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Tuesday 17 November 2009

Mardi 17 novembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 November 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 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 aboriginal prayer.

Prayers.

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 November 5, 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 Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: We're here once again to debate Bill 210. We all agree that we need to protect foreign live-in caregivers. But we have to ask, why does the Liberal government believe there is no other way to defend foreign caregivers without trampling on the rights of others? Why does the government believe that they should defend foreign caregivers by giving employment standards officers the right to warrantless entry into private homes? Why do they believe that the Ministry of Labour should be allowed to conduct fishing expeditions on whatever property they deem fit, without even consulting a judge or a justice? Why is it that this government is destroying an entire live-in caregiver industry, destroying the livelihoods of those who help bring caregivers to this country?

Contrary to the beliefs of this minister, not all of those who help bring foreign caregivers into this country are heartless profiteers. Not all employment agencies exploit live-in caregivers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me; I believe that you have spoken to this bill. You will relinquish—thank you.

Further debate? The member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to speak to this bill today. Last spring, when the stories started to appear in the newspapers about the difficulties, the problems, the challenges and the unfairness that had been visited upon the heads of live-in caregivers, it became clear that legislation—government action—was required to alleviate the very difficult circumstances that some of these caregivers found themselves under. I don't want to suggest in any way that all families that employed live-in caregivers were abusive to their caregivers, but there was certainly a segment of our society that was taking advantage of live-in caregivers.

It was for that reason, to protect our most vulnerable, that our government stepped in and decided to take required action in this matter, and we now find the result of that initiative in Bill 210. What I would like to do is just highlight some of the matters in Bill 210 and explain why they've been brought forward, what they are intended to do and how the provisions in Bill 210 will protect some of the most vulnerable in our society: live-in caregivers.

It's a particularly poignant problem, because the paradox, or the irony, is that our society often relies on these live-in caregivers to care for the most vulnerable in our society: young children and senior citizens. Families in their busy lives, mothers and fathers working and managing their careers often make use of live-in caregivers to look after young children and elderly parents. So now we have a situation where we have, in many cases, vulnerable live-in care workers being asked to look after vulnerable seniors and young children, and it's incumbent upon our society to give the same protection to the vulnerable caregivers as we give to young children and senior citizens, whom the live-in caregivers are often called upon to care for.

Here are some of the highlights of Bill 210. First, it applies to foreign nationals who are employed in Ontario as live-in caregivers or in such other positions in sectors as may be prescribed by regulation—so, other employment. Right now, the legislation applies to live-in caregivers, but there is the potential to expand it to cover other types of prescribed employment; that is, protecting vulnerable workers.

Number two, the legislation provides that persons who act as recruiters in connection with employing these foreign nationals are prohibited from charging the foreign

national a fee. What has happened in the past is that a recruiter has gone out and recruited a foreign national as a caregiver and arranged for them to come to Canada and accept a placement here in Ontario, and then charged a fee to the foreign caregiver, often in addition to a fee charged to the employer of that foreign caregiver. Under this legislation, those kinds of fees that are charged to foreign caregivers—again, the most vulnerable employees here in Ontario—are proscribed. They are forbidden. The money that is paid to the foreign caregiver will be their money. They will keep that money, and there will be no further fees. That's an abuse that Bill 210 has stopped.

0910

A third thing that we find in Bill 210 is that employers of foreign nationals are prohibited from recovering fees from the employee, because a backdoor way for a recruiter to get around not collecting fees is to say to the employee, the caregiver, "We're not going to charge you a fee." A caregiver comes to Ontario, accepts the placement, and lo and behold, where they've accepted the placement, the family then tries to recover their fee or a part of the fee they have paid the recruiter. So we have to nip that in the bud too. That's exactly what Bill 210 does.

A fourth thing that Bill 210 does is prohibit employers, where they're working, and prohibit recruiters, who have arranged for them to take the placement here in Ontario, from taking possession, retaining or controlling in any way their travel documents, in particular their passport.

One of the abuses that we heard about in this past year was a caregiver who was brought into the province, surrendered their passport and other travel documents either to their employer, the family or their recruiter, who then held those documents as a lien or as a method of controlling travel, placement and where the foreign caregiver could move around in the province.

These vulnerable employees coming to Ontario with the very best of intentions, to care for our young children and our senior citizens, were in many ways trapped. The employer or the recruiter seized their passport and travel documents and would give them back on payment of fees. So that has been proscribed.

A fifth thing that this legislation has done to protect these vulnerable workers is that the employer and the recruiter are now required to post copies of various documents that are published by the director of employment standards. These documents contain rights that the vulnerable care workers have. It contains a description of the obligations of the employer, the family, and of the recruiter.

Often when foreign-trained care workers come into the province, their first language may not be English or they may have a limited capacity in English. It's often their first visit to Canada, and they find themselves in a new regime—in many ways a strange, foreign regime. It all becomes a blur as to what they can do, what their rights and obligations are and what their employers' rights and obligations are.

We've now done a couple of things, and you can see the progression of this. We've said you can't charge them fees, you can't take their travel documents, and now, you've got to post—you've got to give them in writing—a statement of what their rights are and what the obligations of their employers are, so that they can sit back and decide and have some sense of whether they are being treated fairly, whether they are being treated according to the law.

The legislation goes a step further. As I've said, often the first language is not English or there is a limited capacity in English, so the legislation requires that if their first language is not English, they be given a translated copy of the postings from the director of employment standards. The ministry will work on the translation of various documents explaining rights and obligations.

So now we have a situation where, in addition to prohibiting fees and the seizure of travel documents, we have what amounts to an empowerment of these vulnerable employees. One of the ways of empowering these vulnerable employees is to in fact tell them in English, or in their own language through translated documents, exactly what their rights are and what the obligations of their employers and their recruiters are. That is a huge step, because my sense, and the sense I gathered from reading the reports in the newspapers and from many conversations with vulnerable employees, is that although they had a sense that they were being taken advantage of, they weren't sure just what the letter of the law was: what their protections were, what their rights were and what the obligations of their employers and recruiters are.

We are providing that information in a very concrete, clear, written manner, so that there is a level playing field. The vulnerable care worker now has access to documentation that explains their situation, and the employer and the recruiter also has a very clear statement in writing as to what their obligations are. One of the first steps in creating a level playing field for vulnerable care workers, their family employers and their recruiters is to make sure they're all reading from the same rule book. That's what this legislation is designed to do.

The legislation goes on and has a series of prescriptions that address the issue of: What if there is a situation in the employment relationship with the vulnerable care worker, their employer or the recruiter that is out of whack, if you will, and that is the subject matter of a complaint? Well, there is a complaints process set up in Bill 210. It lays out what a vulnerable care worker who is covered by this legislation can do to enforce those rights that are set out in the documents they will have from the director of employment standards. There's a regime, a process, to handle complaints from vulnerable care workers.

Let me touch on some of the aspects of how that complaints process will work. Essentially, the complaint will make its way to employment standards. Here is the very significant piece of this legislation: The employment standards officer, on receipt of the complaint, has some powers and authority. To date, it has been unclear what

employment standards officers could do with respect to a complaint from an in-home care worker. Under this legislation, employment standards officers are permitted to undertake an inspection and an investigation, and they can require employers and recruiters to post various notices to correct deficiencies or correct actions that are inconsistent and/or illegal under this act.

There's also a very clear and distinct penalty provision in the legislation for contraventions of the act. If the rights of a vulnerable live-in care worker are alleged to have been violated, there's now a process to investigate that complaint in a meaningful way. If the complaint is established, there are a number of things that can follow from that. There are corrective or remedial measures that can be taken via the issuance of notices to employers and recruiters. There is also the imposition of penalties on the recruiter and on the family employer.

