as opposed to improving the operation of it.

I don't want to spend a lot of time on the Sunrise explosion, because that's not where I have had the most involvement with TSSA. In rural Ontario, the TSSA also looks after all the heating systems in private homes. They set the rules, and I think that's the challenge we face. I was hoping we would see some changes in here.

The company or the supplier of the fuel in our home heating systems in the majority of rural Ontario homes gets a notice, and you must have your heating system inspected before they can put any more oil in your tank. Again, this is the standard set-up, so they will make sure that they're all inspected. I have no problem with that, but when they come in and make the inspection, the rules that were set in place and the requirements under that inspection—they say my furnace, which was put in 10 years ago—it was put in under code; it was put in by a professional installer—is now so many inches too close to the ceiling because of the heat convection, so I must put in a new furnace. It has to be a lower furnace because

the association has collectively set a standard for what that clearance must be.

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This is from personal experience. When they inspected my furnace, it wasn't the height from the ceiling, but it turns out that when I put the furnace in the house—I put in a new furnace and a new chimney, so it was all built to code and properly operational. When they came in to inspect it, I was told that it was all fine but I needed to put up a new chimney. One would think a chimney would be a place to get rid of the excess combustible material, that as long as it was contained, solid, no leaks, high enough so the draft would get it at the top and wide open so there was no creosote on the inside to plug the chimney, that would be sufficient. So I said to him, "Why did you suggest I need a new chimney?" He said, "You have an eight-inch flue and that is too large a chimney and too large a flue for the size of your furnace." I thought that was rather strange.

As luck, or lack of luck, would have it, I was not at the deadline where it had to be corrected, so he said—this was a number of years ago—"Before 2007 you must have had that corrected so we can keep supplying the oil."

We had occasion a year or so later to have someone else come in; we were changing the supplier of the fuel and they had to send in an inspector to make sure that the furnace was appropriate. When they came in to check the furnace, I said, "I was told by a previous inspector that the chimney is too large." He said, "I don't know how he would have known that." I said, "He told me that it was eight inches and it should be only six for the size of the furnace." He said, "The standard is that you have to take a reading." There is a piece of equipment; they put a hole in the pipe right by the furnace and they measure that and if the draft on the chimney—in my case, it had to be between one and three; if the draft in the chimney is between that, you have a sufficient chimney. He put it in there and it was a two. You couldn't get much better than that; immediately it was passed.

When the public asks the inspector, "Who sets that regulation?" they are told that it's the province of Ontario. I said, "I spend a little time with the province of Ontario in the Legislature and I hadn't been part of the debate that said that definition should be six inches or eight inches or whether it should be two, three or four." When we checked it with the TSSA, in fact, the TSSA collectively set it as an organization and then they get the government to approve it.

Again, I think having the same people who supply the product, who do the changes and also set the standard of the changes that are needed, is something that needs to be looked at. I would have hoped that would have been in this bill, but obviously that's not the case.

I just wanted to go back to the corporation and the things they're supposed to do under this. It may all be good, and I think it was used yesterday when it came to the good government debate. One of the speakers from the government side said that there comes a time with all legislation that you need to review it to make sure it's

kept up to date and you change the names that have been changed at ministries—I think the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock mentioned something about the Education Act still including that if you drove your horse to school, the school board was obligated to feed and look after the horse for the day while you were there. Things like that need to be changed. But I don't think you do those types of changes and call that dealing with the problem that was pointed out when they originally started on the act, when they said that we had to do something because of the circumstances that surrounded the fire.

Here we have the direction of what the board is going to be able to do, the board that we changed the name of. It talks all about how they're going to inform and educate, but it doesn't really tell us the relationship between the minister and that board and whether in fact there's going to be any more oversight on behalf of the ministry to make the inspections and the remedial action to be taken any better than they were before. I wonder whether we are in fact improving the situation.

I see here there's a lot of—again, they talk about the safety, but there doesn't seem to be anything at this point in here that isn't that way already, except giving the minister the ability to make more appointments.

I would really like to say that if there's nothing wrong with the bill, then obviously one should support it because things aren't going to get any worse. Then why are we having this debate? We might just go on with another topic. The challenge we face—and we get back to the original comment by the member from Brant about the issue of the opposition never coming up with good suggestions and just telling what's wrong, and because the government introduced it, it's always bad, and because I'm in opposition, it's always good. That may be true, but that's not the intent. If the government would come forward with legislation that was good, I'd be happy to stand here and commend them on it.

But that's not the case with this legislation, because we are going to leave this debate and, as was mentioned, we're going to committee with the bill. The member from Timmins-James Bay is going to put forward his good suggestions on how the bill can be changed to make it a better bill. The government is not going to listen to a single one of those changes. They're going to come back and say, "See, we did it. Now we've solved this problem that the original compendium was supposed to solve," and the bill will do nothing of the kind.

If we had not been talking about the things that were short in this debate, the public would have never known. They would assume that the protection that was missing when the Sunrise explosion took place has now been remedied by this new piece of legislation. That is not the case, because this doesn't do anything with the problems that occurred there. That's why I think it's so important that we stand here and try to get the government to change their ways and listen to some of those recommendations.

The members have a smile across the aisle because they're suggesting that that's not the case. I would ask

them to tell me how many opposition members in the last two years have been accepted at committee to change a bill meaningfully? None.

Mr. Mike Colle: A heck of a lot more than you did in eight years.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I notice that I touched a nerve. I'm not suggesting that they are not telling the truth, but any person who would stand on the other side—I wouldn't do it to the government, to say that they have never accepted one—any member on the government side who would say that any government that has had eight years in office and never accepted a single amendment is a liar.

I think it's so important to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I withdraw that. I was just saying that any member who would think that no amendments had been made on the other party's behalf in all the time they were in office must have missed a lot of the committee meetings, because that in fact happens and it does happen all the time. My question was just: How often has it happened in the last two years? I'm sure that they can provide me with that information.

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I don't have a lot to say about the positives of the bill because, like I said, it is a bill giving authority to the minister to make changes in the TSSA, and at this point in time, we have absolutely no idea what those changes are, or even what it is the minister is proposing to correct with the changes he's going to make by what this bill allows. I don't see the benefit of being here to have this debate, but I also don't see the benefit of passing this bill and leaving the assumption with people that we are solving the problems that presently exist with the TSSA, how it functions and what needs to be changed.

With that, I just don't see how the government proposes to correct the problems that they suggested were there. As the member across the aisle said when the Sunrise explosion took place, he immediately called the minister, saying, "We'd better get our people down there because there's a big problem." When they went down there, they found that there were things that needed to be corrected—and this bill was supposed to correct them, but I don't believe it does so.

With that, I will end my remarks and suggest that I would hope that they would take the advice of the very well-thought-out presentation by the member from Timmins—James Bay on what needs to be changed and that they would look at making those amendments to make this a bill that's worth voting for, and that, when it comes back—if those changes were made—we would look favourably on it. But at the present time, this bill is not going to serve the people of the province of Ontario well. I think that it needs a lot more work before it gets passed.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to repeat what I was trying to say earlier and speak on the comments that Mr.

Hardeman made. I think the comment is fair: The purpose of the Legislature is for the government to be able to bring bills forward and to do the public business. The job of the assembly is to make sure that those bills make sense and that they're drafted in some way that achieves the public policy objective that they want in some sort of reasonable fashion.

The unfortunate part of what happens around here is that over the years—since I've been here, for 20 years, and it started before that—more and more, the process of committee has become weakened. We have not allowed members the freedom they need—as government members, backbench government members or opposition members—to really play the role that they should be playing on committee.

What I've seen far too often is that you go to a committee and you all of a sudden read a section of the act and you go, "Well, the government wants to get to A but this particular section doesn't get them there." So you make a recommendation to change the language in order to make sure that it works the way it should, and the legislative counsel agrees that your interpretation of the act is such, the lawyers for the ministry agree that you are right in your interpretation, and the government won't change it.

I think that is a very, very sad state of affairs, when you don't have a process by which members are able to exercise their duties here in a responsible manner at the committee level.

I was just trying to make the point that if we were to do more of that, I think you would end up with stronger legislation and the government, quite frankly, could say: "Look, we're a government that's introduced 60 bills in the past little while. We've accepted so many amendments from the opposition, and they've actually voted in favour of some legislation." Working together is not a weakness; I think it's a strength that a government could show. Unfortunately, I don't think this government is doing that.

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to speak on this, this morning and to make comments with regard to the member from Oxford. He spent some time on the propane safety and the situation at Sunrise.

Certainly I appreciate the work and the effort from my good colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence on the morning, his action and the alerts he gave to people. But with regard to the after-effects of Sunrise, there was a propane safety review that made 40 recommendations to our government. We have enacted 33 of those 40 to date. If you don't understand and realize what's been done, I would suggest that you talk to your seatmate, the good member from York—Simcoe. She was at estimates yesterday when the minister went through every one of those recommendations and told us that they have been carried out—33 of them.

He also indicated that they were in the process of discussing three other recommendations with other minis-

tries or authorities that have responsibility. Two are in this legislation. Recommendation 31 is, "Propane operators should be required to carry insurance as a condition of licensing," and recommendation 32 is, "When there is an imminent hazard to safety, and the facility operator will not or cannot act to correct it, TSSA inspectors should have the full and clear authority to ensure that the installation is made safe and to charge back the cost to the operator." Those are two that are part of this bill.

So have we done the work that was required after this explosion? Yes, we have; 33 of 40 recommendations, two here, and I believe that would make five more that we're working on. Three are before other ministries and two still have work required.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to stand up and speak for a few moments on this bill. It's a bill that we've been waiting a long time for. The explosion happened 15 months ago, and now we're dealing with the issue here in the House and debating it.

It isn't as fulsome a bill as I think would be appropriate in dealing with an issue like this. Yes, some things were done and, yes, some recommendations were made and some recommendations have been enacted. But in essence, all this bill really does is delay a plan. The government has no plan, not for this and not for anything else. All it has done has been to give the minister more powers to think about how to move forward and do things later, so why is this something that Ontarians should have a lot of confidence and trust in?

The minister is now empowered to appoint less than a majority of the corporation directors, to appoint the chair and the vice-chair of the corporation's board. That means the minister now has a strong tie to that board. But why? If he trusts the board to do their work, why did he have to do that? Ontarians need more than just more ministerial involvement in their everyday lives. They need to know that this government has a pulse on what's going on.

The TSSA is responsible for the safety and inspection of fuels, pressure vessels, boilers, upholstered and stuffed articles, elevating and amusement devices. What does the minister know about any of these things? Why would the minister be involved in appointing people to a board he knows nothing about? It's a delay tactic.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Just in the comments from my colleague from Oxford, I was disappointed in him resorting to schoolyard name-calling when it comes to debating a bill.

The point here is that, because the government in the Harris days willy-nilly privatized the inspection of these services without looking at the comprehensive reporting mechanisms and without looking at the consequences—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: They just said it was good to privatize safety inspection. They don't want to hear the consequences of their mismanagement in the past. But it

happens to people innocently sitting in their homes, to the two innocent victims who died, and this is one instance. That's why government has to undertake stronger measures to oversee safety regulation in this province. That's why the minister undertook a propane safety review made to him by a panel of experts. Thirty-three recommendations were put forward to the minister; they have been implemented.

Then this bill followed. That's the lesson to be learned here: that when you farm out things like safety, meat inspectors, water inspectors, you just don't assume it's going to take care of itself by some kind of dream that you have about the private sector. The reality is that people's lives are at stake, whether it be with boilers, the safety of elevators—it's serious stuff. That's why you need government oversight. This bill gives us greater government oversight to ensure that the job being done by the TSSA is one that is under review and scrutiny. I know the members opposite don't agree with that, but that's what we need in this province to protect our public, who depend on government to ensure that there are good water inspectors—

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member for Oxford has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I just want to point out, for the comments from the member from Eglinton–Lawrence—he suggests that when the TSSA was formed and given the authority to be self-regulating, that that's the problem. My whole presentation was based on, if that's the problem, why is the government not fixing that problem now? It just doesn't make sense to talk about how we know what's wrong—but we've got this bill and it doesn't fix the problem. It doesn't change what the member just said was the problem.

I want to point out that in section 3.11, it lists the new corporation's authority. It's so much changed; now it's going to make some things so much better.

"(1) The corporation shall appoint a chief safety and risk officer with the consent of the minister.

"(2) The chief safety and risk officer shall independently review the corporation's activities or proposed activities related to the public safety responsibilities assigned to the corporation under this act and the regulations.

"(3) The chief safety and risk officer may prepare"—may prepare—"a report on any matter related to the corporation's activities ... if the officer considers it in the public interest to do so.

"(4) The chief safety and risk officer shall prepare an annual report and such other reports as may be requested by the board of directors or the minister."

These are all the things that they're supposed to do.

"(5) Reports prepared by the chief safety and risk officer shall be made available at the corporation's annual meeting and shall be made available to the public."

This bill is really about how the organization has been set up—that the members from the government are suggesting was set up in totally the wrong fashion—and all it

does is make a new way of reporting and giving the minister the authority to make regulations after the fact. When things go wrong, he can make a regulation to try to correct that.

If they wanted to change it, they should have changed it to a way that would have fixed the problem they suggested was there.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I just want to say a few words about this bill. I note, in listening to the comments, that there's a fair bit of reference here to history, so I feel compelled to say something about that history.

I remember when the former Conservative government brought in the legislation which had the effect of privatizing things like elevator inspection and, as we all now know, historically, the privatization of things like the inspection of propane operations.

I remember, for example, the now Minister of Transportation, Mr. Bradley, saying that this kind of privatization was terrible, wouldn't work, was going to put public health and public safety at risk. I remember a number of other people who are now cabinet ministers in the McGuinty Liberal government saying, "This is terrible. This will not work. This is going to lead to problems in public safety and public health."

Well, we had the awful and unfortunate example in North York. A large propane yard was not being handled properly, inspections were not being done, and there were terrible risks to public health and safety. And then, indeed, there was a terrible explosion and lives were lost—and millions of dollars of property damage. We were so fortunate that the explosion happened when it did, on a Sunday, because if it had happened, say, on a Monday morning when people were on their way to work, when people were working in some of the other operations in the area, we could have seen many more people killed. That's all part of the historical record.

I urge people to reflect on this bill that's being brought forward by the McGuinty Liberals, who said that the privatization of things like elevator inspection, propane yards and all kinds of other activities was going to put public health and safety at risk. What does this bill change? Are you going to see public inspection? No. Are you going to see, even sometimes, public inspection? No. Is it going to do anything to really change what the Harris Conservatives put in place? No, it's not. You're going to continue to have the TSSA, which is fundamentally a privatized operation. It has all kinds of people who are in the business, whether it's the business of selling propane or the business of doing elevators, who are going to sit on the board of directors. Inspection is going to continue to be made by people who are not necessarily—we can't be sure if they're well trained. So the whole inspection process—nothing's going to change here.

What was originally condemned by many of the Liberal members of this Legislature is going to continue. The only thing that's going to happen is there's going to be a public relations veneer put over top of it. And that's

what it is: a public relations veneer to give the impression that something is being done, to give the impression that public health and safety is going to be protected better, to give the impression that this issue of protecting the public and protecting people and protecting their health and safety is in the hands of a disinterested body that has as its primary function protecting the health and safety of the public.

That's what this bill is about. It's about giving the impression that something is being done. But once you pry beneath the oh-so-superficial veneer, nothing's changing. Nothing's really changing structurally. The same people are going to do the inspections. The same people are essentially going to be in charge of the TSSA. So we have here what is essentially a public relations gesture. That's what it is.

If I can put it in current context, let me compare it to the financial fiasco that happened in the United States just recently, because what happened, over a number of years, and much of it happened under the Bush government, there was essentially a deregulation and a sort of privatization of financial regulations in that country. People could take a bundle of mortgages that probably never should have been granted in the first place—a bundle of mortgages; there was nothing standing behind those mortgages—and say, "These are very secure financial instruments, and the public would be prudent to buy them." People bought them and then found out there was only a very superficial veneer protecting the public; underneath it was a bag of snakes. And that's what we have here.

I fully admit the Conservatives, when they passed the legislation to privatize the inspection of things like elevators and propane dumps—what was created was a bag of snakes, and it was only a matter of time before public health and safety was put at risk. But have the McGuinty Liberals done away with the bag of snakes here? Not at all. The bag of snakes still exists. The only thing that we have on top of the bag of snakes is this superficial veneer that's meant to say to the people of Ontario, "Oh, everything's okay. Everything's going to be all right. Everything's going to be fine," when, fundamentally, it is the same bag of snakes that existed before.

I'm sure we'll get some annual reports. Whether these annual reports have any integrity to them and whether they have any substance to them, I think we'll have to wait and see. But I have no more confidence that this superficial veneer is going to do anything more to protect the public and the public's health and safety than existed before, because underneath it, it's the same old bag of snakes.

I expect we'll see another press release from the government announcing that it has taken great steps to protect the public and it has taken great steps to protect public health and safety. And we'll probably see another press release and another press release. But underneath it all, it is the same old bag of snakes—just a superficial public relations exercise to make the public feel good while the public continues to be at risk in terms of its health and safety.

New Democrats don't see a lot of substance here. We don't see a lot of integrity here. We see another public relations exercise by a government that's very good at them. I will give this government credit: They are very, very good at public relations exercises—very good at them—but underneath, it's still the same old bag of snakes, and that continues to be a serious problem for the public of Ontario; it continues to be a serious problem in terms of protecting the public of Ontario. Public health and safety, in my view, is one of the most basic services that people should expect from government: The government will protect basic public health and safety and the government will not contract out basic health and safety.

If I can just give another example of where this was contracted out and where it has gone wrong, let's look at driver licensing and driver testing in Ontario today. That was contracted out. The operation that is now running it—if you care to look outside; look in Ontario but also look outside of Ontario—has a terrible record. If you look at the other jurisdictions where they operate, they have a terrible record. If you go and talk to the people who are doing the driver testing, they will tell you that full-time people who were dedicated to the job, who were very knowledgeable about it have been replaced by part-time people, who really, in many cases, do not have any dedication to the job—it's just another job to them, another part-time job to add on to the two other part-time jobs they have—and public health and safety is at risk.

So we see real problems with this legislation. We see real problems with it, and no matter how many press releases the McGuinty Liberals put out and no matter how many announcements and reannouncements they put out that they're going to better protect public safety, underneath it all, it is still the same old bag of snakes and public health and safety continue to be at risk.

We need to do better in Ontario. We need to do much better. But I suspect it will only be a matter of time before this public relations exercise is exposed and we have another incident. It may not be a propane facility; it may be an elevator, it may be some other device that falls under the control of the TSSA, where inspections are not being done properly, where the interests of the operators are taken to have more importance than the interests of protecting public health and safety, and we'll have another incident. When that happens, I think this bag of snakes with the superficial veneer that we're seeing today will be exposed again.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I would like to welcome the winners of the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Great Grants Awards. Joining us today to watch question per-

iod are representatives from le Salon du livre du Grand Sudbury, Actua, Foodlink Waterloo, Fools for Health and the Youth Serving Agencies' Network. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today is the last day for Kira Foreman-Tran, our page from Oakville, and joining us in the member's gallery are Kim Tran and Bruce Foreman, the proud parents of Kira. Please extend a warm Queen's Park welcome to them.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm glad to welcome a group from Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. The seminary is Canada's oldest and largest Lutheran theological seminary and is a federated college of Wilfrid Laurier University located in Waterloo. They are here today to participate in the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition day here at Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would like to welcome a couple of women: Ruth Rideout, who is here today from Beaverton, and Valerie Andrews of Origins Canada, from Richmond Hill. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: We'd certainly like to welcome today a delegation representing various cities from the People's Republic of China. They come from three various cities and represent the Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China. Leading the delegation is the president, Mr. Tuan, Hongjun; Mr. Wang, Tongjie; Mr. Ma, Weidong; Ms. Zhang, Yuling; Mr. Zhang, Reimin; Ms. Xu, Huiling; Mr. Liu, Chuanping; Mr. Zeng, Changtai; and Ms. Ren, Huijuan. Let's welcome them warmly to the Legislature.

Mr. Jim Brownell: Although I don't see them in the galleries at the moment, I would like to welcome teacher Shaun MacDonald, a former student of mine, who is now teaching at Parkhill Academy in Mossley, Ontario, and chaperone Dave Carpani and the 11 students who are here with them today learning about government in action. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome, visiting Queen's Park from the riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London, Mike Pepe and his students from Regina Mundi secondary school, who will be joining us in the galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

VISIT OF PRINCE OF WALES AND DUCHESS OF CORNWALL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think it's important that we put on the record that, on behalf of the Ontario Legislature, we take this opportunity to welcome His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall, to formally welcome them to the province of Ontario. We thank the government of Ontario for their warm welcome to Their Highnesses last night.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I also would like all members to join me in taking an opportunity to thank

this group of pages. This is their last day in the Legislature and we want to thank you all very much for the great things that you've done to assist us. And who knows, some of you may very well be back sitting in these very seats where we are. So, on behalf of the Legislature, thank you to the pages.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC INQUIRY LEGISLATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, do you really think it's a good idea to rewrite the Public Inquiries Act at the same time as the public is calling for an inquiry into your billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: From time to time over the years the government of the day wishes to call a public inquiry, wishes to obtain information from an independent source with a review of facts and circumstances in order to guide either legislative initiatives or policy initiatives. That advice needs to be advice that will be directed to the issue involved and can be received in a timely way and the most effective way. Our Public Inquiries Act has not been updated in many years and what we're proposing are a series of additional tools to provide the public inquiry process, to help get the right information, at the right time, for the right questions, in the right way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The timing here is interesting. The Auditor General reported the eHealth scandal on October 7. On October 13, the Leader of the Opposition called upon the Premier to appoint a public inquiry into the billion-dollar eHealth scandal. Since then, the Premier has done all he can to stonewall every question we've had about who got rich, what connections they had to the McGuinty government and the involvement of former staff and ministers. Then, on October 27, they introduced a new Public Inquiries Act.

Attorney General, do you really expect taxpayers to believe that the timing of this was just a coincidence?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: So a review of the proposed legislation shows, and will show, that the traditional, unlimited-in-any-way inquiry can still take place. What the proposals enable, for example, is a commissioner who is fully independent to be able to narrow the issue, focus the issue, obtain evidence that everybody agrees upon in an acceptable way; enables there to be some assistance in framing the issue and the question; also, all of it directed for the purpose of ensuring that the answer the public wishes to obtain can be received as quickly, effectively and cost-effectively as the public will need it to be received.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's the same old pattern where the McGuinty Liberals will do everything they can

to avoid answering the hard questions. We saw it first with our questions about the economy: first, when they released public accounts late on a Friday, and then when they rushed out the H1N1 announcement a day before the economic update. We saw it when they dumped boxes of documents, Cancer Care Ontario records, on the same day the auditor reported on the eHealth scandal. Now we're seeing it again with a new Public Inquiries Act that comes two weeks after there was a call for an inquiry into the eHealth scandal.

Minister, did the Premier put you up to this?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I say very gently to the opposition that there were some weeks when they were calling for an inquiry on a different issue almost every day. The Public Inquiries Act remains as strong as it ever was, but would propose to be strengthened: additional tools to enable that the inquiry be focused so if you actually need an answer, within a few months you could obtain an answer; if you were actually concerned about the cost of multi-year inquiries, you could help focus the inquiry and contain the cost; if there were a number of facts and circumstances on which there were no evidentiary dispute, the commissioner could benefit. We need the right answer at the right time for the right questions.