0920

This is a comprehensive piece of legislation. It was clear that this was an aspect of the employment world in our society that needed addressing—in many ways, it was almost an underworld economy that was there. We had people working as care workers—again, as I said before, vulnerable workers—often on their first visit to North America, often on their first visit to the western world. Often their first language was not English, and if they did have some command of English, it was limited at best. There was a very clear sense in the media, in the public and in this Legislature that this was an area of employment that in many ways had escaped our notice. I think we were probably all aware that there were issues and problems there, but in the past year, those issues and problems came to a head in a number of quite public and heart-wrenching and touching cases. So our government stepped up to the plate.

We've heard from the vulnerable care workers. We've also heard from responsible employers and from responsible recruiters, because although I've stressed the difficult circumstances that many vulnerable care workers find themselves in, there are many, many responsible employers and recruiters, and they've worked with us and with the care workers and some of the agencies that represent and take a particular interest in vulnerable care workers to help give us some advice in drafting this legislation.

The legislation, like most legislation before this House, is designed to root out a particular piece of mischief or misconduct, and the particular piece of mischief or misconduct here is the taking advantage of vulnerable care workers.

There's another aspect that has cropped up in a number of questions that have been raised in this chamber and in the media; that is, why doesn't Ontario follow the model of the legislation that the province of Manitoba has in addressing this issue? I just want to take a couple of minutes to address this.

The Manitoba model is a licensing regime where the recruiter has to be licensed in order to recruit employees

and bring them into the province of Manitoba. Manitoba approaches it by putting some very tight controls and rules and regulations on the recruitment process through a licensing regime. If you don't have a licence as a recruiter, you can't recruit foreign care workers. We looked at the licensing regime and heard from live-in caregivers, and we determined that the best way to ensure protection here in Ontario is through a complete fee ban, a strong enforcement of that fee ban, a strong enforcement of prescribed rights for foreign live-in care workers and a very precise regime of prescribed obligations for their employers or the recruiters who recruit them, along with stiff penalties that can be applied to the employer or the recruiter.

How does our legislation specifically differ from the Manitoba legislation? Well, the Manitoba act focuses on administration, with a recruiter licensing and employment registration regime. The Ontario legislation focuses on strong enforcement and stiff penalties with respect to the rules covering the employment relationship. We also have a number of very innovative prohibitions and prescriptions of the obligations of employers.

Unlike Manitoba's legislation, violations here in Ontario, if they are really quite outrageous and egregious, could result in very substantial financial penalties and perhaps even incarceration. In addition, if the Ontario legislation is passed, Ontario would be the only jurisdiction in Canada to ban the withholding of passports and other personal documents. The idea of withholding passports and other documents as a way of imposing the employer's or the recruiter's will on these vulnerable foreign workers is, from the workers' point of view, really quite a fearsome—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I always enjoy listening to the member from Willowdale. In fact, I think he made a very, very good point.

I'm really anxious to see something quite new put on the table here. I'd like to have the Manitoba model tabled so all members can be refreshed on that option, because really, when I look at Bill 210—and there are sections of it, of course. We are very much supportive of protecting all workers, not just vulnerable workers. All workers need protection—we understand that—especially persons who may have been wrongly informed or inappropriately managed by recruiters and other people. Let's be very clear on that.

But, thanks to the member from Willowdale raising the point, we now want a full briefing on the Manitoba model before we can support this, because this model has some structural problems that we've drawn to the attention of the minister and others.

I'm just going to mention here in the brief time—I wish I could get more time here, though; I'm running out of time. On page 18 of the bill, and specifically on section 34, which is the investigation and inspection powers section, it's a bit overarching and a bit strong there;

posting of notices, section 37, is another part; and section 40, offences in general. These are sections that need a little more clarity in terms of what are the repercussions for an inspection officer coming in under a whistleblower type of event, where someone said something untoward has happened and the inspector comes in to the privacy—this warrantless entry provision is completely unacceptable in a democratic society. You have to prove in some kind of court that you have justifiable reason for needing this warrantless entry.

I think that if we looked at the Manitoba model, we might come to a consensus here. Isn't that what we're trying to do, to move forward—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Willowdale, and with the greatest of respect, he is like so many other Ontarians who do not understand immigration, immigration law, immigration policy and immigration abuse.

With the greatest of respect, I did work there for more than 20 years, and I will tell you, if there is a way to exploit the vulnerable, people will find it. People will find that exploitation.

We can see today in the province of Ontario that there are unscrupulous immigration consultants, unscrupulous recruiters, unscrupulous people who take advantage of new immigrants.

The province of Ontario, if they want to put an end to it, has to adopt the Manitoba model. You have to license people in order to be able to shut them down immediately when they fail.

I fail to understand what the member from Willowdale was talking about, saying that our model is different and our model is superior. Our model is not superior when you have to go through a long process in order to try to help those who are vulnerable. They have no roots. They have no ability to stay. With a three- or four-year proceeding in order to take someone to court, the chief witness will in all likelihood be gone.

We need the province of Ontario to stand up for foreign workers, we need them to put in a licensing provision, but we also need them—and it has not been talked about—to go back to the federal government and talk about how morally reprehensible the foreign worker program is.

We should be bringing people here to Canada with full rights of immigration. They should come with papers. They cannot be exploited in anywhere near the same way that those who are coming temporarily are.

There was a time when there was only a small agricultural program for foreign workers. Then we expanded it to nannies. Then Canada expanded it to literally hundreds of places, and it just is not working. The government is not addressing—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

0930

Mr. Mike Colle: I certainly agree with the member from East York that we've got over 200,000 part-time foreign workers now coming in every year with no controls, so it's right: The federal government is basically asleep at the switch, just opening the door with no controls, no support.

The member from Willowdale I think also touched on the humanity of this, and I appreciate that, but it's so rich to hear the Tories stand up and say they want the Manitoba model, when they're the ones that stripped all these protections away from temporary workers, foreign workers, when they were in power.

Then the member from Durham has got the gall to stand up and talk about warrantless entry in inspecting working conditions. It was the Tories that put that in. It was their government that put in the warrantless entry. Now they say that's undemocratic. As you know, in labour standards, labour inspectors have the right to inspect places of work. In this case here, if it's someone's home, they don't have the right to warrantless entry. But it's so incredible to hear the retro explanations of the Tories. They're the ones that took all these protections away so that these vultures, the human traffickers that traffic and exploit foreign workers, like caregivers, were given free rein by the Tories. Now they're saying they need more protection. The member from Durham should apologize and leave this chamber for that kind of disgusting thing. They took away the rights. Now they say, "You need more protections."

Anyways, this is a reasoned approach. For the first time in the government of Ontario's history we're protecting foreign nationals in the workplace, and it's about time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Further comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was interesting listening to the debate here and the member referring to "those vultures." Of course, the vultures who exploit these caregivers—the most noted and infamous vulture was the Liberal member of the federal House, Ruby Dhalla. That's the vulture he wants to prevent, and I would agree that we should prevent them. I'm sure that under the Manitoba model, Ruby Dhalla would not get a licence. That's what we should be looking at in this bill. I agree with the member from Willowdale, and I really appreciate him standing up and speaking about how good the Manitoba model is and how we should be looking to copy that Manitoba model and prevent those vultures the member for the cricket club was referring to.

Anyway, there is significant irony here. The Liberals are trying to protect the rights of foreign live-in workers. We agree with that, of course. But to trample on civil liberties, to deny people the privacy of their own home, to allow for warrantless entries, to trample on everybody else's rights for the protection of another: Even the most elementary of debaters would understand and realize that

you don't protect some by harming others. You don't protect some by harming others.

Anyway, I do believe that this licensing arrangement under the Manitoba model would be effective. It would prevent the vultures, like the Liberal member Ruby Dhalla, from ever being involved, and it would allow us to provide those opportunities for foreign live-in caregivers to come to this country and seek and retain gainful—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. The member for Willowdale has two minutes to respond.

Mr. David Zimmer: With respect to the Manitoba model, look, the Manitoba model was a good start in its day. The fact of the matter is that the Ontario model in Bill 210 is a better model, it's a stronger model, and here's why it's a better and a stronger model: It vests—it vests—rights in the vulnerable care worker. That's where you want the rights vested. Here's is what our model does: For example, a violation of the proposed legislation would result in a maximum penalty for an individual of \$50,000 and possible jail time. Manitoba's legislation provides a maximum penalty of \$25,000 and no jail time. Talk about focusing the mind of the employer and/or the recruiter. The focusing that the legislation brings to this is powerful. The rights that the vulnerable worker has will be vested in that vulnerable worker. Those rights are going to have to be posted—posted—by the employer and/or the recruiter. If the working language of the care worker is not English, they're going to have to post a translated copy of those rights and obligations. It's a way of vesting these protections, vesting these rights, on the person of the vulnerable care worker. The officers in the employment standards ministry now have the power to investigate, the power to interview, the power to conduct a very detailed analysis of what's going on in a situation where a care worker is being taken advantage of. These are powerful rights in the Ontario model.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 47(c), there having been six and a half hours of debate, this debate will be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: No further debate, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Therefore, this debate is adjourned.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND SAFETY
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT AUX NORMES
TECHNIQUES ET À LA SÉCURITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2009, on the motion for second reading 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 Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate. The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real pleasure this morning to continue the remarks on Bill 187, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996.

Yesterday, without House leaders' agreement, they brought this bill forward at the end of the sessional day, at about 5:57, which I felt was a little unfair. At that time, we stood because we find that public safety issues are very important, especially in this time of H1N1. The pandemic plan for the province of Ontario is a good example of the planning, or lack of it, that this McGuinty government is able to execute.

In almost every area that I look at—the economy, how is it doing? Terrible—300,000 jobs. The managing of the government expenditures: a deficit of almost \$25 billion. The resignation of a minister; another minister involved in a court issue, another member involved in a court issue; a deputy minister resigning; \$1 million a day in consultant fees—unaccounted for, by the way. You look at H1N1: Is there a lineup; is there enough or is there not? I don't think they can manage anything.

I am so disappointed right now in what's going on in Ontario under the McGuinty government that I have no choice but to make one statement first—these debates seem to be falling on deaf ears. We want the government to commit to public, province-wide hearings on the new HST. This is the largest single tax grab in the province's history and they want to ram it through without consulting the public.

So I'm going to say that based on this government's unwillingness to work in consensus and co-operation, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. O'Toole has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 0939 to 1009.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. O'Toole has moved adjournment of the debate. I ask all those in favour of the motion to please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 42; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion won.

Second reading debate adjourned.

ONTARIO LABOUR
MOBILITY ACT, 2009
LOI ONTARIENNE DE 2009
SUR LA MOBILITÉ
DE LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 29, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario and other Canadian provinces and territories / Projet de loi 175, Loi visant à accroître la mobilité de la main-d'oeuvre entre l'Ontario et les autres provinces et les territoires du Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure for me to participate in this debate on Bill 175, which I think is a very important piece of legislation for the economy of Ontario and, indeed, the economy of Canada.

Just at the outset I'd like to give a little bit of a summary of what Bill 175 is about, what the principle behind it is. Many in this Legislature, and indeed many who are watching this debate on television, may be surprised to learn that in Canada, a country which boasts a number of regulated authorities, a number of occupations for which you need special training and certification—here in Ontario, about 300 such occupations—if you receive that training, and I'll give a few examples such as an architect, a veterinarian, an engineer and an audiologist—once you've completed your education or training, you must go forward and receive a certification. Many might be surprised to learn that despite the fact that we are a single nation—that we are a single market, so to speak, in many cases—if you receive this accreditation in one province or territory, if you want to move to another province or territory, you cannot freely practise that trade, that profession, that what-have-you.

This has been an issue which has been long-standing here in the country of Canada. I think all of us have recognized sometimes the irony that despite the fact that we are a nation, there are barriers between different provinces and territories. The fact of the matter is, we need to move to eliminate those barriers as best we can so that we can move forward and compete. I think people are aware of some of those efforts that have taken place. In 1994, the Agreement on Internal Trade was passed, which was an effort by all the provinces in co-operation with the federal government to remove many of these trade barriers. Included in that was the notion of labour mobility.

Unfortunately, I hate to report that about 14 years later, in 2008 when this next came up on the public agenda, not much had happened, and many of these inter-provincial barriers still existed; that is, an architect, a veterinarian, a what-have-you in one province couldn't as easily move to another province or territory and take up their regulated profession. They had to jump through hoops and sometimes they were denied because they

didn't have experience in that particular province and they were forced to undertake further training.

This became, as I say, a focus in 2008 among Premiers as they met at the Council of the Federation meeting. I want to pay a tribute to the leadership of our Premier in bringing this forward, along with his colleagues, and making a commitment that all provinces would work together to remove these barriers. What was proposed was a very simple rule, a simple philosophy, which underlies the legislation that we're discussing here today. That is that if a person who is part of a regulated profession is recognized in one province, they are in a sense recognized in all provinces and territories. In other words, an architect from Saskatchewan who has received their accreditation there can come to Ontario and hang up his or her shingle and practise.

When you think about it, there's a certain logic to this. All of us in this Legislature have had a chance to travel throughout the country, both on personal business and also on legislative business. I don't think any of us who enter a building in Saskatchewan, to take the architect example, are fearful that somehow an architect in Saskatchewan does not meet the same standards as an architect in Ontario. The principle is that if these various professions—as I say, in Ontario we are looking at about 300 occupations—have received accreditation in one province, that will take place in other provinces moving forward—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. It being 10:15 of the clock, the House stands recessed until 10:30.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm delighted to welcome to the House today David Wolfe, from my riding, who is the dad of Sam Wolfe, one of our great new pages in the batch that just started yesterday.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: In the gallery we have members of the Halton Regional Police Association: Walt Bucci, Irene Kun and Rick Lostracco.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce my daughter Sheri Miller, who is here with her classmates who will be graduating this year from the registered nursing program at the University of Western Ontario: Jillian Dodman, Carmen Romero, Rachel Rollings and Bera Garcia.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm very pleased to introduce the president of the University of Windsor, who has joined us in the House today. President Alan Wildeman is here, and we welcome him and invite all MPPs to a reception that the University of Windsor is hosting downstairs in the dining room this evening between 5 and 7 p.m. Welcome, Dr. Wildeman.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): He's also a constituent of the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I would like to introduce Michael Schmidt, who is here on the third anniversary of the famous MNR raid on his farm. He's a farmer in Grey county.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce four officers from the Greater Sudbury Police Service. They are Jim Gibson, Marc Guerin, Greg McDonald and Dan Zembrzycki. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I too want to welcome the fine officers from the city of Greater Sudbury, but also all the police officers in the province of Ontario who are here for their lobby day, represented by their executive: Larry Molyneaux, the president; CAO Ron Middel; Karl Walsh, president of OPPA, the Ontario Provincial Police Association; and Mike McCormack from the Toronto Police Service.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to welcome Karen Selick, a member of the Canadian Constitution Foundation, joining us at the Park today supporting Michael Schmidt.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd also like to welcome the Hamilton Police Association and their members.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to introduce members of the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario, who are here for their 86th semi-annual meeting at Queen's Park: President Thelma McGillivray; board members Sheila Pepper, Beverlee McIntosh, Shirley Browne, Carol Canzona, May Toth, Marnie Sherritt, Margaret Jennings; and members Denise Mattock, Connie Zboch, Juno Piltz, Sheila McAuliffe, Eileen Lackie, Susan Jaap, Luba Podolsky, Barb Skelton, Mary Potter, Cynthia Dobrindt, Gracia Janes and Kim Ivan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to welcome, from Kitchener-Waterloo, Catherine Thompson, Kevin Crowley, Hélène Crowley and Elizabeth Crowley. They are the family of my page, Simon.