PUBLIC INQUIRY LEGISLATION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Attorney General. As chief law officer of the crown, you're supposed to rise above politics. Aren't you concerned about compromising your office by getting wrapped up in the Premier's scheme to gut the Public Inquiries Act so the Premier won't have to answer questions about the billion-dollar eHealth scandal?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We take a different position than the one being proposed by the honourable member. In fact, a fair and complete reading of what's in the proposed public inquiries legislation does not reduce it but enhances it; does not diminish it but expands its opportunities and scope. A fair reading will see that not only can you call a traditional, non-time-limited, very expansive, come-back-in-five-years inquiry, but you can also now, while maintaining the independence, call an inquiry that will be more focused, with more scope, more timely and more cost-effective, of greater benefit to the people of the province, who we all serve.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Taxpayers are on the hook for a billion-dollar eHealth scandal. At the same time as running a record \$24.7-billion deficit and planning a greedy HST tax grab, the McGuinty Liberals have done nothing to recover the billion dollars they wasted in this scandal.

While the auditor's report spotted the problem, it does not assign blame to those who got rich on taxpayers' dollars. If the Premier won't tell us who is to blame, then we need a public inquiry. Are you gutting the Public Inquiries Act in an effort to block this necessary inquiry

into the McGuinty Liberals' waste of taxpayers' dollars in the eHealth scandal?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: First of all, the member reminds us that we should all actually read the words of the auditor before reaching conclusions, where he said "we saw no evidence of this." Even a public inquiry would deal with the evidence; so the auditor reaches the conclusion.

I say, secondly, the suggestion that the proposed legislation would be less than what is there now is completely wrong. The proposed legislation, in fact, would not only be what we have, it would have additional scope. We want to deliver to the people of Ontario what they need, when they need it, in the way they need it, and not have to spend too many millions of—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The new act isn't just a bunch of amendments; it's a total rewrite of the existing Public Inquiries Act. Something this monumental shouldn't share time with other items in an omnibus bill.

The Premier wouldn't let go of his dirty secrets about who got rich in the eHealth scandal—were they Liberals?—and why a bureaucrat broke the law for months to block the auditor from investigating the billion-dollar boondoggle. At the same time as the public is calling for a public inquiry that reveals these secrets, the Attorney General is trying to make it harder to appoint an inquiry. As chief law officer of the crown, you are supposed to rise above politics. Isn't the Attorney General in a conflict of interest?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As chief law officer of the crown, suggestions in this House that people have broken the law are not appropriate and should be withdrawn by that member—completely wrong. We have a rule of law in this province and in this country that needs to be respected, even within the House that makes the laws—completely wrong and completely inappropriate.

He calls—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Whatever inquiry is conducted by the auditor or any other forum has to be based on evidence, not the fiction that may be thrown by members opposite. The people of Ontario deserve no less than the conclusions based on facts and a strengthened Public Inquiries Act.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, the Minister of Health told parents that they would have to wait to vaccinate their school-aged children against H1N1 because this government didn't have enough vaccine to immunize kids in kindergarten. If that is true, why were millionaire professional athletes able to get the vaccination?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me tell you that our focus remains on our highest-priority groups. Today we

are really emphasizing how important it is that parents, siblings and caregivers of infants get that vaccination. They are part of our priority groups. We are sticking to the priority groups for the foreseeable future. We are hoping to be able to expand that list when supplies become available.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister did not answer my question. We're talking about professional, high-performance athletes, the vast majority of whom are in their twenties and thirties. But they're not the only ones who got to jump the queue. Many others have done the same at posh private clinics in Ontario. With enough money, it seems that anyone can buy their way to vaccination while kindergarten kids and their worried parents are told to wait. How could this minister have allowed this to happen?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the members of this House and the people of Ontario that I have heard reports that some people have jumped the queue. I want you to know that this is entirely unacceptable.

We are relying on our professionals to respect the priority lists. We have a real challenge in this province getting the vaccine to the people who will benefit from it the most. I have to say that we are reinforcing the message with our doctors and those who are providing the vaccine across the province.

I am looking closely into the case of the allegation that the member has made.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In Ontario it seems quite all right for high-rollers and professional sports teams to get preferential treatment while parents of school-aged children are forced to wait—indefinitely, now—to vaccinate their kids.

The Alberta government has taken this issue seriously. They launched an immediate investigation, and heads are starting to roll. Will this minister continue to bury her head in the sand, or will she get to the bottom of how this happened and take the steps necessary to ensure that it doesn't happen again?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I share the outrage of the leader of the third party. It is completely unacceptable for anyone to be jumping the queue.

This is a global pandemic we are in the midst of now. There are priority groups. Those groups need to be respected. I don't care how famous you are, how wealthy you are, how well connected you are; you have a responsibility to all of the others to respect that priority list.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The responsibility lies with this minister, and that's what she's not acknowledging.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Finance. Ontario families understand that

we're in tough times, but they're worried about a system that has been cut to the bone already. Local emergency rooms are closing even while the H1N1 issue stretches capacity. Parents are fundraising over half a billion dollars a year to cover funding gaps in schools. If the government is actually interested in reducing costs—and it should be—why did government MPPs block a review by the auditor into high levels of compensation for health sector executives?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government is taking a comprehensive look at expenditures.

I do want to point out to the people of Ontario that emergency rooms are not being closed. That kind of hyperbole has no place in a serious debate.

There are new investments being made in health care. Our expenditures on health care have far exceeded the rate of inflation. We have reduced wait times across a variety of important procedures.

As we move forward into the years ahead, we will have to get Ontario back to a balanced budget. We have begun a process to do that. I was pleased to note that Moody's bond rating service held Ontario's rating as steady, late last week. We have begun this process. I will begin processes with respect to public consultations. I know that Ontarians will work together to get Ontario back to balance and ensure that we can compete heartily in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The finance minister had better well know that emergency rooms are closing in this province: Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Matthews Memorial. There are a number of them that are closing, and that is the fact.

If this government was actually concerned with the fiscal balance, they would look at all of their spending, including tax giveaways to the corporate sector.

Does this minister think it's consistent to ask families to accept the closure of emergency rooms, schools that rank behind 46 US states in per-student funding, and higher sales taxes, while his government hands out \$2 billion a year in corporate tax giveaways?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The states of Michigan, New York, California and Indiana are laying teachers off, firing teachers, getting rid of them, cutting public services. We made a decision not to do that, and we stand by that decision.

I'd also suggest to the member that she may want to talk about the personal tax cuts, the fact that the Daily Bread Food Bank and a range of other poverty groups have applauded this government for the most progressive tax reform package in history.

Are these easy decisions? No. Do the times call for leadership? Yes.

That member and her party are about the status quo. They're about not responding to the jobless situation. We're about change. We're about rebuilding the economy. We're about creating jobs. That's what the policy is about. That's what it'll do, and it will, in fact, make our

public services more affordable and more accessible to all Ontarians.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is nothing progressive about whacking the little guy and filling the pockets of the big guy. That's what this Liberal government is all about.

With each passing day, this government grows more out of touch with real Ontarians. Well-connected corporate executives and consultants see a government that caters to them, as families are forced to deal with the closure of local emergency rooms, organize bake sales to cover the cost of school essentials, and pay 8% more—8% more—for gasoline, hydro and other daily living essentials.

Why should Ontarians believe that this government has their interests at heart when it shows them daily that it just does not care about their challenges?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I enjoyed the lecture from the leader of the third party, but let me tell her what Hugh Mackenzie said. He's the economist and research associate at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and he also chaired the NDP Fair Tax Commission, which we'll talk about a little later on. Here's what he said: "Ontario's 2009-10 budget establishes the right direction.... It provides substantial economic stimulus. It is consistent with the new orthodoxy that relies heavily on governments to help rebuild damaged economies. It imposes some coherence on an incoherent federal plan. It increases support for low-income families and individuals. It modernizes Ontario's consumption tax." I'm with Hugh Mackenzie, prominent New Democrat. I know he has told you the same thing.

I suggest you listen to your own economist, I suggest you listen to your own adviser, and join us as we modernize the economy to create jobs and—

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

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. We know the federal government supplied Ontario with 2.2 million doses of the H1N1 vaccine. How many are on the shelf? Who knows? The minister sure doesn't. It could be 100,000; it could be half a million; it could be a million.

If you're running a 10-kilometre race and you know you've got one kilometre left, that means you've run nine kilometres. If you buy a dozen doughnuts and eight get eaten, that means you have four left. If you have 2.2 million doses of vaccine and you're talking about running out over the weekend, you must have some idea of your current inventory.

Minister, how many doses of vaccine have actually gone into arms?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that we are on track, according to our public health units ac-

ross the province, to have administered the 2.2 million doses that we have received. We are on track to have those administered by the end of the weekend. Because we have expanded the number of places where people can get the vaccine, it is difficult to determine, on a day-to-day basis, exactly how much vaccine has found its way into the arms of Ontarians. But they have assured us that we're on track to get the vaccine protecting Ontarians by the end of this weekend. I will complete that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, I'm still not getting an answer.

Here are just a few things in Ontario that the McGuinty Liberals track more closely than the number of flu vaccines: the number of fish restocked in lakes, broken down by lake and fish species; eggs laid by chickens each year; calls to the bear wise hotline, including how many calls went to a live operator.

The health minister is managing the largest flu pandemic in 40 years, so why can't she tell us the number of vaccines in arms and those still on the shelf?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What the member opposite should know is that it was a very high priority for us to engage more family physicians in the administration of vaccines. One of the things physicians told us was that they would be happy to deliver it, but the burden of reporting was a barrier to that, so they report to us weekly, not daily, on that.

What I can tell you, though, is that in public health clinics alone, about half a million have been vaccinated. There are another half-million doses in doctors' offices, much of which has been used for immunizations. Our hospitals and our other health care centres like long-term-care homes have another 350,000 doses that are being administered as we speak. We're working very, very hard to reach our target of administering those 2.2 million doses by the end of the weekend.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Fran Martens is a front-line personal support worker in Windsor. She, like all of her colleagues, bathes, cleans and assists frail people of all ages in their homes. Although Fran is in close contact with 11 patients and their families every single day, she was refused the H1N1 vaccination because she was told she is not on the priority list.

Fran Martens is out and about today doing her rounds in Windsor and she's scared. She's scared because she is a care provider for persons at high risk of H1N1 and she doesn't want to bring harm to them.

My question to the minister is simple: Why are PSWs, these crucial health care workers, not considered in the priority list for H1N1?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite that personal support workers are considered health care workers and they are in the high-priority

group, so I would urge them to get their vaccination now. They do not have to wait. The lineups are eliminated in many places and certainly way, way down across the province. Personal support workers are health care workers. They are in the priority group. I would happily look into this particular case if a particular public health unit is not including them in the priority groups. They are a priority group.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad to hear the minister say this, because she is the only one who is. We've checked throughout the province. The story of Fran Martens is repeated in every single CCAC throughout this province. There has been no directive from the community care access centres to home care agencies to encourage home care workers to get the H1N1 vaccine. In fact, if you look on the CCAC websites, you will not even see the mention of H1N1 on any of them. The CCACs oversee home care, and workers are in the community each and every day caring for the sick, many of them persons at high risk for H1N1. These workers are susceptible to the virus just like any of us, but they can also transmit the virus to the homes where they visit.

My question is simple: Why are home care workers, this important component of our health care system, not part of the pandemic plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I completely agree with the member opposite: Personal support workers are health care workers. They are covered. If that is in fact not clear to the public health units, to the long-term-care homes and so on, we will absolutely clarify that. Personal support workers are part of the high-priority group under the health care worker category.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Eric Hoskins: My question is also for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The H1N1 pandemic has led to increased activity at hospitals right across the province. We've seen stories about hospitals coping with increased visits to their emergency departments. Sudbury Regional Hospital, for example, has seen a 30% surge in ER visits, and, as we know, it's not the only hospital experiencing a surge due to H1N1 cases. Some hospitals have even had to cancel elective surgeries in order to manage the incoming stream of patients.

We need our hospitals to be able to respond effectively to emergency situations as they emerge. Could the minister please tell this House how hospitals are managing the influx of H1N1-related visits?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me assure you, all hospitals in Ontario do have a plan. All hospitals are seeing an increase. They are rising to the challenge. They are coping with the increase in visits to their ERs. They are well equipped to deal with H1N1.

Since SARS, we have developed a robust critical care strategy to handle a sudden increase in volume in our intensive care units. Already there are 1,800 critical care

ventilators across the province, and because we're taking H1N1 seriously, we're adding 216 more.

In 2006, we announced \$90 million in annual funding for the provincial critical care strategy. This funding has helped hospitals supply new beds, improve technology and hire staff. It allows hospitals to manage that increased demand without compromising patient safety—

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

Mr. Eric Hoskins: I am also concerned about getting the vaccine to pregnant women. I know that when my wife was pregnant, and under the care of midwives, we were vigilant about taking every precaution we could to protect the health of both my wife, and our soon-to-be-born son. H1N1 is no different. I've heard from pregnant women in my riding of St. Paul's who want to get the vaccine as soon as they can.

I understand that the recommendation agreed upon by Canada's chief medical officers of health is for healthy pregnant women in the first half of their pregnancy to wait for the unadjuvanted vaccine. We heard yesterday that Ontario has now received the unadjuvanted vaccine, but pregnant women and their families are anxious to know when they'll be able to receive it.

Can the minister please provide an update on when all pregnant women can begin getting their H1N1 shots?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I just want to underline how important it is that pregnant women do get the H1N1 vaccine. We need to protect them, and we need to protect their babies—their unborn children.

Canada has received its first shipment of the unadjuvanted vaccine. Ontario got 86,800 doses. That's enough for all pregnant women in the province. Health units are receiving the vaccine as we speak. Some are beginning to administer it today, as in Ottawa, for example. Flu clinics are distributing the 5,500 doses they received. Some health units are holding clinics just for pregnant women; some are sending the vaccine to local doctors and are instructing pregnant women where to go.

I encourage all pregnant women to talk to their doctors and find out what's right for them. We know how important the health of pregnant women and their babies is to them and their families.

PUBLIC INQUIRY LEGISLATION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Attorney General. Hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted in untendered contracts and sweetheart deals with Liberal-friendly consultants in the billion-dollar eHealth scandal. Liberal friends were appointed to, and then disappeared from, the eHealth board. The Premier's own Management Board waived rules prohibiting untendered contracts so it could hand out deals itself. Liberals got rich, patients got nothing, and taxpayers footed the bill.

Why is it that rather than doing something to get the money back, you're gutting the Public Inquiries Act? Is it so taxpayers will never find out who got rich on their money?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: A few facts: First, I'm very pleased to have received the report, which made some very specific conclusions and concluded that many of the conclusions outlined by my honourable friend are not in fact the case.

Second, there is a lot of work that was produced by the team working on electronic health records. It wasn't good enough. We need the last part. That's being strengthened by the Minister of Health.

Third, we have greatly improved and in fact changed procedures that have existed for decades in this House to ensure increased accountability, increased transparency, and a better control over money—the same procedures that were in place when my friend's party was part of the government. We will continue to do what's required to ensure the most effective government is delivered to the people of the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The Attorney General's inaction in this matter is very disturbing. The auditor points out examples of contractors making off with taxpayers' dollars in all sorts of questionable deals. The new CEO of eHealth told the public accounts committee that she's not doing anything to recover tax dollars from the deals that she herself called inappropriate. The Attorney General is gutting the Public Inquiries Act, so it will be harder to recover the billions of dollars wasted in this scandal.

The McGuinty Liberals know who made the money—they made the deals—but we don't, because the auditor didn't name them. Doesn't the lack of effort to recover wasted tax dollars have anything to do with who got the money?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Just to circle back to the legislation, which is supposedly the reason for the question, the proposals for the Public Inquiries Act in fact add to it, not take away from it.

When a public inquiry is called, when any form of report or inquiry or study is done by a government or an independent official, you want to get the answer to the question. You want to get it in a timely fashion. You'd rather not spend more money than you have to to get it. You want to get it so you can act on it and make government or procedures or processes more effective.

We were very greatly assisted by the auditor's report. We have changed procedures that have been in place for decades, including under the government opposite. They had every opportunity to change them, but did not. So we have changed them—

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

TOXICS REDUCTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. A consultation on draft regulations for the Toxics Reduction Act has ended. Groups like the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario College of Family Physicians and the Ontario Lung Association feel the act is now far too weak. Why is the minister gutting his own bill?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The facts couldn't be further from the truth that this member has said. The reality is that we are passing the strongest rules and regulations with respect to toxics reduction in this province. We are basically modelling it on the law that was passed in Massachusetts a number of years ago, and the amount of toxic materials that are being used in the manufacturing process as a result of the law they passed has been significantly decreased.

What we want our companies to do is, first of all, come up with plans that clearly show how they intend to reduce the amount of toxic materials they're using in the manufacturing process, and then we want them to implement those plans. That'll take some time.

We have the strongest law that we possibly can in this matter, and I think the organizations he mentioned have certainly mentioned that to us, as well; that they believe this is the right way to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Those groups have said that the regulations don't deliver what has to be delivered. In fact, this minister continues to use in this act the National Pollutant Release Inventory, the federal system that the federal Auditor General has criticized roundly as being inadequate.

When is the minister going to stop relying on the Harper government for environmental protection in this province and actually bring forward laws that will protect Ontarians?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I can tell you that the National Pollutant Release Inventory lists some 250 different substances that have to be reported on. We want to strengthen that system, and another way in which we're doing that is we are investing taxpayers' dollars heavily in the new green chemistry centre, which is going to come up with alternative products that can be used, instead of the toxic materials that are being used.

This is a tough law, the toughest law in Ontario. We've modelled it on legislation elsewhere in North America that has worked. We know it will work. The end result is that the people of Ontario will be better protected from a health and safety viewpoint. That's really what it's all about. It's all about having fewer toxins in our environment, so that the health of the people of Ontario is fully protected.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Six years ago, the Ontario government's relationship with aboriginal people was at an all-time low, but since then our government has been working hard to build a strong, positive relationship with aboriginal people, leadership and communities across the province.

Last week, ministers of aboriginal affairs from across Canada, including the federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, met with leadership from five national aboriginal organizations. The meeting followed

through on a commitment made by our Premier at the last Council of the Federation to host a meeting on aboriginal issues, specifically lifelong learning and economic development. Would the minister tell us more about what happened at last week's meeting?

1110

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you for the question. I was indeed honoured to chair this federal-provincial-territorial-aboriginal meeting. In fact, it was the first time that aboriginal affairs ministers have gotten together across the country along with aboriginal leaders since Kelowna. So we were very, very proud that Ontario led the charge to make this happen.

Our Premier, in fact, over a year ago spoke out at a first ministers' conference indicating the need to move aboriginal issues back to the federal and national forefront. That's exactly what this meeting was intended to do and what it accomplished. In our meeting, we focused on how we could provide aboriginal people with more opportunities for education and economic development. In addition, we're looking forward to getting together again in April, where we'll solidify those recommendations, and looking forward to making much more progress in these areas, working together.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you, Minister, for your answer. Ensuring that First Nations, Metis and Inuit people have access to education and economic development opportunities will help to build a brighter future for aboriginal people and Ontario as a whole. We need to make sure that aboriginal youth, communities and families have the right opportunities to succeed. Discussing ways to provide more education and economic development opportunities for Ontario's fastest-growing population is a good step forward.

Could the minister tell us what the next steps are following the federal-provincial-territorial-aboriginal meeting?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is absolutely right. This working group was formed last week, and we're working on ways to close the socioeconomic gaps that exist between the aboriginal population in Ontario and across the country and the rest of Canada. We are making these recommendations and will be making them at a meeting of the Council of the Federation, with all the Premiers scheduled to meet this coming August. The working group is committed to meet next April, and that's where we hope to solidify some of the very important recommendations and the direction we will be taking.

I want to say that we should all be very, very proud of our Premier in this province, who was the first Premier to call for a first ministers' meeting on aboriginal issues, about a year or so ago. We hope that these recommendations will indeed lead to a first ministers' conference down the road.

It's great that Ontario, which was behind the other provinces six years ago, is now a leader—

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

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Last May, in a strange and stunning display of legislative incompetence, Liberal MPPs voted down presumptive legislation for volunteer firefighters. The minister says he's working on this and plans to extend to our volunteer firefighters the same workers' compensation protection that full-time firefighters have now had for years. Will he finally do this today when he makes his "important announcement" outside this House in Brant county?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question.

First off, I had the opportunity, the honour and the privilege to be at the rededication of the firefighters' memorial at the beginning of October, after some cowardly vandals desecrated that memorial. To hear the firefighters, fire inspectors and their families speak of the difficult, life-threatening work that firefighters do, it really touched me and all those who were present, and I know it touches all the communities across this great province of Ontario.

That's why in 2007 Premier McGuinty brought forward, with consent from this entire House, presumptive legislation for firefighters, and the member is quite right—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: If this minister has something important to announce, he should make that announcement right here in this House. Instead, it would appear that he's planning to go to a riding represented by a member who, in debate, said he would support my bill, but a few minutes later stood to vote against it.

Again, my question is to the minister: What took you so long? Why did Liberal members vote against a bill that would have fixed this problem last spring? Why won't he admit that any action he might take in the future would be thanks to pressure from the PC caucus and, most importantly, from volunteer firefighters themselves? Finally, why won't this minister assure all volunteer firefighters here and now that they will finally be treated the same as their professional full-time counterparts?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It is the McGuinty government that took leadership on presumptive legislation for firefighters across the province of Ontario. At that time, when that legislation was passed in this House, Premier McGuinty said that the legislation is open to part-time and volunteer firefighters and that we would reach out to our stakeholders and our partners. Those stakeholders and partners—the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, the fire chiefs' association, the WSIB and others—will be present this afternoon.

I am going to Paris, Ontario, where the president of the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario resides; that's why we are going to Paris, Ontario. The other reason is because we have a champion in the member for Brant, Dave Levac, who has shaped and informed this legislation. We are—

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

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. The McGuinty government advertises a six- to eight-week wait for access to adoption records in this province, when it really takes up to 36 months. What is the government's plan for ensuring its six- to eight-week turnaround time is actually met?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, the adoption modification in the legislation was very successful and we have had a lot of requests. It's not the first time that I hear this comment, so we are investigating the matter. If you have any specific cases, I'd like to know and we will act accordingly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the minister didn't say is they rolled out a program and didn't put the infrastructure in place to actually deliver it.

Ruth Rideout and Valerie Andrews are here today, representing thousands of adoptees who have already waited far, far too long for their records. The McGuinty government has created a customer service nightmare of delays, backlogs and lack of tracking. Ruth waited 19 weeks and received incomplete information. Valerie waited 20 weeks and the CAS says delivering all her records is going to take another 36 months.

With November being Adoption Month, will the minister agree to meet with people like Ruth and Valerie and to fix Ontario's adoption disclosure system once and for all?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'll turn that over to the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm actually very pleased to provide some information about the data, such as how many applications we have received and what's happening with them.

As of August 17, 2009, the ministry had received 6,505 applications for disclosure vetoes from adopted persons or birth parents who prefer to keep their personal information private. The ministry also received 1,500 applications from people who agreed to allow information regarding their cases to be shared but requested that they not be contacted by the other party. The ministry also received 2,100 applications from people indicating their contact preferences.

We have received a lot of information and a lot of applications. We are working through it and responding to them as quickly as possible.

RAIL LINE CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Mr. Minister, you gave a green light to the approval of the Georgetown corridor rail expansion environmental assessment, which includes the Pearson-Union line. At the same time, however, you also

introduced 18 strict conditions placed on the approvals—that is, the expansion.

However, there are some questions that need to be answered. One of the important questions that need to be answered is your condition that all trains running along that line be tier 4 diesel trains, which are supposed to be clean. Some of my constituents want to know what exactly these tier 4 diesel trains are, when they will be available and how they will protect human health and our environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all applaud the members from Davenport and from York South–Weston for their advocacy in this matter, because they've been very concerned about this throughout.

The 18 tough conditions include the requirement that Metrolinx implement the newest technology, the tier 4 engine technology. Now, while the technology is not yet available, the EPA standards in the States have changed to the effect that they have to be available by 2015. From past experience, when these kinds of conditions are imposed by the EPA, manufacturers will actually design to the EPA standards. They know what standards are expected of them by 2015. It means that the newest line will have the newest technology right from day one, because the line is expected to come on stream by 2015. The result will be that there will be a 90% reduction in the particulate matter that is being emitted over the technology that's available today, and also—

1120

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

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: A reduction in nitrogen oxide: I'd like to know more about that. Thank you, Minister.

While the decision on the environmental assessment has been made, there remains much more to be done. At a recent meeting attended by more than 1,000 residents, one issue was pretty prominent. My constituents want to know that they will continue to be consulted, and in what way.

One of the conditions, Minister, that you placed on this Metrolinx development—you actually imposed these 18 conditions, and they need to be implemented in terms especially of air monitoring and the reporting plan. That's my question. For instance, the Toronto District School Board's health committee voted to have a role in the ongoing air monitoring study. Will the minister accommodate their request and include the TDSB and our residents in the decision-making process, since they are directly affected by this significant—

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me just continue my answer from before. The new technology will have a 90% particulate matter reduction as well as an 80% nitrogen oxide reduction.

And, yes, one of the other conditions is the fact that Metrolinx has to develop and implement an ambient air monitoring and reporting plan, and that plan must be put into place after consultation with the public. Obviously,

the Toronto District School Board will be consulted throughout. They've got a major interest in this as well, as there are schools in the immediate area.

Metrolinx, as a matter of fact, is required to create a working group that contains, at minimum, Toronto Public Health and Environment Canada, and I would strongly suggest that it would include the Toronto District School Board, as well as, obviously, the public from the general area.

We want to make sure that we can reduce the amount of pollution that's in the air by getting as much transit in the GTA as available. This is a major step forward, but we also want to make sure—

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

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the minister responsible for children: On October 20, I brought to the minister's attention the multi-million dollar cut to the York Region Children's Aid Society. In response, the minister committed—and I quote from Hansard—that she would work “to ensure that children are put first and that their outcomes are a priority” and that she would work with the society. She further committed, and I quote again: “Our regional office is ... working with the York CAS to develop a financial plan to address the challenges.”

I'd like to ask the minister this: Have those meetings taken place? What progress is her regional office making with the York Region CAS to ensure that that society is adequately funded to address the issues there?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance to speak about this really important issue. As I've said in previous opportunities, we're absolutely committed to Ontario's kids and to finding a pathway to sustainability for Ontario's children's aid societies.

Over the last number of years we've had the opportunity to see funding increases year over year. But in this particular year, we are working with children's aid societies across the province because we have clearly said we will not be able to provide any additional funds this year, other than those funds that they have received in the budget.

With respect to the York CAS in particular, like all CASs across the province, our regional offices are actively meeting with them, working through cash-flow management issues, looking at partnership opportunities, reaching out to the board and the executive director.

Personally, I have had an excellent working opportunity with the board chair of the York CAS and have committed our regional office to continuing to work with them, and that's exactly what—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister received a letter this week from the York Region Police Services Board. In that letter, the York board makes this point: “It is the board's belief that this decision will have a severe impact

on the safety and well-being of our vulnerable children and their families.” The decision being referred to is the cut in the budget. It goes on to say, “York Regional Police relies heavily on York Region CAS to assist in child-protection-related investigations. This decision may have an adverse effect on the joint response to child welfare and domestic violence cases.”

Apart from the 30,000-foot-level response I’m getting from the minister, I would ask her to do this: Address the concerns of the York Regional Police services board and ensure that this York Region Children’s Aid Society is properly—

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I do think it is imperative that in this House we deal with the facts as they exist. The funding for this CAS is up 34% since 2003-04. The number of child welfare investigations is down 5%. Over the last decade, the funding is up 188%. So this is a CAS that we have worked with closely.

It’s also a CAS that is, at this point in time, really examining their ability to form partnerships. As the member knows, families come to work with children’s aid societies for a number of reasons. They might have circumstances where they are involved with the police, they are involved with the victim witness assistance program or they are involved with a number of issues. That is exactly the type of partnership that the regional office is working with the York CAS to develop right now. We’re absolutely committed to the kids of this province. We need to develop partnerships to make sure that our communities can best serve those children and families—

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

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Earlier I asked the minister how the McGuinty Liberal government could provide the Buchanan Group of forest companies with tens of millions of dollars of loans, grants and other financial benefits, and yet the more than 2,000 laid-off Buchanan workers across northwestern Ontario could be told, “No money to cover your severance pay or your termination pay.”

My question today: At the same time that the workers have been told, “You’re out of luck,” Liberal candidates in northwestern Ontario, Liberal riding associations, and the Liberal Party have received over \$65,000 in financial contributions from Buchanan companies and Buchanan executives. Can the minister explain how that could happen? The Liberal government has money for the companies and the companies have money for the Liberal Party, Liberal candidates, Liberal riding associations—

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. What I fail to understand from the member for Kenora is the lack of understanding that the challenge in terms of the forestry sector certainly across the province, but in northwestern Ontario perhaps in particular with the Buchanan group being such an important force in terms of employment, is that we believe that the best solution in terms of helping the workers, helping those that have been impacted, is to work with the company to try and help the operation potentially get back up and running. We understand, indeed, that the Terrace Bay Pulp operation is a specific example, and if we are able to help the company get back up and operating, that will have an impact, obviously, on sawmills around the area as well, which are impacted by the operation of Terrace Bay Pulp.

Again, I’m a little puzzled as to why you don’t agree we also need to get people back to work. That’s the key to our future positive elements in terms of—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a lot of ideas on how to get workers back to work, but there is this issue: There’s lots of money from the Buchanan companies and Buchanan executives for Liberal riding associations, Liberal election candidates and the Liberal Party, and there’s lots of money flowing from the McGuinty Liberal government to the Buchanan Group of Companies, but the workers who have been laid off—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would ask the honourable member to be cautious in imputing motive in his questioning.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I’m not imputing motive; I’m simply stating what’s on the public record. The fact of the matter is, the workers who are entitled under Ontario law to have their severance pay and termination pay have received nothing. As far as I know, the Liberal Party and Liberal candidates are not entitled under law, yet the Buchanan Group of Companies has lots of money to give to the Liberal Party, Liberal candidates—

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

1130

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The fact is that we are working with all the forestry companies in the province in a variety of ways. We have provided incentive programs that have been of benefit to AbitibiBowater, Domtar, Buchanan and many other companies in the province. Those incentive programs have helped maintain jobs and have helped get companies back up and running. Indeed, again, I presume the member would have supported the efforts we made to get the Terrace Bay pulp operation back up and running in 2006.

We are working equally hard with all the companies, and we are very proud of the incentive programs that have been brought forward by our government over the last three years. The energy rebate program, again, is available to all major pulp and paper operations.

I find it strange and rather unfortunate that the member is taking this approach when, indeed, I would think

he would have the same goal in mind, which is to find a way to get people back to work, which is our priority. That's what we're working on all the time.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Mike Colle: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: Minister, this week is Crime Prevention Week. The hard-working men and women at 13 division and 32 division in my constituency, who do a heck of a job in dealing with crime, want to tell you that they also believe in the prevention programs. They think that, yes, we need good police officers on the road, but we also need good crime prevention programs. They want me to ask you: What are some of these crime prevention initiatives that your ministry and our government are doing to help the police in their day-to-day work, where they know they've got to fight crime but also fight the causes of crime?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question, because he and his constituents are absolutely right: Crime prevention is everyone's business, and it's more than just putting police officers on the street. We're very, very proud of our government's investment of \$68 million a year to put 1,700 new police officers on the streets of Ontario. That's good. We're proud of that.

But you know what? Crime prevention isn't in isolation, with only the police services becoming involved. Each and every member in Ontario has to do his or her part. It's paying dividends, because Ontario has experienced a 4% decline in overall crime and a 5% decrease in the severity of crime. We work together and we will continue to work together. It is—

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Mr. Minister. One of the real concerns in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence, especially in some of the high-risk areas, is crime involving young people, all the way down to 11- and 10-year-olds sometimes. They're committing serious crimes. In fact, this past summer, with the city strikes, we basically had a summer from hell in some of these parts of my riding because the programs weren't there and the police were saying, "Bring the programs back, especially for youth."

I want to know: What are some of these programs that help the police prevent crime and that are targeted at these high-risk youth in this province?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'd ask the Minister of Children and Youth Services to answer that.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this critically important issue. In communities right across the province, we all need to work together to ensure that youth have the opportunity to take a pathway towards a prosperous life for themselves and their future children and families rather than to take a pathway into crime.

Just yesterday I had the opportunity to sit down with the Honourable Justice Roy McMurtry and talk to him

about the work that he has done and look at the ways that we, as a collective, need to work together to ensure that youth have the opportunities that they need.

That's why I'm so proud to be part of a government that has seen an investment in the youth opportunities strategy of more than \$21 million. That is nearly double last year's investment, and that includes \$1.1 million to expand youth and policing.

I know that for the communities that receive that support, it has been a very powerful tool to bring youth into the police services. It's—

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

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, you would know that the Children's Aid Society of Simcoe County has an over \$5-million operating deficit this year. In fact, it's \$5.5 million.

On the local news yesterday, particularly on Barrie radio news, they were reporting that your government had given the children's aid society one million new dollars. It sounded like \$1 million in addition to help them with their deficit; it turns out that that was a \$1-million cash advance for money they would have received in January, the same fiscal year as now, and it just means that they won't run out of money in November; they'll run out of money in February. As you know, the fiscal year is March 31. I'm wondering, Minister, what you're going to do to help them with their deficit and why you don't care about vulnerable children as a priority for your government.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I would say to the member opposite that I've had many occasions in this House to talk about our commitment to Ontario's kids, and it is precisely our commitment to Ontario's kids and to the sustainability of children's aid societies that we have increased investments year over year. This year, everyone in this House knows the financial circumstances of the province. We have said to children's aid societies, "We have budgeted more for you, but we cannot give you more if you spend more than is in your budget." That is why we are working daily with children's aid societies across the province, like the work being done with the Simcoe children's aid to help them find a pathway to sustainability: examples like working through budget, finding partnerships and, in circumstances where necessary, providing cash advances as we have done with the children's aid society. We're doing our work every single day to make sure that they're sustainable. We look for partnerships across the—

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

VISITORS

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like, with your permission, Mr.

Speaker, to add an addendum to the list of people who joined us today and will be joining us a little later for the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Great Grants Awards. We omitted to mention that in addition to the ones I did mention, David McLaren of the Ojibwa Saugeen First Nations territories is also a winner.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Hon. Jim Watson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm very pleased to report that today is the Minister of Health's birthday, and we wish her a very happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Neither of those were points of order, but happy birthday.

The time for question period has ended. This house stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm very excited to introduce to this House my very best friend, Dorothy St. George, and her daughter, Mary Redfearn.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I would like to welcome to this House an extraordinary businessman and an outstanding community volunteer. He launched and supports the Frances Rose Foundation Dinner of Champions to help in the fight against diabetes. My fellow colleagues, please welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Mr. Dominic Virgilio.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

YORK REGION

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

Mr. Frank Klees: Earlier today during question period I raised the issue of the York Region Children's Aid Society's funding shortfall with the minister responsible for children. Her response was disappointing, to say the least. She deflected by referring to funding increases the York CAS has received since 2003 and over the last decade. That is irrelevant to the fact that the York CAS is facing a funding crisis today. And to say, as the minister did, that the government has no money is unacceptable. It's precisely during these difficult economic times that the government should be prioritizing the care of our most vulnerable, and our children should be at the top of that list.

In a letter to the minister this week, the York Region Police Services Board said this in response to the proposed funding cuts: "York Region CAS is one of our most important partners in ensuring safety and security in our communities. The CAS provides an invaluable service to the vulnerable children of York region. The board

urges the province to reconsider its funding decision to ensure that the safety and protection of our children continues to remain a top priority."

I implore the minister to heed the warning of the police services board and the board of the York CAS to adequately fund these critical services to York region's most vulnerable children and ensure that York CAS is adequately funded.

WILLIAM DAVIS

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: On November 2, I had the pleasure of attending the opening night of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's 2009 Ontario Economic Summit.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is a federation of chambers of commerce and boards of trade representing 60,000 businesses. On November 2, the chamber announced the first recipient of their Visionary Award. This new award was created to honour an individual who made a significant contribution to business, public policy, labour or the social fabric of Ontario through leadership, collaboration and integrity.

I am pleased to report that the inaugural recipient of this prestigious award was Brampton's own William G. Davis, the 18th Premier of Ontario, or, as he's more fondly known by the people of my community, our own Brampton Billy.

Mr. Davis accepted the award with humility, attributing his success as Premier to the values passed down to him by his parents. "I grew up in a household where they all felt we had some responsibility to the community and to give back to the province in which we grew up."

The award was presented in front of a crowd of business, labour, education, government and non-government leaders, with tributes made by Senator Hugh Segal, the Honourable Jim Bradley and the deputy leader of the PC Party, Christine Elliott, all of whom spoke of Mr. Davis's civility and integrity which Mr. Davis exhibited during his 26-year career in provincial politics.

I encourage all the members of this House to join me in congratulating Brampton's own William G. Davis for his acceptance of this inaugural Ontario Visionary Award.

ABILITIES CENTRE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today to advise the House about an extraordinary event that I attended in my riding two evenings ago at the Oshawa Little Theatre. It was actually a Christmas concert; it was called Christmas at Home. I just wanted to raise it because it was organized by volunteers—three people from the community: Mr. Dan Clancy, Mr. Chris Janusitis and Mr. Mike Hill—for the purpose of supporting an organization in my riding called the Abilities Centre, which is a sports, recreation and performing arts facility that's being built in Whitby for people with varying degrees of special needs. It's going to be completely accessible and barrier-free, and construction is expected to begin on it within the next few months.

This was a fundraising effort for the Abilities Centre, which is also aimed at turning people's thinking around and shifting the paradigm to see abilities rather than disabilities. This group did a wonderful job and featured performances by a list of people who I think will be well known to some members of this chamber: Dan Clancy, Ian Thomas, Murray McLauchlan, Lloyd Knight, Coco Love Alcorn, the group of two women known as Dala, Jacob Abrahamse, and Sabrina Moreino.

I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers, to thank the performers and to thank all of the people who came out to celebrate this wonderful organization called the Abilities Centre.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to remind members of the House that we're going to have an important debate here this afternoon on a motion put forward by my colleague Howard Hampton, and that is on the issue of children's aid societies. We are seeing across not only northern Ontario but also the rest of the province that children's aid societies are being advised that their budgets are being cut.

I can tell you that in the riding I reside in, I have a number of children's aid societies. You've got the Timmins and district children's aid, you've got centre Jeanne Sauvé, you've got Payukotayno, and you've also got Kunuwanimano, all of which are under extreme distress when it comes to what they're learning from the ministry as we speak.

The centre Jeanne Sauvé, we know, is going to lose \$700,000 to \$900,000, depending on whose numbers you look at. I just want to put that in perspective: \$700,000 or \$900,000 in that particular children's aid that provides services to kids from Smooth Rock Falls to Constance Lake—aboriginal, francophone and anglophone children—really is going to make a dent in their ability to be able to respond to the needs that they have to respond to by legislation.

At Payukotayno, it's the same story: over \$1 million for the children's aid society that's providing services on the James Bay coast.

These are organizations that are legislated to protect our children. If we, as legislators, and this government can't see fit to find a way to make sure we can protect the most vulnerable people in our society, what does that say about us?

I look forward to the debate that we're going to have this afternoon. I'm urging all members of the House to support Mr. Howard Hampton's motion, and for us to do what needs to be done to protect the most vulnerable people in this province, and that is children.

EVENT IN OAK RIDGES—MARKHAM

Ms. Helena Jaczek: On October 9, I attended a special blessing ceremony at the Mahamevnawa Bhavana Asapuwa meditation centre in my riding of Oak Ridges—

Markham. Led by monks from Sri Lanka, the ceremony featured the teachings of the Sakyamuni Buddha.

Since its opening in July 2006, the centre, under the leadership of Mahinda Gunasekera, has drawn a large number of lay devotees who benefit from the sermons, meditation sessions and recitation of the precepts. In addition, the centre teaches meditation and Buddha's philosophy to children and youth in both the Sinhala and English languages.

The Sri Lankan community is a very special part of my riding. I have a personal connection to Sri Lanka, as my British forebears were tea planters there for many generations. My grandfather, as a British colonial civil servant, was instrumental in the peaceful transition to independence in 1948.

I was honoured to speak at this highly spiritual event and meet so many committed, talented and influential people who work so hard for the benefit of their community.

I wish to thank Sumith Piyadasa and Akila Malwatta, the event organizers, who created an unforgettable experience with this blessing ceremony. In addition, the refreshments following the ceremony were delicious and, of course, washed down by Ceylon tea.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to comment on H1N1 clinics in my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka.

It is clear that this government's H1N1 vaccination program is seriously flawed. From its delayed inception to its ineffective implementation, the McGuinty Liberals have demonstrated a complete and utter lack of leadership and planning during this time of crisis.

In Toronto last week, thousands of people waited for hours in the cold and the rain to receive their H1N1 vaccination. But in my riding, wait times were not the issue. Initially, no clinics were announced for several communities, including the towns of Bracebridge, Burk's Falls and the Almaguin region.

Citizens were quick to respond. One wrote to me in disbelief saying, "We are being totally neglected when it comes to H1N1 protection." Health units responded by adding clinic location and dates.

It would be easy to blame the local health units, but let me be clear: It's not their fault. They received such late notification that they had to scramble to get organized, and they are working hard and doing their best.

Yesterday during question period, the Minister of Health asked members to inform her if there are any problems with H1N1 clinics. But the people of my riding, and indeed of this province, expect her to know about the problems. After all, isn't it the job of the Minister of Health to be informed about problems on the ground?

1310

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to speak about Remembrance Day and the valiant contributions made by

residents of my riding of Mississauga South. Every November 11, we pause and remember the brave men and women who have fought throughout our history to protect our freedom.

In Port Credit, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 82 will be holding their annual Remembrance Day service and parade. The parade will start from the Legion and march to Trinity Anglican Church. Following the service at the church, wreaths from the governments of Canada and Ontario will be laid, together with others, at the cenotaph on Stavebank Road.

Army, navy and air force veterans in Lakeview will be holding their annual Armistice Day parade this Sunday, November 8. Following the parade, a service will be held to honour those who have fallen, and a wreath will be laid at the cenotaph in Lakeview.

It's appropriate that we in south Mississauga and throughout Ontario pay homage every year to our Canadian fighting men and women, especially as the people of Mississauga have made great contributions to our nation's war efforts.

In 1915, Lakeview became the home of Canada's first airport, the Curtiss School of Aviation. There, Canadian pilots trained for the great struggle that awaited them on the Western Front.

In 1939, a munitions factory was built in Lakeview, which supplied our troops for the next six years as they helped free the nations of Europe. During this time, the plant employed 40,000 women as welders, machinists and tool and die makers.

Some notable veterans include our former mayor of Mississauga, His Worship Ron Searle. He served in the Toronto Scottish Regiment in World War II. Joining in 1936, he served right up until September 1945. During his service, he was shot in the leg three times by German snipers in Normandy, but thankfully he survived to come home and lead the newly incorporated city of Mississauga.

Another south Mississauga resident, Dorothy Jamison, served in her native England with the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. In fact, when Winston Churchill came to inspect the fighter control operations tower, it was Dorothy whom Sir Winston chose to be the guide.

We owe a great deal to the people of Mississauga who put themselves in harm's way to protect us and the freedoms we enjoy, and on November 11 we will remember them.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today. I'm going to commend the people in my riding of Oakville. Communities across this province and across this country have been rolling out Canada's H1N1 vaccine, the largest immunization program in our country's history.

We know the challenges associated with it.

Oakville and Halton region have not avoided the unanticipated demand, and a major road was closed in

Oakville to deal with the crowds. More than 17,000 people have been vaccinated in Halton. Many have waited in line for hours, and yet here are the headlines from letters to the editor in the Oakville Beaver: "Vaccine Lineup Brought Out the Best in People," "Flu Shot Wait was Unforgettable."

These letters go on to compliment Halton region's health care workers and members of the Halton Regional Police, who managed the crowd and provided—I quote one resident—"encouragement, information, conversation and a feeling of safety." I'd like to commend the health care workers of Halton region and the Halton Regional Police for their hard work.

Finally, I want to commend the people of my community of Oakville. Bruce Craig, one of those who waited, wrote, "It was moving to witness the extreme patience shown by the children of all ages, who played as best they could and without being too cranky, and their parents, who waited and waited and waited."

Their patience and determination to wait for the vaccine deserves to be recognized by this Legislature as a way that Canadians should act in a time of crisis.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. David Oraziotti: I rise in the House today to congratulate the health care workers and other community officials in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. The Group Health Centre and the Algoma public health unit have been working with local organizations to ensure that the H1N1 vaccine is being distributed quickly and efficiently to residents in my community of Sault Ste. Marie.

For the past 12 years, the Group Health Centre and the public health unit have been working together to book appointments for the seasonal flu shot to eliminate lineups. They are putting the same system to use for the H1N1 vaccination with great success. The Group Health Centre has had electronic records since 1997, and is able to identify high-priority groups and ensure that they receive those appointments first. As patients are immunized, vaccine dosages and other relevant medical information are automatically entered into their record.

A number of articles commending the health system in Sault Ste. Marie have appeared in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. This is not the first time the medical community in my riding has received provincial and national praise. Roy Romanow, the former head of the Royal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada, called its approach "the best-kept secret in the country," and Michael Decter, the chairman of the Health Council of Canada, told local officials in Sault Ste. Marie that they had built an enviable track record in procedures and co-operation.

In addition to the clinics run by the APH and the group health centre, evening clinics have been set up at area schools to ensure that there's greater access to the vaccination.

All of the public officials have a difficult job to ensure that the most vulnerable members of the community are

protected from this illness, and I want to congratulate them for their organization, professionalism and compassion.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Brad Duguid: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet during the week of January 25, 2010, and on Monday, February 1, Tuesday, February 2, and Wednesday, February 3, 2010, for the purpose of conducting pre-budget consultations.

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

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding certain private members' public business.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the order of the House referring Bill 14, An Act to deem that the Building Code and the Fire Code require fire detectors, interconnected fire alarms and non-combustible fire escapes, to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be discharged; and

That the order of the House referring Bill 96, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings, to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be discharged; and

That the order of the House referring Bill 106, An Act to provide for safer communities and neighbourhoods, to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be discharged; and

That the order of the House referring Bill 132, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act, to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged; and

That Bills 14, 96, 106 and 132 be referred instead to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills; and

That the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills be authorized to meet according to the following schedule:

—On Wednesday, November 18, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 96, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement

savings, and from noon to 1 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

—On Wednesday, November 25, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 106, An Act to provide for safer communities and neighbourhoods, and from noon to 1 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

—On Wednesday, December 2, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 14, An Act to deem that the Building Code and the Fire Code require fire detectors, interconnected fire alarms and non-combustible fire escapes, and from noon to 1 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

—On Wednesday, December 9, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 132, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act, and from noon to 1 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Are all members comfortable with the motion?