Hon. John Milloy: I too have a delegation as part of the police association meetings here today at Queen's Park. I'd like to welcome, in the visitors' gallery, Mike Sullivan, Paul Perchaluk, Laurie Cartwright and Amanda Harrald from my community.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On behalf of my page, Vanessa Van Decker, I would like to introduce her mother, Maureen Madigan, and her friend Cavalea Cawthray, who are joining us in the gallery today.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to welcome the grade 5 students from St. Patrick school in Ajax, who will be arriving here at about 11 o'clock. I thank their teachers and parents. This is the school that Minister Watson spoke on very recently, in reference to Greenbelt Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of page Paisley Murray and the member from Oak Ridges-Markham, we'd like to welcome her mother, Carol Heck, her grandmother Una Murray, and her grandfather David Murray. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Niagara Falls and page Alana Fansolato, we welcome her mother, Carina Fansolato, to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Barrie and page Jordan Morello, I'd like to welcome his sister Olivia Morello, his father, Renzo Morello, and his mother, Carol Veale-Morello, to the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery the Consul General of the Portuguese republic here in Toronto, Mr. Júlio Vilela. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guest to the Legislature today. Welcome, Consul General.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members to join me as we allow the pages to assemble for official introduction.

Hadhy Ayaz, Halton; Nickolas Barbieri, Etobicoke-Lakeshore; Melissa Bray, Pickering-Scarborough East; Simon Crowley, Kitchener-Waterloo; Christopher Dabner, Burlington; Alana Fansolato, Niagara Falls; Paisley Murray, Oak Ridges-Markham; Saeyon Mylvaganam, Beaches-East York; Connor Niedbala, Etobicoke Centre; Jamie Sheidow, London North Centre; Valerie Steckle, Huron-Bruce; Vanessa Van Decker, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke; Samuel Wolfe, Nipissing; Cairistiona Federico, Brampton-Springdale; Olivia Hughes, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington; Maggie Hutchinson, Durham; Iman Kassam, Mississauga South; Karen Lin, Willowdale; Robyn Lin, Don Valley West; Nicolas McWatters, Parkdale-High Park; Jordan Morello, Barrie.

Welcome to all our pages. Enjoy your time here at Queen's Park.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(a), the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has given notice of his intention to file a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 218, An Act to implement 2009 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts. Bill 218 may therefore not be called during orders of the day today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. Why are you choosing to exempt newspapers from your sales tax grab but not other sources of news, like magazines, Internet service or cable news?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The tax package that we're providing Ontarians with—the personal tax cuts, the corporate tax cuts as well as the implementation of a more efficient form of tax—is the right package of tax

changes, including the exemptions that we have provided for.

The Leader of the Opposition will be aware that we've provided a number of other exemptions.

The government has determined that those exemptions, including the newspaper exemption, are the appropriate exemptions in the context of the broader tax package, which will create more than 590,000 net new jobs in Ontario.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Frankly, I'm disappointed the Premier didn't respond to a very simple and direct question. Let me try again. Ontario families are concerned that instead of listening to those who are going to foot the bills, you're more concerned about listening to high-priced Liberal lobbyists and insiders like Jason Grier, who might as well have hung out a shingle to say, "If you want access to George Smitherman, come through me."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member that we refer to members by their riding names.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale. Thank you, Speaker.

Ontario families will wonder why Premier McGuinty is cutting a special side deal for newspapers but is going to make working families and retirees pay 8% more for gas for their car, heat for their home, Internet bills, cable bills, and the list goes on.

I ask the Premier directly: Does the exemption for newspapers have anything to do with the fact that Jason Grier is a lobbyist for the newspaper association?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have provided a number of exemptions under the HST as well as the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the member for Halton to withdraw the comment he just made.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I withdraw, but it's true.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The exemptions we've provided are among several that are designed to help families. We adjusted the housing factor and we talked about feminine hygiene products, a range of children's clothing and other exemptions that we believe are the appropriate mix. I want to urge all members again that this package is about tax cuts for families, tax cuts for businesses—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Have you withdrawn the tax on truth serum?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw. It was just a question. I was just wondering about it.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We don't think creating jobs is a laughing matter, like the Conservatives. That's why the fair tax coalition has come out—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: This Jason Grier is one powerful fellow. Instead of the member for Toronto Centre, Premier, maybe you should make Jason Grier your Deputy Premier. At least it would be a bit more honest.

Let me ask the Premier directly again: You're trying to nail Ontario taxpayers with the biggest sales tax increase in the history of our province. Working families and retirees are going to pay more for gas for their car, heat for their homes—a \$3-billion tax grab that is going to hurt families and kill jobs. Premier, if you truly believe that this greedy tax grab is in the best interests of Ontario families, show the courage of your convictions. Call for public hearings in Niagara Falls; call for public hearings in Peterborough, public hearings in London and North Bay. Take your case directly to the taxpayers, because I bet they'll laugh you out of the hall.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Economic Development and Trade will withdraw the comment she just made.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I withdraw.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This from the leader of the party that had its last budget at Magna—talk about lack of public access. You know, I'd like the leader of the Conservative Party to tell us why their 2009 pre-budget submission said that the official opposition calls on this government to heed the call of the federal government and take immediate action to fix Ontario's competitive tax structure. We've done just that. Can you explain to me why Mr. Runciman said, the day we introduced the budget, "I think in theory our party is supportive of harmonization." That party has been all over the map. This province needs leadership. The Premier of Ontario is providing, and this government is providing, a tax package that will cut taxes for 93% of Ontarians. It will create 591,000 new jobs. This province is going to support this. This province knows that we need to create jobs and we need a more competitive—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Finance will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

New question.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, and I wonder if the Premier and the finance minister have the guts to try that circus act in full public hearings in Niagara Falls, in Peterborough and in North Bay.

Premier, you have ordered your Liberal caucus to shut down the public accounts committee hearings into your

billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle before the committee finished their investigation. Why are you ending the committee's work? What exactly, Premier, are you afraid of?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's up to the committee to make their own decisions in terms of what work they want to pursue and how much time they want to devote to that. I do want to thank them for the work that they have done.

I also want to relate back to the original work performed by the auditor and thank him, once again, for his good work. I thought he was nothing short of thorough. He made some specific findings and came up with some specific recommendations, and we adopt each and every one of those. He pointed out, in particular, a lack of oversight on the part of our government over activities that were unfolding over in eHealth and through Smart Systems. We accept that. We agree with that. We take responsibility for that. That's why we have put in place a number of specific changes to ensure that those kinds of activities are not repeated, and in particular, we are no longer going to allow sole-sourced contracts for our consultants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier knows that Liberal Party fingerprints are all over the eHealth boondoggle, from former Liberal campaign chair John Ronson to your former adviser and adviser to the Deputy Premier, Karli Farrow. In an explosive revelation at committee, the former deputy minister, Ron Sapsford, told the committee that the Premier's senior health adviser, Sacha Bhatia, and his principal secretary, Jamison Steeve, had meetings with the CEO of eHealth, Sarah Kramer. Premier, since we don't get any answers from you, we need to ask Sarah Kramer directly about the contents of that meeting.

Premier, will you support the PC caucus motion to call Sarah Kramer for appearing at the public accounts committee, or are you trying to cover the trail that is now leading directly to the top advisers in the Premier's office?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, I won't. I will not support the continuing efforts of the official opposition to engage in games. I think that's counterproductive. I think it runs counter to the public interest, and it runs counter to the very specific finding made by the auditor. I want to draw the opposition's attention to this yet again. The auditor's report says, "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work."

No matter how many times I confront my honourable colleague with this finding of an independent auditor, he continues to reject that finding. Instead, he prefers to engage in political games. We won't participate in that. We'll continue to move forward and put in place an electronic health records system for all Ontarians.

1050

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't understand why the Premier is afraid of hearing directly from Sarah Kramer, his hand-picked CEO at eHealth.