All those in favour? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

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

“Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

“Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we’re not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn’t found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

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

“That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area.”

I agree with this petition, and I’ll sign it.

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TAXATION

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

“Whereas the residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty’s new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

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

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

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

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

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I especially want to thank Sue Taggart of Woodlawn Avenue in Mississauga for having sent this to me. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the population in Peel has tripled from 400,000 residents to 1.2 million between 1980 to present. Human services funding has not kept pace with that growth. Peel receives only one third the per capita social service funding of other Ontario communities; and

“Whereas residents of Peel cannot obtain social services in a timely fashion. Long waiting lists exist for many Peel region service providers. The child poverty level in Peel has grown from 14% to 20% between 2001 and 2006 ... ; and

“Whereas Ontario’s Places to Grow legislation predicts substantial future growth, further challenging our already stretched service providers to respond to population growth;

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

“That the province of Ontario allocate social services funding on the basis of population size, population growth, relevant social indicators and special geographic conditions;

“That the province provide adequate growth funding for social services in Peel region; and

“That Ontario develop, in consultation with high-growth stakeholders, a human services strategy for high-growth regions to complement Ontario’s award-winning Places to Grow strategy.”

I agree with this petition. I’m pleased to affix my signature in support and to ask page Katelyn to carry it for me.

TAXATION

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

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004, he brought in a brand-new tax on income, that they inaccurately claimed was going to ‘health care’; and

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

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas at the pumps; home heating oil and electricity; postage stamps; haircuts; dry cleaning; home renovations; veterinary care; and arena ice and soccer field rentals;

“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, once and for all, on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it as well.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to present this petition, addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I especially would like to thank Bart Konieczek from Plainsman Road in the beautiful town of Streetsville for having collected these signatures for me. It reads as follows:

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

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could better be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

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

'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I am pleased to sign and wholeheartedly support this petition and to ask page Madeline, on her last day with us, to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare funding. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas recent funding cuts include the loss of health care services at the Burk's Falls health centre, reductions in acute care beds at both hospitals and cuts to services such as physiotherapy; and

"Whereas the government is providing hospitals with funding increases of roughly 2%, but costs for health care salaries negotiated by the ministry and other fixed costs are increasing at a rate of 4% to 5% each year; and

"Whereas hospitals will face ongoing budget cuts as a result of insufficient funding by the province of Ontario, despite collecting \$12 billion in health taxes from Ontarians;

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

"That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services for the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound and provide long-term-care beds for Muskoka-East Parry Sound."

I support this petition and give it to page Rebecca.

PARENTING EDUCATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the hard-working member for Niagara Falls, my trusty seatmate for the past six years, I'm pleased to present this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas effective parenting practices do not come instinctively and parenting is our most crucial social role, parenting and human development courses need to be taught to all secondary school students. Parenting education will: reduce teen pregnancies; reduce the rate of costly fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and increase the number of healthy pregnancies; reduce the number of costly social problems related to ineffective parenting practices; and improve the 'social fabric' of Ontario to create a more civil society. Parenting education for students is considered to be socially valuable by a majority of adults of voting age and should be included as a ... credit course within the Ontario curriculum;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the requirements for the Ontario secondary school diploma to include one senior level (grade 11 or 12) credit course in parenting education."

I'm pleased, on behalf of the member from Niagara Falls, to sign this petition and to ask page Jessica to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have another petition against the latest McGuinty tax grab and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in a brand new tax on income that they inaccurately claimed was going to 'health care'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas at the pumps; home heating oil and electricity; postage stamps; haircuts; dry cleaning; home renovations; veterinary care; and arena ice and soccer field rentals;

"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 once and for all on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I have affixed my signature to it as well because I am in full agreement.

CHILD CUSTODY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you again, Speaker. It's very charitable of you.

My seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, has another petition which, on his behalf, I'd like to present and read. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by MPP Kim Craiton.

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"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents"—and there are a number of other sections that I'll skip here in the interests of time;

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

On behalf of the member for Niagara Falls, I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition and once again ask page Madeline to carry it for me.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save Ontario’s independent school bus operators, and it reads:

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the school boards of Ontario, is entertaining or proceeding with a request for proposal (RFP) to obtain transportation services, with the intention of eliminating the current process; and

“Whereas this concept strongly favours large international operators who are in a position to underbid local, small, existing, independent operations; and

“Whereas independent school bus operators form an integral part of the communities in which they operate and contribute to the social and economic well-being of the community; and

“Whereas local school bus operators support other local businesses such as insurance brokers, gas station operators, farming operations, financial institutions, retail outlets and professional services such as dentists, chiropractors and doctors; and

“Whereas school boards already utilize a procurement process where they set the price for school bus services, and this process has proven to be cost-effective; and

“Whereas the outcomes of the RFP pilot projects have proven that local bus operators will lose their routes in an RFP process based on price first and quality second; and

“Whereas the experience in other jurisdictions has proven that, while there may be short-term cost savings to an RFP process, in the long run the process reduces competition and costs eventually go up when there are only one or two large operators left to tender;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned Ontario parents, students, community leaders, education professionals and business owners call on the Ontario government to address the concerns of the Independent School Bus Operators Association (ISBOA), abandon the RFP process, and adopt a process that ensures small and medium-sized school bus companies continue to be able to do business in their communities.”

I support this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: Although I have read this petition once, I had promised the Effort group of Pakistani professionals that on their behalf I would read it in the assembly, so this is for Effort in Mississauga. I especially want to thank Shahid Ali, Zaheer Alam and Husain

Naqvi for having collected the signatures. It reads as follows:

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

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could better be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

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

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

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’d ask all members to join me in welcoming, in the west members’ gallery today, Jeannette Runciman, wife of the honourable member from Leeds–Grenville. Jeannette, welcome to Queen’s Park.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

SENATORS’ SELECTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE CHOIX DES SÉNATEURS

Mr. Runciman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to provide for the election in Ontario of nominees for appointment to the Senate of Canada / Projet de loi 67, Loi prévoyant l’élection en Ontario de candidats à des nominations au Sénat du Canada.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you, and for the benefit of Hansard, I want to say that my wife’s name is spelled with two Ns and two Ts in the rare occasion when her name is referenced in the Hansard, but it’s quite an honour.

Mr. Speaker, I think as you know, I have been a long-time supporter of an elected Senate. This is the third time that I've introduced this legislation, starting in 2004—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Keep trying, Bob.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: And for my friend to the left, this is the first time that it has actually been called for debate and vote.

At the outset, I want to thank and congratulate and commend Canada's only elected senator at the moment, Bert Brown from Alberta, who is a true gentleman and a real champion speaker of the cause of an elected Senate. He ran three times and was appointed by Prime Minister Harper after the third election and has been working his way across the country, meeting with Premiers and legislators to talk about an elected Senate, to persuade them that this is the thing to do and now is the time to do it.

There is no question about it, there is growing support across the country for Senate reform and for an elected Senate. Angus Reid Strategies released a poll just a couple months ago, in September. It doesn't have a regional breakdown, but I found the breakdown that they did carry out to be quite fascinating. I hope my friends to the left are listening to this. I'll just give you the one question on Senate reform: "As you may know, several proposals have been made over the past few years to reform the senate of Canada. Do you support or oppose each of these ideas?"

Now, allowing Canadians to directly elect their senators—this was broken down on a party basis. I thought the interesting elements of this were that among Liberals there was 62% support, and the even more surprising number here was the NDP; 74% of NDP respondents supported direct election of senators. So I am hopeful that my friends to the left, when they're speaking later during the debate, will keep those poll numbers in mind and not the sort of traditionally dogmatic approach they take to Senate reform.

This is an important issue, and three provinces to date have already taken steps to address this issue. As we know, Alberta, with Bert Brown as the only elected senator in Canada, passed legislation. My legislation, Bill 67, that we're discussing here today, essentially mirrors the Alberta legislation. There's very little difference in terms of the writing of the bill. I have not seen the Saskatchewan legislation. It was passed. I gather it's quite similar, if not identical, to the Alberta legislation.

The province of Manitoba, under NDP Premier Gary Doer, has also passed enabling legislation, but has yet to determine how and when those elections should occur. But I understand there are public consultations occurring this fall which will lead to a decision by the Manitoba Legislature in terms of how that process will evolve.

Mr. Howard Hampton: That's Senator Ed Schreyer.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That may be the answer.

We are talking about constitutional change, and of course, that's why we have moved in this direction, and Bert Brown has moved in this direction, and a number of provinces have already, rather than looking at constitu-

tional change because of the challenges we faced in the past with the Meech Lake accord and Charlottetown accord. But the important elements of those accords, those discussions across the country, all dealt with the issue of Senate reform because of its importance to so many Canadians.

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The Charlottetown accord had an option for the direct election of senators provincially or legislative appointment. Reading commentators' responses to that, they felt the inclusion of the legislative appointment option was really to get Quebec to sign on to the Charlottetown accord and that other provinces would in all likelihood move towards direct election.

Appointing people to a House of Parliament in one of the world's great democracies, Canada—when we have soldiers dying overseas, trying to support a budding democracy in Afghanistan—just boggles the mind. We have, in the current situation, a situation where people can be appointed at age 30 and serve until age 75. That's 45 years without any accountability to the taxpayers or the voters or the hard-working people of this great country.

Hugh Segal, who is now an appointed senator but very much a strong proponent of an elected Senate, or at least making a decision with respect to the Senate, I believe has tabled legislation calling for a national referendum on this issue.

But one of the things Hugh said in the past was that the appointment of people as currently occurs makes the former Soviet Union look like a democratic state, and there's a lot of truth to that.

As I said, a growing number of Canadians, a growing number of Ontarians, share Hugh's view and my view that elected status is the prerequisite for the legitimate exercise of influence.

Although the current Senate does do some good work—there's no question about that. I think Michael Kirby's work on mental health was a significant contribution in terms of that discussion across the country. Colin Kenny is a Liberal senator, but I am a fan of Senator Kenny and the good work he does with respect to security issues and challenges facing this country. There's no question that there are some good people serving in the Senate, regardless of political stripe. But the Senate as it is currently structured is a far cry from what was contemplated by the Fathers of Confederation. It's not fulfilling its role as a forum where regional interests will get a fair hearing. It's a place that is essentially a repository for political appointees—some, as I mentioned earlier, for potentially as long as 45 years.

We need a Senate that is directly accountable to the people who elect them, not the Prime Minister and not the Leader of the Opposition. This has been discussed over many years. The Macdonald commission—going back, doing some research on this, in 1985; this is Donald Macdonald, a very prominent member of the federal Liberal Party, and Thumper, I think, was Don Macdonald's name—dealt with that issue and also recommended Senate elections.

The most recent work on this, the Beaudoin-Dobbie committee, took a very in-depth look at this. I think there were some 3,000 submissions to that committee across Canada, dealing with constitutional reform, and one element, of course, was the Senate and Senate reform. That committee made a very clear recommendation with respect to recommending an elected Senate that would represent regional, gender and social diversity in its makeup.

Now, we can go through a number of federal agencies, organizations and commissions that have dealt with these issues over the past number of years, including of course Meech and Charlottetown.

I don't want to overstate the significance of a private member's bill in the Ontario Legislature. If there is a positive vote here today, though, I think it could have a real impact on the nature of the debate across this country. We are, after all, the most populous province in this great country. I think it would send out a very strong and positive signal to Canadians, especially Canadians in western Canada, who tend to view central Canada, and especially Ontario, with some degree of suspicion with respect to their view of national interests and concerns. They have felt left out, and I think that, initially anyway, the idea of Senate reform has been driven by that feeling of isolation and being left out in western Canada.

You can look at the representation in the current Senate and understand some of those concerns. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, for example, have 10 members in the Senate, while Alberta and British Columbia qualify for six under the current constitution. So you can understand that.

Of course, if you look at the national energy program that was brought in by the Trudeau government, again the west—especially Alberta and Saskatchewan, but I think it was felt across the west—felt they did not have a voice and that there was no one representing regional interests in the Parliament of Canada, and certainly not in the Senate of Canada. This is a small step to dispel that view, that sense of suspicion.

I've spoken with Premier McGuinty about this issue on a couple of occasions. He assured me that this is a free vote today. I don't know if he made comment in caucus on Tuesday, but if he did in a negative way, I think that would colour the whole concept of a free vote, and I hope that wasn't the case.

He indicated to me that he was still pondering the issue, which made me feel somewhat optimistic, given the fact that he has been a supporter of abolition in the past. Given the, I think, growing sense among Ontarians as well that it's time for an elected Senate in Canada, I'm going to be optimistic that members on the government benches are going to be supportive of this bill today.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to have an opportunity to speak to this particular issue. I have to say from the outset that I have some sympathy for the argument the member from Leeds-Grenville makes, and I will

speak to that in a couple of minutes. But I want to express my feelings about this issue clearly.

I have spoken on this in the past from time to time—we don't get too many opportunities to speak about these wonderful issues and to speak about Senators in general. I've got to tell you that I'm opposed to the whole idea of the Senate, and particularly offended by the idea of nominating Senators by whoever is in power at the moment. What you've had traditionally are Liberal governments that get elected more than Conservative governments, and what we have had, on the whole, for a long, long time is Liberal Prime Ministers appointing friends, people they were obliged to give an appointment to—

Mr. Howard Hampton: Bagmen.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Some were bagmen, to be sure, and some worked tirelessly for the party and had to be nominated to something. They need to give away some spots, some positions that appear to have some relevance or some importance, so why not appoint them to the Senate? This is what successive Liberal Prime Ministers have done, over and over again.

Harper is now in power, and he's doing the same thing, God bless him. Why wouldn't he? Of course, he was opposed to it in the past, but now that he has an opportunity to appoint people, why not? Of course you're going to do the same thing that other Liberal Prime Ministers have done.

I've got to tell you it's an abominable way to put people in a position of responsibility; it really is. It offends me, and it offends a whole lot of people. It's at the whim of the Prime Minister of the day. It's wrong.

I've got to tell you they are well paid; I dare not say the amount, because I don't want to offend them or the public, but they do make more than we do. I think we work hard, and I suspect some Senators work hard too. I respect some of the Senators who are there, but I tell you they have a budget of close to \$100 million. It's a big budget: \$23 million or \$25 million or so directly connected to their office, and \$57 million or \$60 million connected to indirect work that they do as senators. It's a whole lot of money.

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I want to tell those who are watching that they only sit for 44 days in the year. That's not many sitting days. So you say to yourself, "Okay, they don't sit too long in the Senate. They're well-paid. We don't know what they do." The majority of people in Ontario do not know what senators do. Many senators absent themselves from the Senate because presumably they have a lot of hard work to do in other places, other than the Senate. The absenteeism rate for some members is quite high, in some cases 66%. It's shameful to even talk about. I don't know how they defend themselves. I dare not mention names, because it's not nice to mention names; it really isn't.

Interjection: That sounds like the member from Vaughan.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But you'll have an opportunity. You can mention names. I don't want to hurt anybody, really, in the process, other than stating some

figures: a whole big budget, 44 sitting days, good-paying jobs, and some of them absent themselves. So you say, what do they do? What do they do? If anyone here in this House can tell me with credibility what it is that they will do, I am happy to listen to you. But if you ask any Ontarians what senators do, they won't be able to tell you, because in my view—I don't know—they don't do much. They have no powers whatsoever except to delay bills for six months. That's the only power they've got. I suspect that from time to time they threaten to do that with one bill or another, but usually they back down. But if they put the government to the wall, assuming they have the numbers and assuming that those who are Liberal senators want to fight the government on some issue, assuming they do that and hold it up for six months, that's fine. It simply goes back and gets reintroduced, and pressure is put on senators to do the bidding of Parliament.

So the power is to delay for six months; that's it. It's not a bad-paying gig for having that power that you may use in your lifetime, because as you know, you can stay up to the age of 75 years—not bad. By the way, I'm not opposed to it because there are no New Democrats; really, that's not the issue. I don't believe that's the issue.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's conceivable. It's conceivable that if Liberals appointed New Democrats, some might change their mind. You could be right; I don't know. But it is interesting that there are no New Democrats that I'm aware of. Somebody said there is one. I don't know who that is. But it is possible that Liberals could at some point be generous, and Harper, if he stays in power for a little longer, might be generous and decide it's not right just to appoint Tories: "We're going to appoint a New Democrat every now and there." He might do that; it's possible, so I should be a little flexible in my approach to the issue, because you never know. And then if we turn that into a three-party Senate, it might work out differently; you don't know.

My point is that they don't do anything of relevance for the 44 days they sit, for a well-paying job to be there up until you are 75 years of age. Not a bad gig, I say. But if you are going to have a Senate, and I suspect Liberals and Tories love to have a Senate because you're not going to give your power away to nominate people to plum jobs—you're not going to give that away. I know that. You're not going to do it. If that is the case, and it's mostly Tories and Liberals who get into those federal positions, I prefer that they be elected. This is where I agree with the member from Leeds–Grenville: If you're going to have them, in spite of the arguments I have made that you shouldn't, then I prefer that they be elected rather than nominated.

There are some technical problems. There is a possibility in the motion here that they could either run when there's a federal election or in stand-alone elections. Member from Leeds–Grenville, imagine having separate elections. It's a big cost.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Or it could be municipal elections too.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All right. But if you have independent elections—stand-alone—imagine the cost for senators.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Democracy's not cheap, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, democracy's not cheap.

If those senators had legitimate power of some kind, if they could—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But merely running in the election doesn't give you power; I'm sorry. You're going to have to speak to this. I'm assuming you are; that's why you're here. Tell me, when you stand up to speak, my good friend, why it is that they should be there—not because an election gives them legitimacy, but that they should be there because they're actually doing something. If you could address that, that would be great.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay, good.

My point is, if you're going to have a stand-alone election, it's a serious cost—I'm sorry—for the work they do. I don't buy that. So if you're going to have an election, make sure it's at the same time as a municipal or a provincial or a federal election so we don't incur that many more costs, please. That's first.

Second, as a technicality, if you're going to have an election—let's say we agree. We understand—and the member from Leeds–Grenville knows this—the federal government doesn't have to listen to you. So here you run an election, as they did in Alberta three times, to prove a point, of course, as a way of saying, "Elections are better than nominations." If you want to prove the point, you can. Eventually, if you have one party or the other getting back in, they might say, "Okay, we'll nominate Mr. Brown because we're in power now"—and by the way, we can do it because he just got elected. What a way of giving credibility to Mr. Brown, right? I understand that. The point is, a federal government doesn't have to listen to anybody vis-à-vis elections. But I understand the notion, the principle, of having them elected. That I agree with.

Here's my point, to wrap up, because there are only two minutes: We should abolish the Senate. That's my priority, really. Think about it, Conservative members. Spend a moment or two to talk about that. If we can't abolish the Senate because of entrenched Liberal and Conservative interests, then all right, let's have an election. Having an election, even nominally, philosophically, will send a point to the federal government that it's not a bad idea—and if so, let's have this election, because it's democratically preferable.

Third, if we're going to have to do this in spite of my objections to the Senate, please, it can't be stand-alone elections. Let's not incur those kinds of costs. Canadians cannot afford it.

My humble view, Bob, the member from Leeds–Grenville, is that the majority of people would love to abolish the Senate. That is my view. I agree that if you asked them if they would prefer to have them elected or not, they would say, "Yes, elected, of course." But if you

asked them the question, “Do you think we need a Senate?” the majority of Canadians are going to say, “No. We can’t afford them.” And I would agree with them.

I’m torn, member from Leeds–Grenville, because you see, in theory, I support your motion, but in practicality and in terms of principles, I really oppose it, because I want to abolish the Senate. Maybe in your remarks you can help me out and persuade me to support your motion.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I’ll do my best.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just remind honourable members to please speak through the Chair.

Further debate? The honourable member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Perhaps I can assist my colleague from Trinity–Spadina in focusing some of his thinking, because I’m pleased to stand and comment on the private member’s bill that has been presented by the member from Leeds–Grenville.

I’ve read the bill. The member suggests a short title of the Senators’ Selection Act. As drafted, the bill lays out a procedure to elect candidates for appointment to the Senate of Canada. As a suggested procedure, Bill 67 has some internal consistency, and as the member said, a lot of it has been lifted from Alberta. It brings to mind for me the difference between doing things right and doing the right thing.

The premise of Bill 67 is that there should be an election for Senate candidates—and indeed, that there should even be a Senate of Canada. The more fundamental question, the question whether we are doing the right thing rather than merely doing things right, is not how the Senate of Canada should fill its seats, but whether we need or in fact even want a Senate of Canada at all.

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Now, the member for Leeds–Grenville supports the standard party slogan of a triple-E Senate, an expression that means “equal, elected and effective.” Like most Canadians, I do differ on the mission statement of the Senate of Canada. I favour the abolition of the Senate altogether. The member’s party likes to rail against the government—and I’m in the government—and yet, in the very next breath, aims to expand a body that offers no benefit to Canadians, contributes virtually nothing to the government of Canada and costs Canadians nearly \$80 million each year.

Our research into Bill 67 has shown that only four bills have ever actually been defeated in the Senate in all the decades of its existence. The Senate has shown, on matters like free trade and the GST, that it cannot prevent the will of Parliament from becoming law anyway. Now, some people say that the Senate’s lack of effectiveness stems from its lack of legitimacy. It is an appointed body. It’s a place for federal political parties, especially the governing party, to reward its veterans with a long-term sinecure that isn’t terribly demanding and allows the

office holder lots of time to do other things such as political organizing.

Now, electing Canadian senators implies that there will be a significant role in government for those elected representatives. But Ontarians really don’t see such a role or even a need for yet another layer of government. Ontarians would rightly question why we, as Canadians, would want to further empower an already ineffective body to form a duplicate level of government, to make it twice as cumbersome for laws to pass at the federal level as it is now. We need only look at the United States, where its Senate and its House of Representatives are in fact the motherlode for corporate lobbying.

In the US, a system that Bill 67 aims to more or less replicate or walk a parallel path to here in Canada, getting the work of the people done involves the kind of trade-offs and deals that the member’s own party decries whenever they perceive it here in Canada. So why would this member or his party wish to impose upon us the expensive attributes of a government that spends most of its time in the gridlock of political wrangling instead of actually governing?

The cost of an elected Senate is estimated to be something like quadruple its current \$80-million-per-year price tag. With a federal government facing a structural deficit probably in excess of \$65 billion—the largest in history—one would think that the first priority for Canadians would be to deliver government that is simpler, leaner and less expensive. One way to do this is to abolish the Senate of Canada.

Canadians want strong majority governments. Canadians will give their governments both the mandate to govern them and to act decisively and also, and this is important, the legislative ability to enact laws on their behalf without fettering their federal Parliaments or provincial Legislatures with checks and balances that effectively grind the legislative process to a gridlocked political halt. Although this is absolutely not the intent of this member’s bill, it is surely the outcome. If a government, once having received a mandate from the people of Canada or the people of a province, doesn’t deliver the results that people reasonably expect of them in the circumstances, Canadians always have and will continue to have the power and, through their ballots, the ability to toss out the government and to give another party the mandate. We do this already. We do not need an elected Senate to do it better, and the lack of redundant elected bodies, like the Senate of Canada at the provincial level, gives voters in the provinces the obligation as well as the ability to pay attention and to think before voting.

Canadians have shown over and over again that although a vote is a crude and blunt instrument, Canadians can do sophisticated things with it when their decision, through our collective consciousness as a nation, is reflected in Parliament. So why do we need yet another elected body to second-guess Canadians, who have a long track record of solid good sense when we mark our ballots?

Ontario used to have an upper House. It was abolished in 1867, and no one has ever missed it. Quebec once had a Senate; it was abolished in 1968. In all of the seven provinces that once had upper Houses similar to the Canadian Senate, all of them have abolished them.

We know it can be done. Canadians can do away with a superfluous government institution. It would take the unanimous consent of the provinces to abolish the Senate of Canada. Ontarians think there is no better time than the present to abolish the Senate right now, and we actually thank the member for Leeds–Grenville for the opportunity to make this point in the Legislature.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak to the member from Leeds–Grenville's private member's bill. I think it's an absolutely important bill to speak to, and it's so nice to see a debate in this House on something of significance and importance, instead of what we often get around to debating in government bills. As the member from Leeds–Grenville said, we hope that this is in the tradition of our parliamentary system, that a private member's bill will be a free vote.

I first want to say to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville that we ought not to confuse political representation with the size of government, as he just did. There are many jurisdictions throughout the world that have bicameral systems and have significant political representation but a smaller bureaucracy.

I'll give you the example of New Hampshire. That small state of 1.2 million people has 430 state assemblymen. They also have a bicameral upper House of 24 senators. It is probably one of the most frugal and well-run states in the United States, but it is the state that has the largest political representation and the smallest bureaucracy.

I also want to refer to the member from Trinity–Spadina and, I believe, a couple of factual errors. He said that the only thing the Senate can do is delay bills. Well, that's not quite true. They can offer up amendments to bills initiated in the House of Commons. They can also advance their own Senate bills. Where they're restricted to or from is on bills of supply and taxation. Rightly, that belongs with a House that is elected by people.

The whole concept of the Westminster system is a bicameral system, and it provides for that election by popular vote. That upper House is also there to provide some balance and some representation for regional diversity. That is the concept: representation by geography, as well as representation by population. It's shown around the world that it can be effective. In Australia, they moved to an elected upper House, and it has been successful with that upper House being elected.

There are problems with our system. They've been identified for a long time. There have actually been six different reports. The member from Leeds–Grenville mentioned the Macdonald commission and also the Beaudoin-Dobbie report, but there's also been the Canada West Foundation, the Molgat-Cosgrove report,

the Alberta select committee, and of course, the Charlottetown proposal. All of these proposals went with the idea that an elected Senate is indeed the way to go.

Clearly, all members in this House can understand that where we derive our authority and legitimacy from is from our election. If we were appointed, we would not have any real authority or legitimacy.

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In the Macdonald report, they went on to say, "The Senate is part of Parliament, and Parliament is pre-eminently a representative body. For that reason ... we join those who have argued that the Senate should be an elected body."

The Beaudoin-Dobbie report in 1992 said, "If we wish to establish a strong and effective institution to ensure the responsiveness of the central government to regional needs," and that's key, "that institution needs to have the legitimacy which comes from having been chosen directly by the people."

I think we can all understand that those are undeniable maxims. We understand them to be self-evident. For representatives to have authority, they must be elected.

Unlike the members from Mississauga–Streetsville and Trinity–Spadina, who believe we should abolish the Senate, I believe that the Senate can and will have value if we make it legitimate. It will provide a check and balance on majority governments, elected oftentimes without representation from across this country. We have seen in the past where governments are strongly dominated by urban centres, and the people who do not live in those urban centres are disadvantaged. That's what the upper House is there to do: provide to those people who don't live in those dense urban centres a voice and effective representation.

We can see it here in our own province. When I travel the north, the feeling of alienation of the people in northern Ontario is tremendous. They don't believe that Toronto is representing them, and I would have to agree with them. They are not being well served under our present structure here.

Any government can have a majority with members representing only southern Ontario, and that's what we often have right now. We then have laws that come out and pander to that base, forgetting the other people in this province, the people of rural and northern Ontario.

I agree that the federal Senate has not been effective. I also believe that the reason it has not been effective is that with appointments, it is not legitimate.

We have seen the case in Australia, where their Senate now is a strong check and balance and an effective representation by region and population. We can do that here as well.

I believe that every member here has come to Queen's Park because they want to make our province and our country a better place. Now, we can stand around and debate pit bull bans or light bulb bans, but here we have an opportunity to make a difference. We have an opportunity to help make a change that will better our

country. These opportunities don't come up every day. These are opportunities that we should take advantage of.

The member's bill provides for significant latitude for elections corresponding with municipal, provincial or federal elections. It provides the latitude that we do not have to get into a constitutional debate to begin to do the right things. We can make these changes without that onerous constitutional amending formula. That's why Alberta went this way; it's why Saskatchewan and Manitoba have gone that way. They recognize that their people were not being well served by an illegitimate appointed Senate. They want to make it better.

I believe the people of Ontario want to see a better form of federal government as well. And again, when you talk to the people in rural and northern Ontario, they don't have the representation that the people in Mississauga–Streetsville or Trinity–Spadina might have. They are disadvantaged. We should be doing things to bring and to ensure that everybody in this province, and everybody in this country, feels that they have a voice.

I think it's also important that we recognize that it does have that check and balance on a majority government. We've seen here in this House what happens when you have a majority government. It can ram through things that are providing or causing a burden for others. A second voice, a second House, tempers that strong bull-headedness, sometimes, of majority governments.

As I said, to the member from Trinity–Spadina, the House can and does create Senate bills. It is not just a delay mechanism; it can advance its own bills. It can make amendments and it also can provide and does sometimes provide good committee work, travelling across the country. We can make our democracy better or we can choose to accept the status quo or we can hope that the inevitable or the impossible will never come.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville says he wants to abolish it. You need to have full consent. He wants to have his whole perfect loaf and won't accept an improvement on the system that we have today. Let's improve what we have. Let's make it better. I believe that that second House is an important aspect of our Westminster parliamentary system and that indeed our system cannot fully represent the people of this country unless there is that second House. Let's legitimize that House. Let's vote in favour of the member from Leeds–Grenville's bill. It's an important first step.

I do hope and trust that each member in this House will vote by their conscience and that they have not been whipped, and recognize that our own authority here is what we're looking to ensure happens in the federal Senate—an election of representatives.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to enter the debate on Bill 67, An Act to provide for the election in Ontario of nominees for appointment to the Senate of Canada, which was introduced for debate, for second reading, by the member from Leeds–Grenville. I listened to him and read the bill many different times. But I still don't know

what we can achieve if we pass this bill or if we don't pass it. It doesn't mean anything.

As the member from Trinity–Spadina mentioned, we have no role. We have no role besides just opening the debate around this issue because it's an important issue, yes, to talk about democracy, to talk about elections and to talk about representation, whether provincially, municipally, federally or in the Senate. If we pass it, or if we don't pass it, it's not going to make any difference because the federal government won't listen to us because it's out of our jurisdiction.

We've been talking about the role of the Senate for many different years. What do they do in Canada? They have different roles. They have some kind of decided matter—to my knowledge, I guess the federal government decides on behalf of all the people of Canada, the many different jurisdictions, and has the ultimate role and the positions and the power to do whatever, in this nation.

Therefore, I think the Senate at the present time exists to please certain power-makers, whether from this community, from gender, from this region or other regions. Besides that, I don't see any role for the Senate in Canada. That's why our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, on many different occasions asked to abolish the Senate, and the Premier of Manitoba also asked to abolish the Senate, as did Saskatchewan and many other provinces, because the Senate does not play a role and does not reflect the power which already exists in Canada.

Therefore, I think to abolish the Senate is a good thing to do, as my colleague, the member from Mississauga West mentioned many different times. I want to thank him for giving me all of the information about the Senate system in Canada and all these issues which exist around this issue. He said it would cost \$80 million on a yearly basis for nothing, all to please certain people.

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The member from Leeds–Grenville mentioned a few minutes ago that people could be elected at age 30 and serve all the way to age 75, with no accountability. They don't have to do anything; they don't have to ask constituents to elect them or not. They are just appointed because they're friends with the Prime Minister or the powers that be, whether Liberal, Conservative, NDP or Bloc Québécois.

The Senate, at the present time, is a House to please certain powers in this nation. Therefore, I think that abolishing the Senate would be a very important step to strengthen the power of the provinces and also the federal government. I don't see any role for the Senate at the present time, even though the member from Leeds–Grenville is asking for nominations for a Senate from the province of Ontario. We can go through this exercise—it will cost a tremendous amount of money for no reason—and then the people nominated for the Senate by the province of Ontario would not necessarily be selected by the federal government to serve as senators, because we have no power.

We can't exercise whatever we want. This has to be a national issue. It has to be debated in the federal govern-

ment and has to be debated nationally, and a decision taken as to whether we want to keep the Senate and give them more of a role in Canada. Then we have to reconstruct the whole thing and also establish the election system, give the senators some kind of power and give them some reason to be there, and also a legitimate reason to be elected by the people of Canada, and not be appointed by certain powers in the federal government.

I add my voice to my colleague's from Mississauga West and the member from Trinity–Spadina. I think a good thing is to abolish the Senate and save the money to pay our debt or invest it in different issues like health care, education or infrastructure, instead of wasting our time debating an issue we have no power or jurisdiction over. I think it best that this be debated by the federal government and voted on nationally as to whether or not the Senate should exist.

If we decide nationally that we have to keep the Senate, we have to give them a role and they have to be elected by the people of Canada, not appointed by certain powers in Ottawa. I think that whether I vote for or against it, it's not going to make a difference in terms of persuading the federal government to listen to us.

Thank you for allowing me to stand and speak, Mr. Speaker, and I wish the member from Leeds–Grenville good luck and success persuading his friends in Ottawa to change the rules of the Senate system. As all of us know, when the Prime Minister of Canada was running for election, he promised the people of Canada an elected Senate, but what happened? He appointed more senators than anybody else in the past.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Runciman, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I could use a lot more than two minutes. I want to initially respond to the member from Trinity–Spadina, I appreciated his contribution, and I understand his position with respect to abolition. It's a long-standing position of his party and, I think, his personally. It relates to comments we've heard from the Liberal members as well.

I think we all recognize that abolition is not going to occur. It requires significant constitutional change: seven provinces out of 10, representing over 50% of the population. That's the kind of requirement before abolition could actually occur. Maybe a national referendum would result in that kind of initiative, but I don't think it's going to happen.

You talked about how—I think I'm quoting you, Rosie—they don't have any powers. But in effect, they do. Constitutionally, they have nearly the same powers as the House of Commons, except that they cannot initiate appropriation and tax bills. They're rarely utilized—I'll give you that—but I think the reason they're rarely utilized is because the chamber lacks political legitimacy.

To the member from London–Fanshawe, that was a bewildering contribution. He's saying that we, the most populous province in Canada, have no role. Three provinces have already passed legislation on this issue.

The Premier of British Columbia recently said that he would support it as long as the federal government picked up the costs associated with it. So to say the most populous province in Canada has no role, this assembly has no role, is really a disservice to this place and the importance that a motion, a vote, from this assembly can have on this national debate. That's just bewildering. What is most disappointing is that obviously this is a whipped vote; there's nothing free about this vote today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will vote on Mr. Runciman's ballot item in about 100 minutes.

MISSING PERSONS ALERT

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should establish a province-wide notification system, known as the Silver Alert, to alert the public of a missing person who suffers from Alzheimer's disease or other form of dementia.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Aggelonitis moves private members' notice of motion number 117. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: First, I'd like to recognize all the people from the Alzheimer's Society who are here with us today in the gallery. Thank you for being here.

I start with a question: Who hasn't been touched by someone who has Alzheimer's? I believe that we all have been touched by someone, whether it's a family member or a friend who has a family member or a friend. Alzheimer's is a brain disease. It is incurable; it is degenerative; and it is terminal.

Today in Canada, there are 500,000 people living with Alzheimer's disease or a related form of dementia. Within the next 25 years, this number will rise dramatically. It is estimated that Canada will have almost 1.3 million people living with this disease. In Ontario today, we have well over 180,000 people living with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia. By 2015, in just six more years, seniors, who represent those 65 years of age and older, will exceed the number of children 15 years of age or younger for the first time in Canadian history. It is anticipated that by 2031 seniors will make up approximately 25% of the Canadian population.

The reason for my resolution today is personal. It's personal, but it's also a conversation that I've had with many of my constituents on Hamilton Mountain who have family members who have Alzheimer's. Some of those family members wander. When I talk about wandering—wandering is a typical behaviour for an Alzheimer's patient or someone who is suffering from a form of dementia. They will wander. Statistics show that 60% of all Alzheimer's patients will wander at one time or another during this disease.

The story that I'd like to share is about my grandmother Sophia. My grandmother Sophia and my grandfather Lemberis lived in a small village in Greece. They were farmers. They lived off the land; they had olive trees, fruits and vegetables. When my grandfather

passed away, my grandmother moved to Canada to be with her two daughters and her three grandchildren. I was very lucky to spend a lot of time with my grandmother, and those are days that I will never forget. On one occasion, it was late evening after a late supper, my grandmother, who had Alzheimer's, wandered. She left the house, and we panicked. Everyone panicked. We called the police; we called all our friends. We were really lucky to find her, many hours later, in a wooded area behind a school blocks away. I remember talking to my grandmother after the fact. I said, "Grandma, where were you going?" She said, "I just wanted to check up on those olive trees." She just wandered away.

Another story is from just a few weeks ago in Hamilton. An 86-year-old man who suffers from dementia went for a walk. He was found 24 hours later. The police said, "He ended up on the other side of the city." They said that the temperature that night dropped below freezing and he was not dressed for the weather. Thank goodness they did find him.

1430

These are just two good stories, but they don't always turn out that way. I believe that we must have the foresight to address these issues that put our Alzheimer's sufferers at risk. This means taking action and implementing effective policies that will safeguard the lives of people with Alzheimer's or dementia.

I did mention wandering. Wandering is one of the symptoms of Alzheimer's that can be fatal. Wandering isn't necessarily dangerous, but when you combine it with short-term memory loss and the inability to make rational judgments, that's when it could be fatal.

If they are not found within 24 hours, nearly 50% risk serious injury or death. This can occur because of extended exposure to the elements or because of the lack of food or hydration.

Currently there are some very good notification systems in our province. There is a system from the Alzheimer Society of Canada, a system that was developed for a nationwide program which is called the Safely Home registry, which provides identification cards and bracelets. There are also locating devices. I know that McMaster University is also working on this.

The good news here is that the Silver Alert program that I'm suggesting would be a very good example that could be partnered with already existing programs, much like they've done in the United States, with some very successful results. The Silver Alert program in the US: Right now there are 32 jurisdictions that either have a program operating or the program is pending before legislation.

This resolution is about creating a notification system, the Silver Alert. This program is modelled after the Amber Alert. By using similar infrastructure, it has the capacity to find our missing Alzheimer's patients.

Like Amber Alert, Silver Alert will contact media outlets and may activate an emergency alert system when an adult is reported missing. In doing so, it will alert not only the law enforcement agencies but the public as well,

who will be encouraged to aid in the recovery of the missing person.

However, it is very important to note that this should not be mistaken for weakening the Amber Alert or desensitizing the public. While this was a primary concern in several jurisdictions in the US, it has since been reported that the concern did not translate into reality.

Various strategies have been undertaken to prevent public desensitization and the weakening of the Amber Alert, such as activating the alerts regionally and outlining specific criteria to be met before issuing an alert. In any case, this resolution has been generally defined for the purpose of allowing discussion pertaining to the specific guidelines of the Silver Alert.

US jurisdictions vary widely on several matters, such as the target population and the criteria for issuing an alert as well as its method of dissemination. This means there is plenty of flexibility in regard to system parameters. Nevertheless, the reported range of missing cases emphasizes the requirement for a Silver Alert in our province.

For instance, in North Carolina, there were 82 alerts activated between December 2007 and October 2008. Forty-three of those were on behalf of individuals who went driving and 39 who went wandering. Of the 39, three had taken a plane to another state, two were last seen on a bike, one took a bus to another state and one took a taxi. These incidents show how difficult it could be to locate missing adults without the coordinated effort of a Silver Alert.

Another example in Georgia: Between July 2006 and January 2009, the alert contributed to the recovery of 79 individuals, and 78 were found alive.

In Texas, 77 alerts were activated; 21 contributed to the recovery of wandering patients.

Although the outcomes vary, these numbers show promising signs of Silver Alert's achievement. This is a notification system that has not only proven successful in locating missing persons, but it also functions as a supportive structure that caregivers can count on.

The existence of a Silver Alert program reassures caregivers that although there is no promise or guarantee, the dissemination of alerts to the general public will certainly spread awareness about the missing person. This value is something that should not be underestimated.

The concern regarding system costs also should not diminish this value. In fact, we found that states like Rhode Island, Ohio and Oklahoma have reported little or no additional costs. They found that the implementation costs of a Silver Alert are frequently absorbed by the Amber Alert budget because the infrastructure already exists.

Overall, these reports indicate that fairly little harm would arise from allowing Silver Alert to take shape in our province. The formation of the Silver Alert here would allow for greater swiftness in locating missing adults and would decrease the chances of serious injury, illness or death. It would also function as a system for caregivers who fear for the safety of their loved ones.

For these reasons and for many more, it is truly necessary that we take this step on behalf of all Alzheimer's sufferers throughout this province. Again, I ask the question: Who hasn't been touched by Alzheimer's?

I would like to end with a thank you to the people who have helped me get this resolution prepared. Some of those people are here with us today: Donna Cripps from St. Peter's Hospital in Hamilton; Mary Burnett, the CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Hamilton; David Harvey, the interim CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario; Kathy Dewling, the president of the board of directors of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario; Mary Schulz from the Alzheimer Society of Canada; Brian Mullan, the chief of police of Hamilton; and as well, people in my office, Fil D'Amico, Michael Coe and Sylvia Guirguis.

I hope I can count on the support of my colleagues.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to rise this afternoon to make a few comments with respect to this private member's resolution. I won't be using the entire time; my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora also wishes to speak to this. But I would like to say at the outset that I do intend to support the member's resolution, and also to commend the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing this very important matter to the Legislature. It certainly is worthy of consideration. It is an important concern to many individuals and families. Thank you also for sharing your personal story with us.

This is a system that has already been incorporated in some measure, as the member indicated, in other jurisdictions in the United States. It certainly is something that we should be considering, especially since we have the infrastructure here with the Amber Alert. We can use that platform to build a similar system here in Ontario.

I do thank, as well, the members from the Alzheimer Society who are here, and from any other organizations that are here that contributed to this work, which can be done, I would think, quite cost-effectively and easily, given the existing infrastructure.

The facts and figures relating to Alzheimer's in Ontario are actually pretty startling. Right now, today, there are half a million people in Ontario who are living with Alzheimer's; 25 years from now, it's expected that this number is going to balloon to 1.3 million. So this is a matter of significant concern.

Alzheimer's, as we know, is a disease of the brain. It affects memory and the ability to think clearly and results in people being unable to perform tasks of daily living that they have performed for most of their lives and that have been almost automatic for many years. It also means that often people can become disoriented in terms of time and place, and results in changes in behaviour. This could lead people to leaving home, becoming confused, getting lost and wandering away, as the member mentioned. So there's no question that we do have a significant need for some kind of an alert system to be able to bring people safely home.

I do have an example myself, actually, that I can share that I myself witnessed a number of years ago when I

was waiting in a car in a hospital parking lot—it was the Toronto Hospital, actually—for a friend to come out. I noticed, as I was sitting there, an elderly lady come out of the hospital in just pyjamas and slippers. It was quite cool out. She walked across the parking lot and walked off the hospital property, went to the first set of crossing lights and just walked off into a nearby subdivision. Although this probably wasn't the best response for me to have taken, but because I was afraid that I would lose her, I followed her in my car. I thought, I'll just leave her to see if she knows where she's going. Quite clearly, she didn't, and I found her several blocks away standing in the middle of the street. She was quite upset; she was actually crying. I was able to persuade her to get into the car with me, and I took her back to the hospital. They were certainly quite relieved to have her back. Though it ended well, it could have ended quite differently. So I am firmly convinced of the need for a registry of this nature and I would strongly support it.

1440

I have had a chance to take a look at the program called Safely Home that has been developed by the Alzheimer Society in conjunction with the RCMP, and it looks like a wonderful registry that stores vital information safely in a confidential database, so that if somebody does get lost, they will have the information on a bracelet that can be tracked into the database and the person can be located fairly quickly. I'm not sure if that's exactly what's going to be used in this situation, should this resolution pass, as I certainly hope it will, but I think that is something that certainly could be used to build upon.

The only thing I would say—and this is certainly by no means a criticism; it's just a wish that we had been able to include other people with a cognitive impairment in this organization. There are many people, those people living with an intellectual disability who are also similarly vulnerable, who may have been included in this. I think perhaps that's something that, as the system gets under way, people may want to consider adding. Or maybe it'll even be the subject of another private member's resolution.

Having said that, I think it's a wonderful idea. It should be extended to all vulnerable people, as I hope it will be in the future. So I'm most pleased to support the member's resolution today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to say that I will be supporting this motion. I also want to say that the member from Whitby–Oshawa raises good questions about what else could be attached to this kind of system, rather than having a different system attached to a different problem. I think we need to think more carefully about how we do that, because often we get these private members' bills and they deal with one specific issue, and we know there are so many. Those questions are useful and obviously can't be dealt with today, but it would be nice to have a better-coordinated system.

I'm speaking in support of this motion mostly because of the experience I had with Alzheimer's. In 1990, my father died of Alzheimer's disease. That was the year I got elected. He had Alzheimer's disease for about seven years. I have to admit, our family didn't know anything about Alzheimer's until my father experienced Alzheimer's disease. We knew initially that he had some memory lapses, and we didn't quite understand. We thought they were stress-related. He was very worried about money problems in the very beginning, and we thought, why is he so worried about this? I thought it was connected to some issue with some property we had in Italy, and I thought, if that's the case, we'd say, "Father, just forget about it. We don't need to worry about that." Little did I know it was dementia.

When we went to a good friend of mine whose name is Dr. Fornazzari, he diagnosed, close to the two-year range, the problem as dementia, which was of course Alzheimer's. But even until then, we knew nothing about the effects of Alzheimer's on the individual and the consequent effects on the family. Up until the two years there was some cognitive knowledge, but after the two years it was just over. He was alive but not with us for the remaining five years. It's a tribute to what families can do on their own.

I just wanted to praise my mother for the work that she did, because she took care of him for seven years. She was four foot 10; my father was a bit taller. She didn't want him in an institution, she didn't want him in long-term care; she wanted to take care of him. She wanted him at home.

We tried to get some respite care at Christie and Dupont. I was a school trustee at the time. I had a difficult time trying to persuade the institution that what my mother wanted was respite care so that she had a break. We did that, I think, for a year or so, but there was pressure from the institution to institutionalize him, and my mother didn't want him in the home. There was no respite care for individuals who, on their own, are taking care of family members without any societal support from the government or anywhere else, and the supports were not there.

We all took turns in the family, of course, to help my mother to get him out of bed, to clean him, but my mother did the mountain of work with respect to the care. She fed him regularly.