We all know that this billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle has so far resulted in the chair of eHealth, the CEO for eHealth, the deputy minister, and Ministers Caplan and Smitherman all losing their jobs. The only senior eHealth figure who has yet to lose his job is Premier McGuinty himself. And just when the committee found the direct links to his principal secretary, to his top health adviser, all of a sudden Dalton McGuinty now wants to cut off the committee hearings.

Premier, what ever happened to your commitment to transparency? What ever happened to your commitment to integrity? What ever happened to your commitment to watch out for the best interests of taxpayers? What happened to Dalton McGuinty after six years in office? Will you call Sarah Kramer to that committee today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have a different approach and I think Ontarians can garner that on a day-to-day basis.

Rather than engaging in innuendo, I think Ontarians are looking for ideas, especially good ideas, and e-health is a good idea.

According to Canada Health Infoway, we are 95% to 100% complete on our client registry, on our diagnostic imaging systems, and on clinical reports of immunization. There is more work to be done, but we are making real progress. Since 2005, more than four million Ontarians now have electronic medical records in place. All of our hospitals have now gone filmless and are using digital diagnostic scans.

There were some problems, admittedly, at eHealth. They had to do with oversight. The auditor spoke to that in a very direct way.

Now we choose on behalf of Ontarians, in their interests, to move forward, and that's what we're doing.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. People across the province are worried—worried about their jobs, worried about their ability to pay their bills. The Premier says that a new tax on gas, on heating and on haircuts is going to make all that go away. Alberta-based economists may think that, but Ontarians struggling to get by during this recession absolutely do not.

My question is, when will the Premier start listening to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is right; there have been a number of economists who have spoken out in favour. There is a very strong consensus that it's time for us to do this kind of thing. One of those,

in particular, is Hugh Mackenzie, who's an economist. I think it's fair to say that he's on the left side of the political spectrum. This is what he said: "Ontario's 2009-10 budget establishes the right direction for the next few years. It provides substantial economic stimulus. It is consistent with the new orthodoxy that relies heavily on governments to help rebuild damaged economies. It imposes ... coherence on an incoherent federal plan. It increases support for low-income families and individuals. It modernizes Ontario's consumption tax."

I'd urge my honourable colleague to listen to an economist who is highly regarded on the left and, I'll also say, in connection with these comments, highly regarded by everyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier asked Ontarians for input on the last budget, but people's concerns about his tax plan are now falling on deaf ears—people like Lynn Eckert from Pickering, who writes this: "It is unfortunate that during these tough economic times ... middle-income families will have to battle another struggle just to make ends meet. Most of us have cut back as much as we thought possible just to keep our heads above water over the past couple of years and now we will have to ... make even more sacrifices for our families just to make our mortgage payments!" Why isn't the Premier listening to people like Lynn?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I look forward to the day when my honourable colleague stands in the House and says, "Did you know that 93% of Ontarians are going to get a permanent tax cut under the Liberal government's comprehensive package of tax reforms?" In addition to that fact, which my colleague omits, 90,000 people will no longer pay personal income tax in Ontario, and an average family with an \$80,000 income will see a 10% tax cut. That means a family of four with an annual income of \$25,000 will permanently save \$1,040 every year.

We have worked hard to be fair and equitable and to ensure that families at the lower end of the income scale stand to benefit from this package of tax reforms, and I only wish that my honourable colleague would draw the public's attention to that from time to time.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Lynn is not the only Ontarian being ignored by this Premier. Mark Marcon from Windsor writes, "I am opposed to the HST.... This is absolutely the worst time." Carla Baird from Kenora says, "I ... do not support the HST. The HST will cost all a lot more money for such things as home heating [and] gas." And Heather Barr from Ottawa adds this: "Don't you realize that many people just took salary cuts ... because of [the recession]? How do you think people have extra money to be able to cover this?"

How much longer will the Premier ignore Ontarians like Heather, Carla, Mark and Lynn?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to, through my honourable colleague, reassure all the individuals whose

names she has put forward that we are in fact cutting their personal income taxes.

I also want to speak to those people and all Ontarians who understand intuitively that our world has changed. We need to do something to build a stronger Ontario and create more jobs. They're not looking for strong champions and defenders of the status quo, which they will find on that side of the House. What they are looking for are people who are prepared to lead them into a bright and promising future, where we can secure a bright future for our children.

One part of our plan has to do with modernizing and putting in place a competitive tax system. That's what our package of tax reforms is all about. More importantly than anything else, it's about creating 600,000 more jobs. We will do everything necessary to move forward with this package of tax reforms and get in place those 600,000 jobs for the people of Ontario.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's a difference between new ideas and the really old, tired ones that the Premier continues to bring forward.

You know what? The Premier has a chance, though. He has a chance to show Lynn from Pickering and Mark from Windsor that he's at least willing to listen. The Premier can make sure that the committee that reviews the HST legislation travels across the province so that the people in Thunder Bay, Windsor, London, Ottawa and Kingston are heard. Will the Premier promise today, here and now, that the committee will visit communities across Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can promise a fulsome debate. I would say that it has been the subject of some considerable debate and conversation for at least seven months, and I expect it will occupy much of the interest of the public for months, if not years, to come.

What I would also draw to my honourable colleague's attention are some of the recommendations that came from the NDP Fair Tax Commission in 1991. Recommendation 58: Ontario should exempt all business inputs from the retail sales tax. Recommendation number 60: Ontario should harmonize—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Premier?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This pains them, but we must continue. Recommendation number 60 from the NDP Fair Tax Commission: Ontario should harmonize its retail sales tax with a national sales tax modelled on the federal goods and services tax.

Somewhere on the road to Damascus this leader lost her way. We have found our way. We are doing it the right way. We are going to create 600,000 jobs for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't know how digging up two-decade-old policy is new, but the Premier seems to think that it's all new. I have to say, in all seriousness—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Start the clock. Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It seems really clear from the Premier's response that he's not prepared to listen to the people of Ontario when it comes to their opinions about the HST. Since he's prepared to ignore them, I'm going to give him some more views from the people of Ontario that we've heard.

Tanya Clancy from Stratford says this: "It has been difficult enough the past couple of years with job losses in our home, just to keep the bills paid."

Dave and Laura Goodwin say this: "In this recession, the HST is going to devastate all the families already hard-hit by layoffs."

These are the voices of the people whom we represent in this chamber. Why won't the Premier at least hear them out and commit to HST hearings across this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We obviously have heard those kinds of concerns, but there's another one that I would call upon my honourable colleague to listen to and try to find some way to answer. The question that is being put forward to us by Ontarians is quite simply this: What do we need to do to grow stronger? People understand that the old world is behind us and is not coming back. What they want to know is what we need to do to grow stronger, and that's going to involve some changes on our part.

This is not a time for champions of the status quo. It's time for us to find a way forward. One important way forward is for us to put in place a modern, competitive tax system. We've got to catch up to 130 other countries. We've got to catch up to four other provinces. It's time for us to take this step forward together and create 600,000 more jobs. If my colleague has a different plan to create 600,000 more jobs, we'd love to hear it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Listening to people isn't an old-world idea but ignoring them is. That's what this Premier is prepared to do. Until the Premier starts listening, I am going to keep raising the views of Ontarians in this chamber.

Russ Horner from Oshawa says this: "I doubt that any savings will be passed on. The same thing happened with the GST some time ago. Consumers got screwed as usual."

Christine Prokulevich from Sudbury says: "My husband hasn't worked in over four months, and additional costs that we'll have to pay due to the HST will have nothing but a negative impact on our family and home. We're struggling now."

Mrs. Hodges in Thunder Bay adds: "My husband and I live on a fixed income. There is no way we will be able to make do with the proposed HST tax."

Why is the Premier preventing Mrs. Hodges and other Ontarians like her from having a say?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I fully expect that my honourable colleague will do a very good job at making those kinds of representations day in and day out in the House. What I believe Ontarians are looking for are just a few more ideas on the part of the opposition. We have worked hard and, I would argue, well in government to come forward with a package of tax reforms that involve tax cuts for individuals, small businesses and our larger corporations and moving forward with the HST. We know that will create 600,000 more jobs.