I have to tell you, if my mother didn't take care of my father, I don't think he would have survived long. People with Alzheimer's in institutions do not survive long simply because the care isn't there. And the care isn't there because the people who work in the system are overworked and terribly underpaid. There aren't enough of them to be able to worry about a human being who doesn't see them, cannot respond to them, cannot feel any pain—at least as far as we know. We didn't know whether he felt pain or not, but we knew, over the course of this disease, that he must have been suffering. But they can't communicate it to you. Yes he, like most others, wandered and had violent episodes where many of us had to control his violent episodes, but he wandered.

The reason why we never had a problem is because there was always somebody there. But that's not true in all cases. Not every family has the power, the strength, the resources to be able to deal with a family member who has got that disease. My mother was just different and special. I wish I had her strength, but we don't all have that kind of strength.

So where they do offer their supports, like the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and others—God bless them, because we need them. If they didn't exist, all of our families would, indeed, be on their own. I support the Alzheimer Society of Canada in terms of the program they developed, the Safely Home Registry, which the member from Whitby–Oshawa mentioned and Sophia mentioned.

It's a good idea, except that only 17,000 or so—16,000, close to 17,000—are registered. Sophia mentions there are half a million people with Alzheimer's disease, so what that means is that we have close to half a million not registered. And what it means, for those who are not in institutions but at home, is that they will wander. They will, inevitably they do. Most of the time there is some family member who can take care of it, and sometimes they don't. They do wander, and they are in danger. We know that.

To the extent that this province-wide notification program is helpful and it complements, it's a good idea. How it complements, based on the questions the member from Whitby–Oshawa asked, is the question. I don't know whether we've worked that out, whether you've thought about it or whether it's going to be worked out once we agree, pass it and, hopefully, institutionalize it. But it does raise questions.

Up until this point, what we are doing as a society, as governments and NGOs—nongovernmental agencies, non-profit agencies that do their best with their volunteer time donating thousands of hours, saving government so much money, we bless them for the work they do and for helping to manage the problem. But that's all we're doing: We're managing the problem. What we're not doing is focusing on what we can do to prevent it. In fairness, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario talks about prevention as a key element of the work that needs to be done, but we spend so little time and energy in that regard.

We know that there are risk factors attached to this disease as, indeed, there are risk factors connected to most of the chronic diseases. Some of them are high cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes—adult diabetes—strokes, depression, stress, lack of physical exercise, unhealthy eating habits, obesity, low levels of formal education and low socio-economic status.

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Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Unilingualism.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Are you speaking, Doctor? Are you going to be speaking? No, no, I'm just saying—I didn't mean to say that as if somehow it was a criticism. Don't get me wrong. I hope you do speak.

So these are some of the risk factors that we are aware of and they are intertwined with a number of chronic

diseases, and it is related to people's socio-economic environment; I agree. The good doctor talks about unilingualism as a problem, because if you don't speak another language or if you just speak one language and you're a senior citizen, it complicates it even more; I agree.

But we have to talk about the socio-economic factors because there are many people in society who face incredible stress levels. That is hurtful to the mind and to the body sociologically, psychologically and physiologically. Their level of income hurts if it's low. If you're low income, it's going to hurt you physiologically, physically, psychologically. The access to social supports or recreational opportunities—if they're lacking in those opportunities, it's going to put a lot of stress on those individuals.

We know this government is spending billions of dollars—\$42 billion, \$43 billion—on our health care system, but the chronic diseases are not going away. In fact, they're becoming more widespread and part of the reason is—at least this government, and in the past, I have to admit—we're treating and managing the disease rather than preventing it, or talking about how we prevent it. Liberals spend 1% of their budgets in trying to contain and manage rather than dealing with prevention. So we have to talk about that.

I've got to tell you that a lot of middle-class parents, who understand intellectually some of these areas and how we can prevent it, are actually working on it. But there is an intellectual ability to deal with it and there are economic resources that permit them to deal with it. Poor people don't have that luxury. Poor people only have the luxury of trying to survive. They don't have the luxury to try to prevent some of the problems they face, some of the problems of unemployment, some of the problems of economic insecurity, some of the problems of unhealthy environments. Unless you deal with that, this problem is not going to go away.

The only thing I can say to the member from Hamilton Mountain is, this is an easy step, or at least much easier, but unless we dedicate more time to prevent the problem, which is what we talk about here as New Democrats on a regular basis—we have to spend more time and attention on how we prevent rather than spending billions of dollars on treating and managing a chronic illness. Until we do that, we're going to be spending billions of dollars that we do not have rather than learning how to prevent, and we can prevent it and we should devote ourselves to that.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing such an important issue to debate in this House concerning mental health issues faced by almost 180,000 Ontarians. I appreciate her personal story and how she shared it with all of us in this place and also probably many Ontarians who are listening to us today.

It's such an important issue. I was talking to my friend, the doctor on my left side here, and he was telling

me very important things about this disease. When you have many different languages, it will help delay that disease from attacking the person. But the funny part is, when the disease controls you, you lose all the languages you learn and you go back to your native tongue, which I think sometimes makes it difficult for many people who come from different nations to express their feelings and their needs. They go to institutions and not many people are able to understand them or what they want.

That's why I think it's important to talk about this issue and deal with it. I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for proposing a solution, a Silver Alert added to the Amber Alert, to help deal with this issue.

One of the symptoms of this disease is that people wander around and go everywhere, especially in the wintertime. They might get caught in the ditches or somewhere, they get cold, and they die. I think it is our responsibility as citizens to look after those people who are considered vulnerable and our responsibility to care for them and give them the chance to live with respect and dignity and provide them the service they need and they deserve.

I believe every one of us in this place, every one of us in the whole nation, is touched by or has someone who has faced those diseases and suffered from them many different times for many years, and they don't find a solution. I listened to the member from Trinity–Spadina talk about his father and how much it caused him confusion because they couldn't find a service which alleviates some of the work for his mother and his family. Probably his father was privileged and blessed to have a family care for him. There are many others who don't have that extended family, who don't understand the connection to family and responsibility, so they let them go live on their own, and they suffer for many years without any attention, without any service, without any care.

I think if we have a provincial strategy, it would be important for all of us in the province of Ontario to make sure the vulnerable people who live among us get the support they need and the help they need.

I listened to the member from Whitby–Oshawa talking about many different suggestions. I think it is important. That is why we have a private member's bill and debate it in this place. Everyone brings an idea and other people are critical of the idea or respond or suggest more ideas. This enhances our ability to find a solution.

Before I finish, because many of my friends want to speak on this issue, I want to thank the member again for bringing to this House such an important issue to be debated. I wish you all the luck and success.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: First of all, I want to thank my colleague the member from Whitby–Oshawa for allowing me some time as well. I want to speak in very strong support for this resolution brought forward by the member from Hamilton Mountain. There are occasions in

this place when a member brings forward a resolution that certainly transcends any partisan issue and allows us to come together as members of this Legislature to deal with the issues that really matter in people's lives.

Again, I support this. The member from Hamilton Mountain rhetorically asked the question, "Who has not been touched by this?" As was the member from Trinity–Spadina's, my connection was a very personal one. In my case it was my mother, who up until my father passed on was a very strong and very healthy woman. But it wasn't long after my father passed on that we started to see the signs of dementia.

It didn't really hit me until an afternoon I will never forget. We had invited my mother to live with us while my sister was on a trip, and so she was spending four weeks with us. We saw various signs from time to time that something was not quite right. I'll never forget: I had just finished spending about an hour in discussion with my mother. My wife, Jaine, was there. Then I had to leave, and when I came back that evening, my wife said to me, "I have to tell you what your mother said when you left." I said, "What is that?" And she said, "Who was that man who we just had that conversation with?" That was a sense of reality for me that we were losing a certain part of my mother.

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I think what is so challenging about Alzheimer's is that on the surface people look very, very normal. What we don't know is what is really going on in their minds. So this initiative on the part of the member from Hamilton Mountain is just the civil thing to do. It's the right thing to do.

We have, as the member from Whitby–Oshawa indicated, the platform through the Amber Alert system in this province. Whatever the funding may be that's required to extend that to ensure that our vulnerable loved ones in this province have at least the basic protection of an alert to bring them back into a safe environment, it's our responsibility to do.

Every morning, I get a little memo from a dear friend who has made a habit of sending me an e-mail to my BlackBerry with a little saying. It was interesting this morning. Shirley Bray sent me this message, and it was the story of a man who met with his wife for breakfast every morning before he went off to work. This happened to be in a long-term-care home. Someone asked him, one day as he was leaving, "Would your wife be upset if you didn't come?" He responded by saying, "Actually, she hasn't recognized me in five years. She doesn't know who I am, but I know who she is."

I think it's because we know who they are that we have a responsibility to do what the member from Hamilton Mountain is asking us to do, and that's why we should all support this and, as the member from Trinity–Spadina said, not just support the resolution, but the government needs to put behind this resolution the resources for implementation. If that happens, we can say that this has been a good day in the Legislature of Ontario.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With your indulgence, I just have the Ravindran family visiting from my riding: Shaki Ravindran, the mom; Anju Ravindran, who's 15 years of age today—it's her birthday; Taran Ravindran, who's at Crescent School; Evan Ravindran, who's at Allenby school; and Jena Ravindran, who's at Allenby school. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. It's not a point of order, but welcome to Queen's Park.

Further debate?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I wish to speak in support of the resolution from the member from Hamilton Mountain that she's putting forward today.

Alzheimer's and related dementias are diseases of the brain. They erase our memories. They steal the ability to think and they make simple daily tasks, such as eating or getting dressed, impossible. They rob independence and eventually take lives.

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias affect men and women of all races, religions and socioeconomic backgrounds. It's not a normal part of aging, and no one is immune.

With the elderly making up the fastest-growing segment of the population, it's clear that more caregivers and more families will have to spend ever-increasing time and money in the coming years to keep tabs on older citizens with dementia.

Caregiving is a critical issue for people living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia and for Canadians as a whole. According to the Canadian Caregiver Coalition, one in five Canadians 45 years and older provide some form of care to seniors who have long-term health care problems. Almost half of the caregivers in Canada are between 45 and 54, balancing this role with job and family responsibilities. A quarter of all informal caregivers are seniors themselves. Family caregivers are the invisible and hidden backbone of the health and long-term-care system.

Dementia results in more years lived with a disability than stroke, heart disease and all forms of cancer. Over 70% of those living in Ontario's long-term-care homes have Alzheimer's disease or related dementia.

One of the most troubling issues with the disease is the desire to exit-see, and the burden of caring for individuals is made even more complex with the need to constantly guard against the potential escape of the afflicted individual.

When I became aware of this private member's bill, I asked the police chief from my municipality of Brampton if the Silver Alert was an issue that affected my community. I've been advised that in Brampton we use a program similar to Silver Alert to provide vital information to authorities to assist in the search and safe return of wandering individuals suffering from some form of dementia.

I support the initiative before us today. I feel that having a program to provide for the safe return of

vulnerable individuals is a valuable tool for every community.

The Peel Regional Police have advised me that they are supportive of any program that provides assistance in the search and safe recovery of those individuals suffering from some form of dementia.

I've come to understand that each community has its own unique way of handling the issue of missing adults. I can only think that if there were one such system that became the norm, much like the Amber Alert for children, the loss of an adult, a loved one who has wandered off, would be much better handled.

This resolution is a great first step, and I'm happy to support the member from Hamilton Mountain in her efforts to establish a province-wide notification system.

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to support the resolution put forward by my colleague from the riding of Hamilton Mountain.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia in Canada, and it accounts for about 64% of all dementias in this country. It erases memory, steals the ability to think, and makes simple daily tasks, such as eating and getting dressed, almost impossible. It takes away a person's ability to be independent. Sadly, it eventually takes one's life. In Ontario, more than 180,000 people are living with the disease.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common dementia affecting elderly people. The Ontario government has made a significant investment in Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. This is the first comprehensive, multi-faceted strategy on Alzheimer's disease to be introduced in Canada.

With all that we are doing, can we do more? Yes, we can always do more, and that is why I support this resolution. The resolution asks the government of Ontario to establish a province-wide notification system, known as the Silver Alert, to alert the public of a missing person who suffers from Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia.

One of the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias is the tendency to wander. Wandering is not a dangerous activity in itself, but short-term memory loss and impaired ability to reason or to make some judgments can contribute to unsafe wandering behaviour.

Sadly, though, when a loved one wanders, they can get lost and are unable to find their way back. This morning, the Mississauga News reported that Gur Dev Kaur Aujla, who has Alzheimer's disease, went missing for over eight hours. With the help of the police, she was found and returned to her family. If we had the Silver Alert system in place, perhaps the time it took to find her would have been much less. Thankfully, she was okay. That is why it is important for us to have a system to help find our loved ones sooner and before any harm can come to them.

The Silver Alert system is much like the Amber Alert system, which lets the public know a child is missing. A Silver Alert system would allow the public to know that a person is missing and they suffer from dementia and they need help to be brought back home. With the public alerted, loved ones such as Gur Dev Kaur Aujla can be found faster and reunited with their families faster.

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I want to commend my colleague for bringing this resolution to the House. Although the members from Whitby–Oshawa, Newmarket–Aurora, Trinity–Spadina, Brampton–Springdale and London–Fanshawe have supported it, I encourage all members of this House to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, the honourable member for Hamilton Mountain, Ms. Aggelonitis, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I would like to thank the member from Oshawa–Whitby, who shared her story with us. Thank you so much. I also want to thank the member from Trinity–Spadina, who shared his story about his dad. I'm very sorry about the passing of his dad. To the speakers from Brampton–Springdale, Mississauga–Brampton South and London–Fanshawe, thank you very much. Lastly, I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for sharing your story, of course, but especially the last part, when you said that if this program was implemented it would be a good day in this House.

Today, all of my colleagues who spoke showed me why I wanted to come to this House. It's about working together and about bringing resolutions like this to the House so that it can be a good day in this House and make a difference.

Lastly, I just want to say that the member spoke just yesterday about someone going missing, and thank goodness we found her only eight hours later. The time for this program is now. The time for our government to work on implementing a strategy is now. I will be working on this continuously for as long as I'm here, to make sure we do implement a program like Silver Alert, because our Alzheimer's family members deserve nothing less. Thank you very much, everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): For the people watching in the gallery and those watching at home, we will vote on this ballot item in about 50 minutes.

The member for Ajax–Pickering on a point of order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: With your permission and the permission of the next speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish someone a very special day today. My former seat mate, Dr. Helena Jaczek, the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, is celebrating a very, very special birthday. She is so young looking that I'm not sure if it's her 39th birthday or not, but we all wish her well today from everyone here in the caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It's not a point of order, but happy birthday, Doctor.

Orders of the day.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Howard Hampton: I move that, in the opinion of this House, children's aid societies in the province of Ontario, including the children's aid society for the district of Rainy River, must be provided with sufficient annual funding to allow them to provide the services necessary for the children and families they are required by law to serve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hampton moves private members' notice of motion number 118. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member, Mr. Hampton, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Howard Hampton: There has been a fair bit of commotion over the last couple of months about the funding of children's aid societies. I myself have asked a number of questions on the issue. I have received some answers from the minister, and the answers tend to be along this line: The minister believes that children's aid societies are squandering the public's money, and that children's aid societies in the province of Ontario are not financially responsible.

I have listened to those responses, and then I've done some research. It's interesting, if you look at the economic statement that was tabled by the government just a couple of weeks ago, because what the economic statement shows is that the cost of children's aid societies across Ontario since 2003 has increased only at the same rate that the provincial government's revenue has increased. This government has increased its revenue by 32% since 2003, and the costs incurred by children's aid societies have increased by 32%—in other words, a steady state.

Overall, this government's expenditures have increased by 54%. But what that tells you is, if the government is looking for a bad guy, somebody who has driven up government expenditures by 54%, it is not children's aid societies. Their expenditures are actually much less than that. Yes, the cost of children's aid societies has increased, but the cost increases come as a result not of things that the children's aid societies have done but as a result of two initiatives by the provincial government.

One of those initiatives was put in place by the former Conservative government in 1997 to 2000. It was called the Child Welfare Reform. Everyone understood, when that reform was put in place, that it was going to cost resources because under the legislation, that was new then, more children were going to come into protection. So, for example, the legislation was changed to include that chronic neglect of a child would be added to the definition of a child in need of protection; emotional abuse would be considered in terms of a child in need of protection. Children at risk of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect; increased requirements for public and professional reporting of child abuse and neglect and sanctions for not reporting; introduction of standardized eligibility and risk assessment tools for all CASs: This was all mandatory. It was laid on by the

government, and everyone understood that that was going to increase costs for CASs.

The second initiative was an initiative of the McGuinty government itself, called the child welfare transformation, which began in 2006. This put a number of other requirements on CASs. There was a shift from intrusive investigative approaches to balancing risk with supporting families. Supporting families is a much more labour-intensive activity, with much more time spent searching for kin who may be interested in helping to care for a child—but that's a labour-intensive activity. Mandatory use of alternate dispute resolution prior to using court processes—but that is a labour-intensive activity. A need for a higher number of qualified and skilled staff who can work with complex families—again, an added cost. And there was a large increase in mandatory service and administrative requirements, policies, directives, regulations and standards related to services, including over 200 reporting requirements involving more casework and paperwork. Everyone understood that this initiative was going to add to the cost of children's aid societies too. But it's important to remember: These were initiatives of the provincial government, not of the CASs.

So the natural thing happened: Workloads went up, more and more complicated factors, more children coming into care—costs went up. But costs went up no more than the province's revenues, and certainly less than this government's overall expenditures.

Now the government says, mid-year, it's going to cut CAS budgets by \$23 million. This has placed a number of CASs across the province in crisis, because CASs have no choice. CASs cannot say, "We're going to turn this child away." CASs cannot say that a child in need of protection will simply be ignored. Children's aid societies are statutorily required to provide protection and child welfare services to children. In effect, this means they have no control over their own caseload.

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So let me use the children's aid society I'm most acquainted with, because I used to do legal work for them, and the predicament they've been put in. This is the children's aid society for the district of Rainy River. It's a small children's aid society. It's very close to the communities it serves. For the last three years, it has had a balanced budget. Its funding formula is one of the lowest in the province, and that's because it usually doesn't take a lot of children into care. It spends most of its time working with families, helping families so that children don't have to come into care. But their budget, a \$3-million budget, has been cut by over \$400,000 mid-year, and they've had three very unique children come to them.

One child was the subject of a court order. The child was taken before the court under the Youth Justice Act. The judge who heard the case has ordered this child into a specialized treatment home. Why? Because it was found as a fact in the court that this child has sexually molested a number of other young children. This child is

a risk to all children they come into contact with, so this child has been placed in a specialized residential treatment home. The cost is \$450 a day.

What is the CAS to do? Turn this child away, send this child back out into the community where more children, other children, can be sexually molested? Of course not. So they've done what the court has ordered them to do.

Another child, found by a battery of experts to be a child who is a danger to themselves—a child who pulls out their own hair, who has attempted on some occasions to puncture their own eye, has attempted on other occasions to puncture their own eardrum, a child who is a danger to themselves and has been found to be so by a battery of experts—again has been placed in a specialized treatment home. The cost: \$350 a day.

What is the CAS to do? Turn this child away and say, "You don't matter. You don't count"? Of course not. They don't do that.

Another child is very developmentally delayed with a series of very serious behavioural problems, and happens to come from a poor family. The family does not have a lot of resources. So the family cannot look after this child, cannot look after it because they do not have the financial wherewithal and simply because the mother cannot handle the day-to-day stress of trying to deal with a child who has so many developmental and behavioural needs. This child is placed in the protection of the children's aid society. Again, the cost of caring for this child is about \$350 a day.

What is the CAS to do? Turn this child away and say, "You don't matter. You don't count"?

This is the position that children's aid societies have been placed in. CASs have no control over how many children in need of protection, how many children in need of child welfare, how many of these children come through their doors. That is why not only must their budgets be maintained, but this government must agree that, at the end of the year, it will cover the costs of these children.

Again, this is not a children's aid society that's asked for an increase in budget over the years. It's a children's aid society that has managed within its budget and has provided good service. It is probably one of the most efficient, in terms of the optimum use of its funding, CASs in the province. But their budget has now been cut just as a number of children with very special needs, who are in need of child protection, come through the door.

What is to happen? I would argue this children's aid society and all children's aid societies in the province of Ontario must be provided with the money so that they can do the job that the law requires them to do.

Let me give you another example. This is another CAS that I'm acquainted with. It is Tikinagan Child and Family Services, which services the First Nation communities in the far north of Ontario, some of the most impoverished and challenged communities in this province. Tikinagan has had over a \$2-million budget cut. This is what they must deal with. In one community alone, over 40 children have been taken into care over the last month. The Tikinagan CAS cannot keep up with

their death reports to the ministry because of the high rate of suicide they're currently dealing with amongst children. In one community that has 800 children, over 400 children are not going to school. Children as young as six and seven are sniffing gasoline, diesel fuel and solvents. This is the challenge they're faced with. And what was the response of the government? To cut their budget by \$2 million. What is this agency to do? Ignore these six- and seven-year-old children who are sniffing gasoline and solvents? Ignore these other children who are committing suicide?

There must be a recognition in this House that children's aid societies must be provided with a budget which allows them to do the job they're legally mandated to do. That must be recognized here today, and any sort of budget cut that we've seen in here simply can't be allowed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I listened carefully to the comments made by the previous member. I've looked very carefully at the resolution that he's put forward to this Legislature, and frankly, I'm pleased to support it.

It reads: "That, in the opinion of this House, children's aid societies in the province of Ontario ... must be provided with sufficient annual funding to allow them to provide the services necessary for the children and families they are required by law to serve." I'm happy to support that. I don't know if all members will. This is private members' hour, and members are free to vote as they will. I'd be surprised if any do not support this.

I think this is something, certainly, that we support not only in principle, but our government and our Minister of Children and Youth Services are supporting it in practice, and have indicated as well that, indeed, while there are challenges in ensuring the sustainability of children's aid society services across this province—I think all members are aware of some of the challenges that have occurred in the past. There have been issues in the past that have arisen to suggest there's a need to ensure that, as much as possible, the resources that are available are going to the most important factor in what we're talking about today. And what's that? That's the kids; that's the children. That's the most important thing that I think all of our minds have to be on as we go through these challenging times.

The fact of the matter is, and the minister has made it clear, as we go through this challenging time, as year-end dollars will not be available as they have been in the past—we are going through a global economic crisis. We all know that. It's affecting all governments around the world. Very few, if any, governments right now are going to find themselves in a surplus position, where they'll be able at the end of the year to come forward with surplus dollars to help out in areas where there may be requests. That's the world we live in right now, and we have to make sure that the agencies—not only children's aid societies; all agencies that are doing business with government need to know that those dollars just are not going to be as available as they were in the past.

That being said, though, let's be clear: This government is not going to let young children slide through the cracks. This government is not going to let young children who are at risk be at greater risk. They are not at greater risk today than they were before. There is more we need to do; I don't disagree with that. There's more we need to do for these young children at risk.

I've been in some of the communities that the member has talked about. I've spent the last year in this new portfolio, in fact, travelling some of those communities. The member lives in a riding where there are 51 First Nations communities, most of them far north communities that are experiencing challenges and whose children are experiencing severe challenges. He shared some of those stark realities with us. We, together, have to work to ensure that those young children are getting the services they need, are getting access to the hope that all other Ontario children have, are getting access to economic development opportunities and education and services when they are at risk such as children's aid societies provide.

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There is no argument with that whatsoever, and there's more work we all have to do. This government, though, is committed to doing that. That's why we've tripled funding. Over the last 10 years, this province has tripled funding when it comes to children's aid societies. It has doubled funding over the last six years, and the same is true of the aboriginal groups.

Does that mean that all of the challenges are gone because we've done that? No. I think you're quite right to raise the fact that there are challenges, and we have to be cognizant of that. But the Minister of Children and Youth Services has said that as we go through these difficult times and as we look to these agencies to do all they can to reduce administration costs, to ensure that all of the dollars that each and every one of us is providing to these very important agencies are going to the children—as we're going through that exercise, it's very important that we continue, and the children and youth services ministry will continue, to work with each and every one of those agencies to ensure, indeed, that this is being done in a proper and appropriate way. The minister has committed to that in this House. She has committed to that outside of this House.

I've had the opportunity to work with her on the aboriginal side. I've been meeting with aboriginal leaders, and there are issues being raised in the aboriginal communities about this issue. We'll continue to work with aboriginal leaders across this province to ensure that this is done in the right way.

I'm just going to speak very briefly in the minute or so I have left to say this as well. I think it's important to note—and the member from Kenora–Rainy River would probably agree with this, because his community has probably had these experiences—that the six aboriginal children's aid societies are different. I think it is something we need to note and, as a government, take note of. They are different. They do have a variety of different challenges, whether it be the element of risk involved in

some of the young people they need to deal with or whether it be the challenge of distances that they have to travel, which increases, obviously, administration costs. So certainly in my capacity as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and as a member here in this Legislature, I'll continue to work with the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and I thank her for the dedication she's engaging in this issue and for the fact that she is continuing to work with those children's aid societies to ensure this is done in the right way.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I, without question, of course, will be supporting this resolution brought forward by the member from Kenora–Rainy River.

Speaker, you know that I have raised the issue of funding for children's aid societies on a number of occasions during question period and members' statements over the last number of weeks, and it comes from my concern that the York Region Children's Aid Society is being grossly underfunded.

I'm disheartened by the statement made by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I hear what he is saying in words, but what I don't understand is how he, as a cabinet minister, can say, as he did just now, that the Minister of Children and Youth Services is supporting in practice what the member from Kenora–Rainy River is asking us to do, and that's why he can support this resolution.

Speaker, that is not happening. If that was happening, there would be no need for this resolution. If that was happening, there would be no need for me repeatedly to stand in this place and say to the minister, "Please look at the reality of what is happening in York region." The budget has been cut by \$5.5 million. It's one of the fastest-growing regions in this country. There are more and more demands on that children's aid society to meet the needs legislated by this Legislature, prescribed by the government. The York Region Children's Aid Society doesn't go around saying, "How can we create more work for ourselves?" They are simply responding to what the government of the day has told them they must do. What is happening is that the board of directors of the York Region Children's Aid Society is saying to me, "We feel obligated to deliver the service, but we also feel a liability as a board because we have a prescribed definition of services and we're going to be incapable of delivering those services." It comes to the point where I asked the minister here, on a number of occasions, if she will look at the York Region Children's Aid Society, at the challenges that they're facing. And what is the response that I get? As recently as this morning's question period, the minister responsible for children stands in her place and tells me that since 2003, there has been this much additional funding. That "over the last decade," to quote her, there has been an increase in funding for York, and that is supposed to be the answer.

As I pointed out to the minister, what happened a decade ago or what happened in 2003, regardless of what the increase in funding over that time may have been—it

may make for a good prescribed answer. It may sound good as a sound bite, but it does nothing to address the reality on the ground of children at risk in need. It has nothing to do and in no way addresses, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs says, that the minister is supporting in practice what the intent of this resolution says. I say to you that is not what is going on, and we're appealing to this government to prioritize spending.

Look, the argument is made again by the minister responsible for children, "It's tough economic times. There's only so much money to go around." Well, this is precisely where government and cabinets are called on to make decisions that prioritize the importance of vulnerable people in this province. This is exactly the time when governments are called on to say, "We have limited resources, and yes, there have to be reductions in expenditures"—but we don't do it on the backs of the most vulnerable in our society. We don't do it on the backs of children who are at risk and we don't do it by saying to an agency that's desperate to meet the requirements and the mandate of this government, to meet the needs of those at-risk children—we don't go to those agencies saying, "Well, you know what? You're on your own." They shouldn't be on their own. They are performing the duties and responsibilities that they're called on to do.

I want to point out once again to the minister responsible for children, specifically with regard to York region—this is in a letter that was sent to the previous minister in which the York Region Children's Aid Society points out something very important. I want to read this into the record and I hope that the minister is listening. I quote from this letter: "Were York Region Children's Aid Society funded equitably on a child per capita basis, equivalent with the average of other Ontario CAS agencies, our funding would be approximately \$113 million versus the allocated \$38.1 million, an amount that is less than the agency received in 2007-08. York region residents are being unfairly disadvantaged."

The expectation that I had when the new minister was appointed is that she would set the reset button and say, "Wait a minute now. As a new minister, I want to take seriously my obligations." As she responded to me during one of my questions, here's what the minister said to me: She wants to work with the York CAS "to ensure that children are put first and that their outcomes are a priority." I would have thought that if that was what the minister really wanted to do, she would sit down and look at these numbers and realize that the York Region CAS is grossly underfunded compared to the average of all other CAS units across the province.

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I want to read again from this letter, and I hope the minister is listening: "York CAS receives the lowest funding per unit of service of any CAS in the GTA, on a funding-per-case basis. In fact, York CAS is being directed to make cuts that represent 25% of the funding reductions for the entire child welfare system in Ontario. Were we to be funded at the same level per case as Peel CAS, our budget would be balanced."

Here's what is so puzzling for me. We stand alone, myself and my colleague Julia Munro, as opposition MPPs. There are three other MPPs representing York region ridings who are sitting on the government side, who have the minister's ears. I am not hearing one word from those members of the government side challenging the minister to at least bring York region up to par with funding of other CAS units, not only in the GTA but across the province.

I am simply saying, where is the justice and where is the fairness in how this government is applying funding? The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs said that he would be voting for this resolution. I am so pleased to hear that, but if that is the case, then I would hope that the minister will also, as he sits at the cabinet table, support his colleague the minister responsible for funding children's aid societies and that he would be there as an advocate in support of the minister to ensure that the allocation of funds is made at the cabinet table so that she can do what the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs claims she is doing and we know factually is not the case.

If I take heart at all from the debate that is going on this afternoon, it's at least the fact that one cabinet minister has said he agrees with the resolution. Now it's a matter of putting the resolution up against the reality of what is actually taking place when funds are allocated. I will be looking, as every member of this House will be looking, as every CAS across the province will be looking, to see if the rhetoric matches with the reality. If it doesn't, we have a serious problem in this province.

I want to wrap up my comments with a letter that was received by the minister, written by the York region police services board: "York region CAS is one of our most important partners in ensuring safety and security in our communities. CAS provides an invaluable service to the vulnerable children of York region. The board urges the province to reconsider its funding decision"—which, by the way, was a decision to reduce funding to the York region CAS by \$5.5 million—"to ensure that the safety and protection of our children continues to remain a top priority."

We'll be looking for the minister and her cabinet colleagues during these difficult economic times to ensure that the allocation of funds to the most vulnerable in our society, at-risk children, is prioritized. There are many, many, many other programs that can be set aside for another day. This is not one of them; it must be considered a priority of this government.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I obviously will be supporting my colleague's motion in regard to funding for children's aid societies in this province. I, along with Mr. Hampton and Mr. Klees, have raised, on a number of occasions in this House, questions to the Minister of Children and Youth Services in regard to what is happening across Ontario vis-à-vis year-end funding.

It was interesting to note that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs said, "All we're doing is we're not going to renew year-end funding." My Lord, that's the whole

issue. The issue is that children's aid societies, by way of mandate, have to provide certain services that we, as the Legislature, have passed in laws. So they have no choice. The children's aid societies just can't all of a sudden say, "Oh, there is a child at risk. Nothing to do—don't worry. I don't have year-end funding. I'll just go off and do something else." They have legislation that they have to follow and if they were to not act in regard to an issue within their jurisdiction when it comes to protecting a child, they could be charged under the act.

The year-end funding is to deal with that exact situation, because the children's aid societies, as they prepare their budgets for the year, never know from year to year exactly how many kids they're going to come into contact with based on what is going on in their communities. We know, for example, because of what's happening in this recession, it is a fact that people in a time of recession—we see all kinds of things demonstrate themselves within the home: more stress within the family, sometimes drugs or alcohol, physical abuse, sexual abuse, all kinds of things that happen when people lose their jobs. Therefore, year-end funding is meant to say, "Here is the money in order to offset costs that you have no control of because in your care you had certain children that you needed to provide services to."

I'm looking at the communities that I represent in Timmins—James Bay and I have a great number of children's aid societies. I've got the Timmins Children's Aid Society in Timmins; I've got the centre Jeanne Sauvé that goes from Smooth Rock Falls to Constance Lake; we've got Payukotayno, who does all of the James Bay when it comes to First Nations communities; and we've got Kunuwanimano, which does the aboriginal urban community and are working towards becoming accredited as a full-time CAS. These people have no choice.

What's going on? Payukotayno is losing \$1 million in a year in their funding. And here is the reality: To service these kids there are no roads to any of these communities. So when a worker has to be sent up to Attawapiskat or Peawanuck or whatever community it might be, it's not like you drive two minutes down the road to go visit the child at their home or to visit them in some centre somewhere; you've got to charter an aircraft to bring people in. If the child has got to come out, you've got to charter the aircraft to bring the child out. You can't control those costs. You have no way of knowing what kind of crisis is going to happen from community to community and how many kids are going to be under the care of Payukotayno. They're being told \$1 million is their year-end funding that will be affected, and the government and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs come here today and say, "We're not cutting the funding; we're just not going to do the year-end funding." Well, for Payukotayno, it means \$1 million a year, and what are they going to do? Parents are going to be in the position of having to sue the government because the children's aid societies have not done what they were told to by mandate.

Centre Jeanne Sauvé on Highway 11 from Smooth Rock Falls to Constance Lake: Depending on whose

figures you listen to—the provincial ministry's figures or centre Jeanne Sauvé themselves—they're looking at somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$700,000 to \$900,000, in very similar circumstances that were pointed out by my colleague Mr. Hampton. We have kids that are in need that are having to go in special residential programs that cost a lot of money, anywhere from \$300 to \$400, \$450 a day to put those kids in those programs. There's nowhere else to put them. Therefore, what do we do? Does the children's aid society at centre Jeanne Sauvé say "Oh well, too bad. We're not going to deal with these kids. So what? They're in danger, but maybe things will work out if we just close our eyes"? They have to act. They've got no choice. They've got to do what they're mandated to do by way of legislation. So yes, the year-end funding is critical for them to be able to do what needs to be done.

I've asked questions to the minister, and I've gone over and talked to the minister, and what I was told was, "Well, you know, all you've got to do is—these centres, you know what it is: They haven't done a lot when it comes to amalgamation of services with other organizations and finding ways to save in administration." My Lord, they led the way. Timmins children's aid society amalgamated with another organization about six, seven years ago and have lessened administration, far less than what it used to be before. Centre Jeanne Sauvé has done the same. They've co-located their offices together, which means to say you don't have to pay rent in two separate places. They've done things in order to share administration, share workers, share resources, computers, payroll—they've done all that stuff. I was a bit shocked when the minister said that all they've got to do to offset is to trim some of that fat. Well, there's no more fat. We did that five or six years ago. These centres are being asked, "Well, you know, make due with less," and all I can tell you is that we can't. These children's aid societies in communities like mine, in Toronto, in Kenora—Rainy River, or wherever they might be, are mandated by legislation to provide services to the most vulnerable children in our province.

1550

I would say this in the few seconds I have left: If we as a Legislature—and, more importantly, this Liberal government—cannot take care of the most basic needs of children, then I think it speaks volumes as to the commitment of this government when it comes to the kids of this province.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate, and it's interesting to hear some of the remarks that are coming from the members opposite. I had the privilege, prior to being in this House, to serve 12 years on the board of my own children's aid society in the region of Halton, serving under the Liberal government, serving under the NDP government and serving under the Conservative government. Let me tell you that nobody's got their hands clean on this file.

Mr. Frank Klees: We're talking about today.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Yeah, you want to talk about today, Frank, but what you don't want to talk about is how we got in the mess in the first place. I was on the board, I was serving as president, when you were running the government, Mr. Klees. When you were in the government, Mr. Klees, we were running into problems far worse than are being run into today. So you know that your hands aren't clean on this file, Mr. Klees. If there's anywhere that you could put the blame for what's happening today, we can go right back to your government. The NDP at least tried.

Anyway, getting back to the point—

Mr. Frank Klees: That's despicable.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Despicable? The way you treated children's aid societies, Mr. Klees, was despicable, and to stand up here—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Order. Stop the clock for a minute.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I would ask honourable members to be respectful to each other and to speak through the Chair.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I've stopped the clock. Have a seat, please. Sit down. Sit down, honourable member, just for a moment.

I would ask members not to banter back and forth and to speak through the Chair and show some respect for the fact that the honourable member from Oakville has the floor.

Honourable member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. It's still a pleasure to join the debate and I'm still intending to support the motion that's on the floor. But let me tell you some of the things that we had to deal with in the past and why I think it's important that we come to some conclusion and that we come to some sustainable situation that's got some permanence attached to it.

There are people in our society who are always prepared to talk about children and to talk about child welfare. There are some in our society who are prepared to go a step further than that and serve on the boards of children's aid societies, take on executive positions, try to do something about that and advocate for kids in the child welfare system. Those are the sort of people that I was proud to be associated with for 12 years.

We still have an odd circumstance within the funding system where you have exceptional-circumstances funding. What that means to anyone who knows the system is that you will get paid if you take the child out of the house. Now, sometimes the best place for the child who is in need to be is with the family, and the family needs work. But the funding won't flow in those circumstances. The funding will only flow under the exceptional-circumstances funding that comes when you remove the child from the family.

We also had a situation under the NDP government, and you might remember this, Mr. Hampton. We had a pay equity issue, and we were trying to be of some

assistance at the Halton Children's Aid Society. We were trying to come to some agreement that would allow the province to deal with the pay equity issue. What we were told by the bureaucrats—to be honest with you, it wasn't by the politicians, but by the provincial bureaucrats who were under your control at the time—was to take the pay equity money away from the kids, to make a pay equity deal with money that was designated for children's services. That quite simply is wrong—I'm sure you would agree with that—and I don't know if you knew about it, but that's the sort of thing that was going on.

As one of the frustrated members of the boards of children's aid societies around the province, I can empathize with them, because I've been there under each and every government that presents itself in the House today and purports to support these children. I agree with the member. I agree with the statement he has brought forward that these children must be provided with the services and with the money they need. But I also agree with the direction that's being taken by this government: that we must achieve a system that has some permanence attached to it so that the hell we put these organizations through over the past 15 or 20 years is not allowed to continue.

Our government has done a lot to increase funding over the past few years. It simply isn't enough in a system that's not sustainable. When you see some of the increases in intake that some of these organizations are dealing with and some of the funding they're receiving, sometimes it matches up; sometimes it doesn't.

The intent of the commission is to bring this to some sort of conclusion that everybody agrees we can move forward on, and that would be the service providers themselves, the children's aid societies, the boards of those societies, and the people who purport to support the intent of those societies.

If you asked taxpayers around the province, "Is this a good place to spend money?", they would say, "Yes, it is." If you asked the taxpayers around the province, "Do you want this money spent in a way that's supportable, in a way that's sustainable, in a way that the organizations that actually provide the front-line service to the kids can rely on?", I think they would say that that is the way they want the money spent.

I'm proud to stand up here as a person who spent 12 years as a board member with the children's aid society. I didn't just talk about kids; I tried to do something about kids: kids who are in need, kids who are in circumstances that we can only imagine and kids who are in circumstances that they simply shouldn't be in. And kids are still in those circumstances today.

I think the member brings forward a healthy motion. It has allowed debate to take place. I believe it's going to get support from all three parties. I think that's a good thing, I think that's a positive thing and I think it's going to mean good things for the kids in our society who are in need of protection.

I thank the member for bringing it forward. He has my support. I hope he has the support of the whole House.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: For those who are watching at home and wonder what we're debating, it's a motion by our member from Kenora–Rainy River that fell on the heels of a secret cut in budgets to children's aids across the province that the McGuinty government made. On June 26, 2009, the McGuinty government quietly cut \$23 million from 53 children's aid societies in Ontario. Twenty per cent of that hit was borne by First Nations children's aids.

In response to the member from Oakville: Now that he is an elected representative here, knowing what he knows, having served on the board of a children's aid, he should be absolutely lobbying his cabinet and his Premier to fix the situation. It's not enough to cast blame around the room. What we're asking for here is action now. There's only one side of the floor that can take that action, and that's the government side. Only one side of the floor can take that action now, save a child's life now. We're not looking back 15 years or 10 years; we're talking about now. There are children in need now, and that's the simple reality.

If people at home are wondering who is being hit, it's not only First Nation children's aids; it's not only those in the north. Here are some other figures, and these are letters that members on this side and I'm sure members on that side have received from children's aid societies:

—Native Child and Family Services of Toronto: a 9.5% decrease in funding, a hit of \$1.5 million;

—Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County: a 10% cut, \$2.1 million;

—Niagara Family and Children's Services: \$2.9 million, a 7.3% cut;

—Durham: 5.2%, \$3.9 million;

—London-Middlesex: \$3.9 million, 6%; and

—Simcoe county: a 13% cut.

These are cuts for mandated services. As the member from Timmins–James Bay said, if the children's aid societies do not deliver the services mandated by this Legislature, they can be charged. They can be taken to court.

These are not frills. These are not expenses that can be cut. What you are cutting, when you cut to children's aid societies, is the welfare of children. That's what you're cutting. Make no mistake about it: That's who is hurting.

I find it unconscionable that on the government side they can defend this in any way, shape or form. The moral and ethical tenor of any administration is how it treats the most vulnerable. I believe there's no question—we would all agree—that the most vulnerable in Ontario are the children that children's aid societies see and have to contend with. Those are the most vulnerable, and what this government is doing is literally cutting the funding that goes to those children directly. It's unconscionable—unbelievable.

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Now, the context, for those watching at home, of course, is that not everybody in Ontario is feeling the hit of the recession. Children are; we've just shown that.

Children's aid societies are. Not everyone: We all know about the billion-dollar boondoggle at eHealth. Consultants don't feel the brunt of the cutbacks in McGuinty's Ontario. Consultants are doing well, thank you very much—a million dollars a day.

Maybe if we rebrand the children's aid societies as consulting firms, they'll get a little bit more money from this government. If we put them in a position to consult with some of the bureaucracies for this government, maybe then they'll get looked after. If they join the Liberal Party, maybe then some money will flow to the children's aid societies and to the children who need it.

That's the reality here: Friends of the government, friends of the Liberal Party, consultants who work for bureaucracies are some of the best paid in the world. They make money during the recession in McGuinty's Ontario, but children who need the help of children's aid societies—no, they don't. They don't count. They get cut. That's the reality.

I can't believe that members opposite who have children's aid societies in their ridings aren't defending them. Come on. Again, it's not only the test of a government; it's a test of a person. The individuals, particularly those who actually know what working in a children's aid society looks like, what sitting on the board of a children's aid society looks like, are absolutely implicated, and they are absolutely morally and ethically obligated to do something for those children.

It's absolutely staggering to me. I have had to deal with families in crisis for a long time, I have had to deal with children's aid societies and I have had to hear from children's aid societies, not in my riding but in their ridings, because they're not listening. They write to our members on this side of the House, because the government isn't listening.

Here's my advice: If you want to make money, if you want to balance your budget and if you want to help children in children's aid societies, join the Liberal Party and get jobs as consultants. That's the only way you're going to make any money in McGuinty's Ontario, and that's the only way you're going to be looked after. If you're a child, if you're an abused child, if you are a child who is at risk of harming yourself or others, then God help you—literally, God help you—because the McGuinty government will not.

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

Seeing none, Mr. Hampton, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank all the members for their contributions to the debate, but I want to bring the debate back to the reality of today. The reality is that this year children's aid societies had their budgets cut by \$23 million mid-year. That means they're operating with \$23 million less than they operated with last year.

We're also seeing in Ontario today an economy that is not exactly flourishing. Unemployment is growing. Poverty is increasing. Families are under greater stress than ever before. This results in more children being put at risk.

If you look at where 20% of the cut to CAS budgets happened, it happened to native child and family services, some of the most challenged and hard-pressed CASs in the province. It is unprecedented—it has never happened before in Ontario—but 37 of some 50 children's aids societies have used section 14 of the act to have their budgets reviewed, because they know they can't meet the needs now, never mind deal with the budget cut that is being imposed.

This has real repercussions for kids. Kids who are some of the most vulnerable in Ontario are being forced to wait for services or they can't get them, and that has real repercussions for the CASs themselves, because some of the people, the volunteers who serve on the boards, are looking at the situation and can't, with integrity, continue. They can't pretend to the children in their area that they're going to provide services when they know they don't have the money to do it. And I say to the government, if you think that amalgamation is going to do it, some of our CASs already have geographic areas larger than most European countries. More amalgamation is not going to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

SENATORS' SELECTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE CHOIX DES SÉNATEURS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 43, standing in the name of Mr. Runciman.

Mr. Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 67, An Act to provide for the election in Ontario of nominees for appointment to the Senate of Canada. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members after we deal with the next two ballot items.

MISSING PERSONS ALERT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 44.

Ms. Aggelonitis has moved private member's notice of motion number 117. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 45.

Mr. Hampton has moved private member's notice of motion number 118. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1607 to 1612.

SENATORS' SELECTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE CHOIX DES SÉNATEURS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 67.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Albanese, Laura	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Dickson, Joe	Moridi, Reza	Sousa, Charles
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Takhar, Harinder S.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 7; the nays are 29.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS ACT (LIVE-IN CAREGIVERS AND OTHERS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ÉTRANGERS DANS LE CADRE DE L'EMPLOI (AIDES FAMILIAUX ET AUTRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 210, An Act to protect foreign nationals employed as live-in caregivers

and in other prescribed employment and to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / *Projet de loi 210, Loi visant à protéger les étrangers employés comme aides familiaux et dans d'autres emplois prescrits et modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Smith, you had the floor. Would you like the floor again or would you like further debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I think we'll go for further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate on Bill 210?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill, and I have to open my notes here with respect to the bill's summary.

We are in some respects reluctantly supporting this legislation. We certainly approve of the stated purpose and agree that its provisions are necessary, but I think it would be helpful to have a bit of a background with respect to why this bill is before the Legislature.

I think many of us in this place will recall the allegations surrounding a Liberal member of Parliament, Ruby Dhalla, and the fact that live-in caregivers in her family home made very serious allegations with respect to abuse on the part of Ms. Dhalla and her family members. They made those in the presence of two members of the McGuinty Liberal cabinet: the Minister of Labour, who is responsible for protecting, if you will, foreign nationals, individuals in the position that these caregivers were in; and the Minister of Education, who also sat in on this meeting where they heard these very serious and disturbing allegations being made.

As we were told later, what was their response to hearing those allegations in their presence? They apparently gave the individuals some brochures and a 1-800 number and did not carry it any further. Certainly that, by and of itself, was very disturbing, there's no question about that, when we're talking about very vulnerable people, people who have limited language skills and were placed in difficult circumstances.