The opposition says that they are against these reforms. What we don't know is what they are for. If they have a package of reforms that they can guarantee will create 600,000 more jobs during the course of the next 10 years, then we would love to hear that, but to this point in time we've heard no such ideas, no such proposals and no such policies. We have a solid idea. We're moving forward on behalf of Ontarians.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier of Ontario. Why are you blocking public consultations in Kingston, Cornwall, Belleville, Windsor, London, Thunder Bay and North Bay? Why are you blocking public consultation across Ontario on the HST?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We will have the same public hearings we've had on other fall budget bills, and I will tell you they will be considerably more than that bunch had when they were the government. We announced this in March. Myself and my colleagues have had public meetings all over Ontario. I have had meetings in Windsor, London, Thunder Bay, Peterborough and Ottawa. The committee will have hearings as a result of this bill. They'll be the same as we've done on other fall bills.

We will take time to put out the full story: to tell people that they want to block an income tax cut, to tell senior citizens that they want to slow down property tax credits, to tell our business communities that they don't want them to have the most competitive taxes in North America.

We are behind this policy, as are Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Harper. We will continue to sell it. We will convince Ontarians and show them that this party, this government—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If he believes his rhetoric on the HST, I've got an energy centre in Windsor to sell him.

He tells us he's going to create jobs; he doesn't. He tells us he won't raise taxes, then he does. Yesterday we had 150 Ontarians here who wanted to speak out against the HST. What do they have to show for it? Nothing, because you are going to block Ontarians, hundreds of thousands of them, who want to speak in their local community and have their voice heard. You're denying them that right. Are you afraid to face the public on this greedy \$3-billion tax grab?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member and her party are going to vote against the broadest set of tax cuts for Ontarians ever presented. They may hide themselves in their rhetoric. They may want to ignore the advice of Jim Flaherty and Stephen Harper. They can ignore the advice of every major economist who's been talked to. They can wrap themselves in hyperbole; they can wrap themselves in false anger.

This government wants to create jobs. This government will create jobs. Unlike that member and her party, we're not content. We're not content to have unemployed auto workers in Windsor and St. Catharines. We're not content to see people lose their jobs in Brockville, North Bay and elsewhere. It's time for leadership, for courage, to listen to the experts, do what's right and create more than 600,000 new jobs. Stand up for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. If you're going to have some of these cross-debates, I'd very much encourage the honourable members to take them outside.

New question.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Michael Prue: To the minister responsible for the OLG: Can the minister explain how the Windsor Energy Centre could be budgeted at \$40 million, end up costing the public \$80 million, and now, if the forensic accountants are correct and to be believed, could be worth absolutely, and I quote them, "nothing"?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister?

1110

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are serious issues around the Windsor Energy Centre. Unlike the Conservative government, we are not going to close down Casino Windsor as a result of that, as Mr. Shurman indicated they would. Unlike the NDP, who voted against the initiative to create those jobs in Windsor, we are committed to ensuring the vitality and success of this enterprise.

We've taken a number of steps to deal with what transpired with respect to the Windsor Energy Centre. I would invite the member to look at OLG's statement of claim that was filed in court the other day, and I'd invite—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: The government of Ontario tells families that these are tough times. They should get ready for emergency room closures, fired nurses and other cuts, but when they turn on the news, they learn their government spent \$80 million to build a power plant that may literally be worth nothing.

CBC reports that the minister couldn't even find the valuation report. Why does the CBC have more infor-

mation on the Windsor Energy Centre than the minister supposedly responsible for it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are, and have been, serious issues at the OLG, which is precisely why we have taken a number of the steps we have taken. There are questions on both sides of the issue.

Over the past five months, we have taken steps at the board level, at the senior executive level. We've put in a short-term operator at the Windsor Energy Centre to keep the lights on, and we've done a competitive RFP for a longer-term operator.

There's no doubt that the issues around the energy centre are troubling. We are committed to getting to the bottom of them. We are committed to defending the interests of taxpayers. That's what we've done to date. We will continue to do that, and we will continue to do it as part of our efforts to ensure that we create jobs and maintain jobs in the tourism industry, both in Windsor and across the province, with respect to gaming.

UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. In my community of Windsor-Essex, health care continues to be a key concern for families. We're well aware that Ontario is in need of more doctors, and over the past several years, we've made great strides in training and recruiting more doctors, but I still hear on occasion from constituents who do not have access to a doctor. My constituents want to know that when they're sick, they have quick and easy access to a health care provider. Some residents have expressed concern that they live in communities that are not adequately reached by health care professionals, and I know this concern is echoed in some communities across the province.

What is the minister doing to train more doctors so more Ontarians have access to health care providers?

Hon. John Milloy: That was an excellent question raised by the member. I think all of us recognize the need to train more doctors here in the province of Ontario, and I'm very pleased that our government has taken the initiative and invested in more medical spots throughout the province.

One of the approaches that we've taken is to establish new medical education campuses, satellite campuses, in a number of communities across the province that do not have medical schools. I know the honourable member comes from the Windsor-Essex area, and one of those, in fact, involves the University of Windsor. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize those who are here today from the University of Windsor.

I'm pleased to report that, in partnership with the University of Western Ontario, the University of Windsor recently opened their doors to more medical students at the satellite campus. Last September, 28 new first-year students began their studies at the University of Windsor, and I think, as members know, studies have shown—

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

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Everyone in Windsor-Essex county is excited to see the effects of the medical school on our community. Windsor has been in need of a boost in the medical sector, and I know it will do just that.

While a new medical school is important for the university, there are a number of other programs offered by the University of Windsor that are just as important. I understand that the university works very hard to improve its programming each and every year, and recently I was pleased to see the university call for tenders for the construction of the centre for engineering innovation. I believe that this will not only help attract students from outside the Windsor-Essex area, but it will also encourage more of those living within the area to attend the university.

Through you, Speaker, again I'm asking that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities share with this House how this government is helping to boost Windsor's ability to train and retain engineers by investing in the University of Windsor.

Hon. John Milloy: In 2007, the provincial government announced that we'd be investing \$40 million to help the University of Windsor build the centre for engineering innovation, and I'm pleased to report that the federal government came to the table earlier this year through the knowledge infrastructure program. This 300,000-square-foot facility will focus on research and development and facilitate a direct connection between education, research and industrial innovation. The project is expected to create more than 1,600 jobs and have a total direct and indirect economic stimulus for Ontario and Canada of \$270 million over three years.

I think all members recognize the importance of engineering as an area where Ontario needs to excel as we move forward to the jobs of the future, and I'm very proud that we could partner with the University of Windsor on this extremely important—

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

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier. Congratulations, Premier, you've made The National. The McGuinty Liberals' answers to questions about the Windsor Energy Centre simply raise more questions.

First, you begin construction of a casino expansion without any mention of needing additional power. You say it will cost \$40 million to build the energy centre, then you spend \$81 million to build the energy centre—just what we needed: more hot air from Windsor.

Now, media reports reveal that you are sitting on a report that says the \$81-million project may be worth nothing. Perhaps we need a public inquiry on that.

What are you going to do about this Dwight elephant?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can tell you we're not going to shut down Caesars Windsor the way that member wants to. As I've said to the member in the past, there is no doubt that there are challenges at the OLG, and this is one of the biggest.

Here is what we have done in the last five months. First of all, we've replaced the board and we're in the process of replacing the CEO. We have a short-term operator in place at the centre, we've done a competitive RFT and we are defending the lawsuit that the contractor has filed. I would invite the member and his colleagues to look at the rebuttal to the lawsuit to get a better sense of what the position of this government is.