I want to say that this is not, from our perspective, unusual: the fact that, in our view and in the view, I think, of the third party, the NDP, the ministers who heard these allegations were reluctant—and I'm being polite—to bring those allegations forward into the public view. We have to ask a very legitimate question: Why? Because a prominent member of the Liberal Party was involved with respect to those allegations: Ruby Dhalla, a federal member of Parliament, a federal Liberal member of Parliament.

When you look at what we've seen over the past few months with respect to the eHealth scandal and the efforts to protect Liberal insiders and to, in some respects, enrich Liberal insiders in the eHealth scandal, and what we've seen subsequent to that, the effort to protect and to keep from public view the activities that occurred with respect to eHealth, that has very clear linkages to what we saw happen here. You have two very senior ministers of the McGuinty government in a

situation where serious allegations are being made against a Liberal member of Parliament, and they failed to act upon those. In fact, they tried to dismiss them. We wouldn't know about them today if the Toronto Star hadn't revealed the fact that this meeting occurred and those revelations were made in the presence of senior members of cabinet. That's the reality. We wouldn't have this legislation in front of us today if it weren't for the Toronto Star revelations, and we have to tie this in to what's happened with eHealth—

Hon. Brad Duguid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I've seen off-topic in this place before, but he's way off topic. I'm not sure what his discussion has to do with live-in caregivers, but I'd ask you to take notice of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd ask the honourable member to refer to the bill once in a while. Thank you.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you, Speaker. I thought I was referring to the bill once in a while. Certainly, I'm talking about live-in caregivers. That's what this bill is all about and that's what we're talking about with respect to what drove this, what was the catalyst behind the drafting of this legislation.

1620

Mr. Frank Klees: Liberal incompetence.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Not just Liberal incompetence, as my colleague suggests, but also the fact that there was an effort, revealed by the Toronto Star, to keep this under wraps, allegations of serious abuse of caregivers by a very prominent federal Liberal member of Parliament.

So I think it's eminently fair to draw linkages, I say to the minister, with respect to what we've seen with eHealth and your efforts to protect Liberal insiders and enrich Liberal insiders, and I suggest we've seen it with what's happened with the refusal to have a public inquiry and their shutting down of the public accounts committee when we wanted to call two of the key players in the eHealth scandal—a \$1-billion scandal, I might remind the minister. What do his Liberal colleagues do? They follow instructions from the Premier's office, like they did here in private members' public business.

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: He's talking about a bill that regulates foreign caregiver recruitment agencies and protects foreign caregivers from abuse by these agencies, and he's totally off the bill that's before us and continues to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Speaker's job is to facilitate free speech, and I think Mr. Runciman has shown a linkage to the bill in his debate.

Mr. Runciman.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I understand the concern of the members opposite on the Liberal benches. They certainly don't want us to even talk about this. They will not open this up to the light of public view. They attempted to keep this under wraps until the Toronto Star revealed what was happening with respect to these nannies, these foreign caregivers, people who are very, very vulnerable, with limited language skills. Yet two

senior Liberal ministers would not take any action—“Here’s a brochure. Here’s a 1-800 number”—because a prominent Liberal member of Parliament was the subject of those accusations, and members of her family.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: If you were listening closely, I think you would have heard a pretty bona fide case of impugning motive with that last statement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I’ve certainly heard this debate previously in the House, and the Speaker has not ruled it out of order, so I’m not inclined to either.

The member for Leeds-Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: As I’ve said, folks sitting over there on the Liberal benches are perturbed by the fact that we’re raising these issues, because we’ve seen what has happened with the public accounts committee, where they’ve closed the door on listening to the two key principals—Sarah Kramer, the former CEO; and Dr. Alan Hudson, the former chair—with respect to the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle.

This is indicative of the way this Liberal government reacts. They try to keep these insider scandals hidden from public view: the fact that their friends have been enriched and the fact that people may have linkages clearly right into the corner office of the Premier, because we see these people in here on a daily basis, following their instructions. They have no minds of their own apparently; we saw that here earlier today in private members’ public business.

On the basis of what’s happening in public accounts and their refusal to have a public inquiry, Mr. Speaker, I have no recourse than to move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Runciman has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1624 to 1654.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will rise and be counted.

All those opposed will rise and be counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 3; the nays are 27.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I appreciate the opportunity. I don’t think anyone viewing this should be surprised by the results of that vote, given the arrogance of the Liberal majority government.

I’ll speak to Bill 210, Speaker, before you caution me, which is titled the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act (Live-in Caregivers and Others). Essentially, Speaker, as I know you are very much aware,

as a former labour critic on this side of the House, this is a bill designed to protect foreign nationals employed as live-in caregivers. It deals with other issues as well.

I indicated in my opening comments that the Progressive Conservative opposition will support the bill. We approve of its stated purpose and agree that the provisions contained within the legislation are necessary. There are a number of concerns, but I think one that jumps out immediately is warrantless entry. Section 34 of the bill, Speaker, which I’m sure you’re familiar with, indicates that the inspectors will be provided with the wherewithal to enter premises. I’ll read that section:

“An employment standards officer may, without a warrant, enter and inspect any place in order to investigate a possible”—a possible—“contravention of this act or to perform an inspection to ensure that this act is being complied with.”

I want to reinforce our concerns about the use of this kind of government power, which seems to be endemic within the McGuinty Liberal government. We see this creeping into all kinds of legislation—the granting of special powers to government employees for warrantless entry. That should be a concern of government members, but of course, we know that they have no concerns. If they’re given the green light, if they’re given their speaking points from the Premier’s office, the corner office, they have no concerns. They’re not thinking about these things as individual members or representing the concerns perhaps of their constituents; they’re here to represent the wishes of Premier McGuinty and his unelected staff, the people who surround the Premier. That’s what we’re seeing here with Bill 210, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act.

Again, because there may be new viewers to this broadcast, I want to remind those folks and others that really the catalyst for this legislation is the Toronto Star. I’m, on occasion, critical of the Toronto Star because they have, I think it’s pretty well accepted, a Liberal bias editorially. But I have to compliment the press corps at Queen’s Park. I think they do a pretty darned good job in terms of investigative reporting—because we’ve seen the reduction in staff in the press gallery at Queen’s Park over the years that I’ve been here; a dramatic decrease. The resources available for the print and electronic media simply aren’t what they used to be for investigative journalism. The Star is perhaps the leader at Queen’s Park with respect to revealing these stories and getting them out before the public.

With respect to Bill 210, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, the Toronto Star really deserves the credit for this piece of legislation being before us today, because they revealed the fact that two senior members of the McGuinty Liberal government—the Minister of Labour, who’s responsible for this legislation, responsible for protecting vulnerable people working in the province of Ontario, and a very senior member of the McGuinty cabinet, the Minister of Education, being present at a public meeting where two live-in caregivers—I believe they were Filipino nationals, if

I'm correct, and I will apologize if I'm not correct in that, but I think they were from the Philippines—who had difficulty communicating in English, females, vulnerable individuals, complained to two ministers of the crown about abuse in a situation where a magic name appeared—I call it a magic name—of a Liberal member of Parliament, the name of Ruby Dhalla. The allegations made by these caregivers implicated Ms. Dhalla and members of her family. They were very serious allegations of abuse.

1700

The ministers apparently listened, but how did they react? I think that's the key here with respect to what we're talking about today: Bill 210, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act. They listened, and what did they do? How did they react? Apparently, according to the *Toronto Star* and what we've heard subsequently, they provided these very concerned female foreign caregivers with a brochure and a 1-800 number, and that was it.

Now just think about it. This is explosive in its nature. Put yourself in that position as a member of the Legislature. You have these very serious allegations about a prominent figure in public life in this province. I would call that—I think accurately—explosive. Dynamite. These are very serious allegations, and what happened? Nothing, absolutely nothing with respect to the ministers engaged in this, until somehow it leaked to the *Toronto Star*, it was a front-page story, and now, miraculously, we have legislation to address these very real concerns.

I said this earlier and raised the ire of some of the members opposite, but I think it's a legitimate point to make in this discussion: What drove this legislation? What's behind this legislation? Is it legitimate, real concern about these vulnerable individuals, many of them foreign nationals—most of them, probably—young women with very limited English language skills? Is the real reason behind Bill 210 genuine concern on the Liberal government benches?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I don't think so.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't think so either. It's the fact that it became public knowledge that two of their ministers had ignored serious allegations. And why did they do it? Again, I think this is legitimate to be raised in the context of the debate on Bill 210, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act.

The reality is—we have to draw these conclusions, and I think they're fair—that the reason this was not handled in an appropriate way and the ministers did not react in an appropriate way is because it involved a very prominent member of the Liberal Party—case closed.

When I draw parallels with the eHealth scandal, again irritating especially the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the \$1-billion scandal on the doorstep of the McGuinty Liberal government, it again involves Liberal insiders, people who were enriched—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: I direct your attention to standing order 23(b)—the member for Leeds–Grenville has clearly directed his speech

“to matters other than ... the question under discussion”—and as well, standing order 23(h), making “allegations against another member,” and standing order 23(i), imputing “false or unavowed motives to another member,” all of which are being violated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I've heard this type of debate before, and it certainly hasn't been ruled out of order, and so I'm not inclined to.

The honourable member from Leeds–Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It really pains me to agitate the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. We're heading off to a one-week constituency break, and I certainly hope that I can improve his approach to matters in this place in the minutes I have left in this discussion.

I think that how you react to these situations and why you react in the way you do is relevant, I say to the member, and important to the people of the province of Ontario. I have suggested that Bill 210, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, is the result of a public revelation of efforts on the part of ministers not to act appropriately. We've seen the same thing in eHealth, where you are refusing to allow the key principals in that scandal to appear before the public accounts committee—a bare minimum—and at the same time refusing to have a public inquiry.

As a result, I have no recourse but to move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Runciman has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1706 to 1736.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour will please stand and be counted.

All those opposed will please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 2; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Further debate.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm just wondering, if the member from Leeds–Grenville moved a motion to, first of all, adjourn the debate, and then he moved a motion to adjourn the House, and then he didn't even come back for the vote that he moved, how is that in order?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. As you know, you can't refer to another member's attendance or absence in the House at any time, so that is not a point of order.

Further debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But it was clever; that's the point.

It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 210. I want to welcome my Liberal friends; there are so many there today. They are here for me.

We're talking Thursday. We're on live. It's November 5 and it's Thursday night at 5:37, and so many of my Liberal friends are over there.

Interjections: And here.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: With all due respect, and here, so I thank you.

I also want to thank Chris, who's a regular viewer of this program, and I promised—

Interjection: Who's Chris?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It doesn't matter. It's Chris. Chris knows. He will know as soon as I do this who I'm talking about. He—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I would just remind the honourable member that you have to speak through the Chair; there's no direct debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Chris knows who I am talking about when I do this. So, Chris, welcome to this political channel. He's a good friend.

I'm going to be supporting this bill, of course. How could you not support the bill? Even when they do a little bit, how could you not support it? I don't expect much. I really don't. I know how it is, with the Liberal Party just inching its way forward ever so calmly, so slowly. Don't be rushed into making mistakes, because I know you've got to do it right. I know. To do a little more would be complicated, and you don't want to make any mistakes. I understand.

1740

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Rosie, do you want us to come and sit next to you?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We're going to support it.

Louie, I might have to criticize you. Don't do that.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: No, no, no. I'm here to support you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay.

The Liberals have done a little bit with respect to nannies, live-in care workers. You've got to remember that my friend Cheri DiNovo from Parkdale–High Park raised these issues for months.

Where are you guys going? They're going for the wine. I understand. They're going to sit—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, don't do that.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Rosie, I'm going to sit next to you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. Oh, please. The Tories did that in the past, Jim. Do you remember? Were you part of that? Please, please.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Okay, I'm coming. I'm coming.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Come along.

Mr. Bob Delaney: We're here for you, Rosie. We're here for you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There is room for so many of you. Do you see the kinds of links we have with Liberals?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Yes. Hi to Peter as well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We are so close.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Speaker, we love him so much.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. You want to sit here?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. But I need room—

Mr. Mario Sergio: You can stand.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I need room to move around.

Mr. Mario Sergio: No, it's okay. Here: There you go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member can't be in the member's chair. Member from Trinity–Spadina, are you in your seat? Listen, are you in your seat? Get in your seat or I'm going to—

Interjection: He needs the seat, Mario. He needs his chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): You're wasting your time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's complicated, I know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It's not only complicated; I'm totally confused now. Is that your seat?

Interjection: That is his seat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Good. You have the floor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I usually move it over because I need room, right? I hate to be confined, yes.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: He's a thespian. You know that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is that allowed?

So, Speaker, they've done a little something with respect to recruiters of nannies.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank goodness.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're quite right, and even Cheri DiNovo, the person who motivated you, gave you a lot of support to push you a little bit, and eventually the Minister of Labour presented this bill. God bless. But even she recognized that you've done a little something, so she thanked you, and I wanted to thank you as well.

You've done this a little late; that's not a problem. What you've done is make sure that you are banning recruitment fees charged to live-in caregivers, and henceforth employers will be required to pay such fees. This is the main component of this bill. There's another component, which I will get to in a few minutes.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Oh, there's more than that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, that's about it. It's not much more than that, but I'll get to that.

The problem is—everyone knows what it is. Everyone knows the problem. These nannies are cheap labour; that's what it is. We import hundreds of thousands of people just to do the dirty work that no one wants to do here. We import them because they're cheap labour, because we get them to work not eight hours but 10, not 10 but 16—whatever it takes. We withhold the passports in the event that they are not compliant. In order to make them compliant, we hold on to the passports. Some people do that.

Interjection: Yes, bad ones.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Not everybody does that; the bad employers. Mike, sit down here.

There are some bad employers who do that on a regular basis. We know why they're doing it. They're

doing it because it's cheap labour and because they can, because these people don't know their rights and because these people speak another language and it's easy to abuse people. That's why they do it.

Canada is not the only one that's doing it; you know that. Many other—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hey, guys, you've got to keep it down. Boys, you've got to keep it down, because I'm speaking.

Canada is not the only one doing it. Everybody's doing it. Germany had two million Turkish people, if not more, who went there as cheap labour. Of course, they hoped that most of the immigrants would leave. When they don't leave, it becomes a problem. The fact of the matter is, they only want them as cheap labour; they don't want them to settle down. The Italians are the same.

Mr. Mike Colle: And Holland—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Holland, same thing. The Italians love to have cheap labour; they just don't want them to stay. They love to get them in their restaurants to work for nothing. But when it comes to rights and special rights—just rights that everybody else has—they say, “No, we don't want you to stay. We don't really like you. We just like your cheap labour.” That's what it's about.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Everybody's doing it. So we are replacing permanent landed immigrants with permanent temporary workers.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Two hundred thousand? It's more. There's more than 260,000, because most of these are undocumented, done by my Liberal friends when Chrétien was there, done by my Harper friends now that he's there. It's growing.

The idea was that we're going to do it for a little while because Alberta is a strong province and they need cheap labour. They don't say cheap labour, but they need workers to come and do the work that nobody else wants to do. Then, lo and behold, the program expands like a big elastic. We're not talking a small elastic; we're talking a big elastic. And then, all of a sudden people start saying, “We've got a big problemo on our hands. What do we do?”

Thank you for coming.

Hon. Brad Duguid: You lost me at the elastic.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, I lost you at the Liberal part.

So we are happy that some of the newspapers are doing good coverage on this. Haroon Siddiqui of the Toronto Star is one of my favourite writers, one of the most insightful of writers. I've quoted him before and I'll quote him again.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: He's a good Liberal.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My good doctor friend: “He's a good Liberal”; he probably is. He's a good left-leaning Liberal. Often in this place I say, “Where are the left Liberals?” Over there, over here, and not one of them

stands up. If Haroon Siddiqui is a left-leaning Liberal, God bless, because he shows himself as such in the newspaper.

What does he say? He talks about indentured labour. By the way, indentured labour, because nobody ever defines it, and I suspect 90% of the public doesn't know what it is—I thought, for the benefit of those who don't know, that I would look it up just to make sure I've got the right language. It's “a contract binding one person to another for a given period of time.” So if you ever hear “indentured labour,” you'll have a clue what it means.

He goes on to say, “You import workers on short-term visas, tether them to one employer, bar them from bringing families, deny them state benefits and services, and then ship them back at the end of their contract.” Beautiful, isn't it? That's what we do. I don't think we should be proud of that, but that's exactly what we do. By the way, he uses the word “tether,” which is a lovely word, and I suspect 90% of the people don't know what that is. You know when you use a rope to tie an animal, in this case a human being, and you've got them on a short leash, right? They're on a leash, except for those who eventually break the leash and go underground, and then you've got some undocumented underclass that's running around the country looking for whatever work they can get just to stay here, without any of the rights that most Canadians enjoy.

He goes on to say, “Temporary workers may be exploited for up to four years. Many cannot join unions or apply for immigration.” I'm assuming here Haroon is saying, as New Democrats do, that they should be able to join a union—a good left-leaning Liberal, eh?

Interjection: A good Liberal.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, but most Liberals here and up there don't think that's a good idea.

“Abuses are inevitable—by recruiters who charge high fees or promise non-existent jobs, and by employers who pay lower than promised wages, provide inadequate housing or forfeit promises of paid travel to home countries”: This is the underbelly of the other part of what temporary workers have to face in this country. So caregivers still face abuse, except now we say recruiters cannot charge them a fee; the employers will do that, and then we say we've got some enforcement.

Here, let me read it: “Provision is made for the enforcement of these rights”—okay? And then it says, “Employment standards officers are permitted to undertake inspections and investigations”—yeah, sure—

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, to help the caregivers. They can go there and check it out.

1750

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Except, Michael, please, less than 1% of Ontario workplaces get a visit from an employment standards office. Mario, do you know what they're saying? Less than 1%. How could you talk about—let me just see—“provision is made for the enforcement of these rights,” when you've got a couple of people all over the province? Remember, Ontario is three times bigger than Italy. This is a huge, huge country, and

Ontario is a huge place. You're going to have employment standard workers going around checking things out? Come on.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's never been here before. It's finally in the legislation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's in the legislation; that's all that matters. Whether it happens or not is irrelevant. The fact of the matter is, it's in the legislation.

Mr. Mike Colle: Before they couldn't go in; now they can go in.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And now they can? It's all done; it's all settled. Safe.

The problem is, these people have 12 months to lodge a complaint. Not two years, not three, not four; it's 12 months. You're going to have some immigrant from the Philippines, or wherever they come from, with no knowledge of their rights, but after they get this bill, they will, because they're all going to read it, right, Mike? Yeah. No knowledge of their rights. The language is very, very shaky.

Mr. Mike Colle: Many speak English. Many Filipino caregivers speak English; that's their second language.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All right, but I've got to make the case, and you've got to speak through the Speaker.

The problem is that they're not going to complain. Even though there's a bill that says you can, within 12 months in a two-year employment, who is going to have the courage to go to the employer and say, "This isn't nice, what you're doing"? They're not going to do it. It will not be enforced, first, and second, while they're in the employ of that individual, they're not going to feel that they have the power—because they don't—or the strength to be able to take an employer on and feel the government is on their side or that their employer is going to treat them fairly after they complain to the employment standards office that they're being abused. Do you know what I mean, Mario?

Mr. Mario Sergio: We have to communicate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My good friend Mario—Yorkview?

Mr. Mario Sergio: York West.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —from York West—says we have to communicate these things. We've got to pass it on to the Minister of Labour.

Mr. Mario Sergio: We have to let them know.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And we've got to let them know. We're going to publicize it. We're going to publicize in it our newsletters, publicize it in the local newspapers, educate, inform them that they have rights; they have power. They shouldn't be afraid. They shouldn't be afraid because there's no imbalance of power between the employer and the care worker. There is no imbalance at all. Besides, the law protects you. It's as simple as that.

It's complicated stuff. We've got to strengthen, in my view, the enforcement mechanisms. We have to do this. You got to add a whole lot of workers.

By the way, even if you said you did, I wouldn't believe that you would. Even if you said it. Now that we

have a deficit of \$25 billion, we're talking about huge cuts—huge—all over. Nobody's going to be spared. Even if you said, "We're going to hire people," I wouldn't believe you because it would just be on paper. It wouldn't be real.

The real way to deal with this is to create a workforce that is well-paid. It's to create a child care system like Quebec's, where they pay \$7 a day versus our \$40 or \$60 a day. If working men and women had a place to take their children in a child care service with workers well-paid, we wouldn't have to recruit people to work for minimum wage or sometimes less. We shouldn't have to do that.

Mr. Mike Colle: We're doing it now, the four- and five-year-olds in schools. That's a good start.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's good, and I supported you guys on that. But does it deal it with years zero to four, that child care? It's absent. This is child care that is expensive, costly, and most middle-class women and men can't afford it. Most middle-class women and men can't find a place to put their child in.

What do we do? We recruit. We go to other countries, where we can bring them here, abuse, mistreat and use their resources as best as we can, and we do—we do. Why can't we create a better child care system?

Mr. Mike Colle: We had a national child care program.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh. It would be good to—

Mr. Mike Colle: Paul Martin had it on the table, and then you know what happened? It was a good program.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Within a three-month period, when Jack Layton says, "We're not supporting the Liberals," we lost it.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yeah, we did.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Because we didn't have three months. Paul Martin was going to introduce a national child care system. Within that three-month period from when Paul Martin said he's going to call the election to when Jack said, "No, we're not supporting you"—a three-month period—we would have had a national child care system. Come on.

Mr. Mike Colle: It was certainly on the books. It was there ready to go, and then Jack pulled the plug.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yeah, ready to go in three months. Nothing happened.

Mr. Mike Colle: Jack and Olivia pulled the plug.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We can't even get you guys to move an inch in three months, let alone more than one inch.

Mr. Mario Sergio: We've got to get this going, Rosario.

Mr. Mike Colle: You're cynical. It was ready to go.

Mr. Mario Sergio: This is good stuff. We've got to get this—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'm sure people watching at home are totally confused about who's actually speaking, so I would remind the honourable members that you're not to speak into the micro-

phones unless you're in your own seats. The honourable member from Trinity–Spadina exclusively has the floor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, I've got tell you, people watching like this interaction. They do. I've got to tell you that. You should do a poll. I'm serious. A whole lot of people watching this program say this is a boring program. You've got to make it exciting. You do. If you don't make it exciting, they're not going to watch you. So what we're doing is chatting, right? That's okay; I don't mind that.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Some people don't like feedback. With some people you've got to be silent—absolutely—because if you say one word, you distract them, and the whole speech breaks down. I understand, but I like interaction, and the viewers like it, too, through you, Speaker.

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's the House in action.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So this bill, it's okay. It moves the yardstick a little bit, and we're going to support it. But wouldn't it be nice if you could just move from nannies to other temporary workers in terms of rights? Wouldn't that be a good idea?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes, yes.

Mr. Mike Colle: In the regulation, it's possible to—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And it's coming. If we elect another Liberal government two years from now, it will come. It will come. It'll take a while, maybe a couple of more years, but it will come.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Just in case I get two minutes, I'm going back to my seat.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You need to speak for two minutes.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Maybe, it depends on the Speaker.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, are you going to call this off, or do I have to finish it off or what? I have one minute.

Temporary workers need rights. Temporary workers need protection from the provincial government. They need protection from the federal government. Nannies, here in this particular instance, need greater protection than what we've got. They need more than 12 months to be able to lodge a complaint; we argue they should have four years. They need better and stronger enforcement in order to give the protections to nannies that they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you to the honourable members for their contribution to the debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I know all of us will join together once again in thanking our pages as this is their last moment with us.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 16, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
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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	
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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	
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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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

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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
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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	
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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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Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
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Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
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Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
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