What I can tell the member is that we remain committed to building the tourism sector across Ontario, especially in southwestern Ontario. We remain committed to keeping those facilities operating, and we will deal with this in an appropriate fashion over the next weeks and months. But make no mistake; we're—

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Since the energy centre was built, indeed since pledging no more sole-sourced contracts, you awarded a \$15,000-per-day sole-source deal to Angus Consulting, as you've just confirmed.

On October 30, the Premier said that breaking a promise to end sole-source deals was necessary because you had to keep the lights on at the Windsor casino. But the Cole valuation report says the energy centre is not about generating power, so this can't be about the lights. I've been telling you this for months while you dodged and took cover behind lawsuits and police investigations.

Why did you say you awarded the contract to keep the lights on when you did not?

1120

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did let a short-term agreement go in order to—and I think the member forgot the other answer I gave him, that in fact the centre is providing heating and cooling to the facility.

I agree with him entirely: It is not an ideal situation. I don't like what has given rise to this situation. What we are trying to do now is unravel this and make sure that that centre is competitive, make sure that it continues to employ 2,300 people in the part of this country that has the highest unemployment and ensure that this sort of situation never happens again. That's what we're doing, those are the steps we've taken, and that's what we're going to continue to do, in spite of whatever they may say or want to say. We remain committed to the operation and we will unravel this mess in due course.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Finance. On October 28 in this House, you made a perplexing statement. You said that the implementation of the Arthurs recommendation to protect monthly pension benefits up to \$2,500 would result in "a massive increase in what employees have to contribute in order to fund the PGBF."

Again I ask: Will the minister stand in this House and admit that (1) employees do not pay directly into the guaranteed fund; pension funds do, and that (2) nowhere

in the Arthurs report is it recommended that individual employees pay directly into the fund in the future?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Perhaps the member doesn't understand that if we increase the benefit, it's going to have to be paid for. Will the company write the cheque for the pension? Yes, but where is that money going to come from? It will have to be part of negotiations.

I know the member feels strongly about this, as do we. There are pension benefit guarantee funds in Ontario and the United States. Both of them are financially underwater. According to Mr. Arthurs's recommendation, we have engaged an outside actuary to give us an estimate of how much it would cost to provide that benefit and how it would be paid for. That will, I would say to my friend and colleague opposite, have a very meaningful and direct impact, potentially, on employment. Therefore, I think we have to look at this in the context of all the recommendations and work together to try to see what we can do in the—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Again on October 28, there was a perplexing statement made. In responding to a question as to why Ontario wasn't following Quebec's lead in helping safeguard the pensions of Nortel employees, he said, "What the government of Quebec is doing is exactly what we would do in the same circumstances.... It would not be appropriate to characterize it as doing anything different than Ontario is doing."

Will the minister now admit that the Ontario government has not followed the lead of the Quebec government in offering a helping hand to Nortel employees and has neither guaranteed the capital of Nortel employee pensions in Ontario nor agreed to hold off on a wind-up plan and give the assets five years to regain their value?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, we did that last December, and that's precisely the point. The way the Quebec response has been characterized—it was, in fact, a change of policy for the government of Quebec. However, it reflects steps that we have already taken. I will undertake to provide the member opposite with a more detailed response to that.

We have an enormous challenge with respect to post-retirement income here in Ontario and across Canada. Premier McGuinty has led the fight to get this on the national radar and to have a full national discussion. That will take place next year at the Council of the Federation.

These are difficult issues. Ontario will continue to move forward. Within the next two weeks, I'll be bringing forward the first piece of serious pension reform legislation, and we'll have an opportunity to debate those ideas and those thoughts. In the interim, we will work with employers and employees to help protect those pensions that are threatened now.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Many seniors in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and across Ontario are living

on fixed incomes. In these tough economic times, every cent counts.

Many seniors are hearing the fear tactics and scare-mongering of those who choose to play politics with Ontario's future. What they haven't been told is that the HST is part of our comprehensive package that will see 93% of Ontarians receiving personal income tax cuts and also that 90,000 low-income Ontarians will no longer have to pay personal income tax. As well, low- and middle-income seniors will receive a permanent \$260 sales tax credit, and the list goes on.

The Daily Bread Food Bank has been calling for more consideration of what the HST will mean for low-income Ontarians and those living on fixed incomes. Specifically, they were asking and looking for an exemption on prepared food under \$4. What does this exemption mean for those on fixed incomes and businesses in my riding and in those ridings—

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I thank my friend for the question. I want to say to seniors, and particularly those on fixed incomes, that starting in January we will be permanently reducing their income taxes and we'll be enhancing their tax credits in July.

What that means, and I would say with all due respect that is the whole story, is that it is vital that we pass our fall budget bill. We need to do that because we cannot provide some \$10.6 billion worth of income tax relief for individuals over the next three years and some \$4.5 billion worth of tax relief for our corporations over the next three years unless we get that bill passed.

There are some who are opposed to some \$15 billion worth of income tax relief in the province of Ontario. On this side of the House, we know it's important, as we move forward with our tax modernization, that we get the piece about reducing income taxes into law as quickly as possible. That is what the seniors, particularly those on fixed incomes—

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: Again to the Minister of Revenue: As we face the current global economic recession, one of the most pressing questions people face is, will they have a job or how can they find a job? No one chooses to struggle in supporting their families. However, we can support Ontario families by helping people get back to work.

Telus says that the HST will mean more investment in the province and more jobs. The Canadian Chemical Producers' Association says that the HST savings will help to preserve jobs in Ontario and allow companies to grow in the future. The Railway Association of Canada says that a single sales tax will save jobs. Jack Mintz estimates the HST will create over 590,000 jobs. Should Ontarians believe those who are playing politics with Ontario's economic future or should they believe in Canada's leading employers and economists?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say, with all due respect, there are those on one side of the political spectrum who

think that what we should do today is slash and burn. That is something they did to this province before. There are others who think that we should just increase taxes for everyone. But what we've said is that it's important for us to reform our tax system, to modernize it. What we need in the province more than anything else is more jobs—more people paying taxes to support our public services and fewer people who have to draw upon that pot for the common good. That is the route for us to restore Ontario to vibrant economic times. That will lead our tax reform to an increase of some 590,000 more jobs, \$47 billion worth of more investment. On this side of the House, we're embracing a growing economy by reforming our tax system. On that side of the House, the twins of the status quo over there, status and quo—

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

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Before I get to the question, I want to welcome all the members of the Police Association of Ontario here today and give my full support of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus.

Minister, you are responsible for the police services in this province, and of course, many of them are here today. You are aware that the director of the province's special investigations unit reports directly to your colleague the Attorney General. As the minister responsible for police, are you satisfied that the director of the SIU, Mr. Ian Scott, is performing his job in an objective and non-biased manner?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Obviously this is a very, very important issue. Let me say, on behalf of the people of Ontario, that we have every confidence in the structures that we've set up. We've set up structures to ensure that oversight is independent. We've set up structures to ensure that police officers and the public have equal rights of protection. We have set up a system whereby there can be no question about the integrity of our police officers in their actions.

Independent oversight is important. Independent oversight is good. I have to say that this is a government that clearly supports its police officers and the important work they do in the province.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, maybe you can begin by answering the question.

Minister, comments made by the director in an SIU press release of September 28 involving a police shooting incident in northern Ontario and more recently in a Toronto Star article of October 31 would indicate that the director sees fit to inject his personal opinion. His opinion casts a wide swath of doubt with respect to police in general.

The police community, both front-line and administrative, are outraged and believe that the director has lost

his ability to remain objective and clearly has a bias against our police officers.

Minister, if the director oversees the actions of the police, who oversees the actions of the director? And what is being done to correct this abuse of the power of this office?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member knows full well that this minister or any other minister in this government cannot comment about individual cases.

But let me assure the people of Ontario, let me assure the police officers of Ontario, let me assure everyone in this chamber, that we value the work that our police officers do. We respect the work that our police officers do.

We will put the resources in to ensure that our police officers have the ability to do what they have to do in order to protect the people of Ontario. We will not be like previous governments and put half-measure programs in place that deter community safety rather than enhance it.

We are about community safety and our partners. We are proud of that partnership.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. All management and unionized staff at children's aid societies and children's mental health agencies across Ontario will be wearing blue ribbons on National Child Day on Friday. The blue ribbon indicates that the McGuinty government has failed children at risk, as the agencies that help them prepare their layoff notices and teeter on bankruptcy and outright closure.

On behalf of the children who depend on these vital agencies, I ask, will the Premier commit that no children's aid society will cut services, lay off staff or file for bankruptcy?

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance again to speak in this House on this critically important issue with respect to finding a pathway forward for the sustainability of children's aid societies. I have told this House before, it is our commitment to the kids that drives us to find a sustainable pathway forward for children's aid societies. Children's aid societies do some of the most important work, but they also must work in partnership in the communities in which they operate to make sure that we are able to put kids first and find the best outcomes for kids.

We are actively working right across the province with respect to the work being undertaken in our regional offices, to work line by line through budgets and to find a sustainable pathway forward. At the same time, we will be making some announcements shortly with respect to the individuals who will be on our commission to promote the sustainability of children's aid societies.

I look forward to working with our partners across the province to find—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The children of this province do not need another commission. They need their children's aid societies to be there for them when they need them. The only pathway this government is preparing is a pathway to bankruptcy and closure of children's aid societies.

Payukotayno James and Hudson Bay Family Services has issued layoff notices already; so has York Region CAS. Native Child and Family Services of Toronto faces a \$1.4-million shortfall. Chatham-Kent children's aid society is preparing for bankruptcy as we speak. The children's aid society in Kenora can't meet the \$600,000 monthly cost of protecting high-needs children and will soon be unable to make its payroll.

When management and unionized staff at these agencies sound their blue ribbon alert on Friday, what will this government do to ensure no layoffs, no services are cut, no closures at any—

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: One of the things that we need to do is work within communities across the province. If the member opposite had an opportunity to talk to those who are out in communities, she would well know that this ministry is working at the regional level to manage cash flow, to work with agencies, to find that partnership.

Let's be clear on the facts in this case. Children's aid society funding has gone from \$500 million to \$1.4 billion in the last 10 years. That level of increase is not sustainable. We need to find a way to do better and we need to find a way to deliver more services and better outcomes to the kids.

I can tell you that every single day, my focus is on the children of this province, finding a way to deliver services to them and being open to the fact that we need to find a better and new pathway forward. The old way will not be the way of the future. We need to continue working with—

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

POLICE

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, police officers perform a vital role in our communities by working to ensure the safety of all Ontarians. Every day, police officers selflessly place themselves in dangerous situations without hesitation. It is because of the serious and often dangerous nature of the job and the importance of community safety that our government must ensure our police officers have the resources they need.

I know that today we have many esteemed representatives from police services across the province at Queen's Park to discuss issues of concern to their profession, including members from my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I hope that our government continues to listen to them and give them the support they need to perform very important duties—namely, keeping our

loved ones safe. Minister, how does this government support our police officers?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question and for his commitment to community safety. I'm proud that our government values the relationship with the police officers of Ontario. That relationship is very, very important because of their valuable input, their on-the-job experience and their sound advice. It's a partnership that is truly working.

Let's look back at the history since 2003, briefly: \$93 million for our guns-and-gangs strategy. We just didn't have \$93 million and we decided we'd put it somewhere; we listened to the police officers of Ontario, who told us, "That's a wise use of money." Then the police officers told us that we have to invest in the Toronto anti-violence intervention strategy, and so we invested \$25 million. Why? Because they said it was important. Then they said it was very, very important that we invest in—

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: I know that one of the concerns of our police services is that they have adequate funding in order to have enough officers in Ontario communities. Being able to increase the number of officers in our communities is one of the most important things we can do to ensure safer communities. Police officers play a number of important roles when it comes to reducing crime. Not only do they remove criminals from our streets, but the presence of officers is also a major deterrent. In many Ontario communities, the involvement of officers in community programs is a key factor in deterring at-risk youth from becoming involved in criminal activities.

Minister, given that increasing the number of police officers offers so many benefits, can you tell me what our government is doing to increase the number of police officers in our communities?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Again, another very, very important question. We, the government of the day, the government of Ontario, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, understand that it is very, very important that we put more police officers on the streets. So we have committed \$68 million every year to put 2,000 new police officers on the streets.

One of the items on the Police Association of Ontario's agenda is that we lobby the federal government for the police officer recruitment fund, for them to live up to their commitment. I want every police officer here and those police officers across Ontario to understand that Premier McGuinty and this government will do all we can to ensure that the federal government lives up to that commitment to put more police officers on the streets of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Minister, with the introduction of the "support our troops" licence plate, which was initiated by my colleague from Simcoe North, Garfield

Dunlop, you waxed on about your support for our troops and the men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces and your gratitude for the great work that they do. If the minister truly means what he says, then he will surely not continue to ignore the request of Lieutenant-Colonel Keith Rudderham, the commanding officer of CFB Petawawa—Ontario's largest military base. Lieutenant-Colonel Rudderham wrote you on August 31 on the issue of access to licensing services for the people on base Petawawa. To date, you haven't even shown him the courtesy of a reply. Why won't you respond to the base commander? Or are your words simply empty rhetoric?

1140

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me tell you, I think the yellow licence plates that we're issuing are in support of our troops. I'm very proud of the work that our troops do outside the country and inside the country, and anything that we can do to acknowledge their contributions—that's exactly what we are doing by issuing these yellow plates.

We have worked very closely with the Canadian Armed Forces, and they're very pleased with the arrangement that we have come up with. This is not a political issue; this is an issue that is right for the forces. It will help them to move forward with some of the assistance they can provide to the armed forces personnel.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wrote to you and had it hand-delivered to you on October 13, supporting the lieutenant-colonel in their request for an urgent meeting so that they could make their point to you about the importance of licence services to the over 11,000 personnel and family members who live and work on base Petawawa. You have not even shown me the courtesy of a reply in a month—no reply.

Talk is cheap, Minister. Talk is cheap. You stand up in this House and talk about how you support our troops and their families and the great work they do, but you don't even acknowledge the fact that they've written you. That is shameful. That is, I dare say, nothing but hypocrisy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Stand up for our troops.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We are standing up for our troops; you are not.

The changes we are making actually are going to improve the public service in this province, and I'm very proud of those changes. In fact, right now, we're offering only the driver licences and the car licences in certain locations, but going forward, we will offer to the public a package of services which will include the health care card services as well. There will be 300 locations. It will consist of both the private offices and the government offices. It strikes a good combination to provide the services that we need in this province, and they are very well being accepted by the public as we move forward.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question for the Minister of Transportation: Recent articles in the Toronto Star have shown that hundreds of Ontario drivers are being shafted by Highway 407 toll collectors. Out of the blue, drivers are receiving poorly documented bills for long-passed travel with thousands of dollars of added interest charges. Bills are being sent to people who are deceased, people who have not owned a car for years, people who are living

Hon. James J. Bradley: Unfortunately—that's a good line; I'll give him that—as you may know, first of all, your government was involved in the privatization of Highway 407—step number one. Step number two, this government completely sold it, and they wrote rules into the agreement with 407 that allows 407 to do almost whatever it wants.

I share the member's concerns about some of the tactics that are being used. But of course, our government went to court to defend the very people you are talking about. Unfortunately, the courts ruled against us and in favour of the corporation that runs Highway 407 because they signed a very, very lucrative deal with the Conservative government that preceded us in office.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Government Services, in not answering my question, accused me of not supporting our troops. Now—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I would just say that if the honourable member is dissatisfied with an answer, he has the ability, as I am about to read, to file a late show for clarification.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38a, the member for Nepean—Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Finance concerning public consultations on the HST legislation. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

Pursuant to standing order 38a, the member for Thornhill has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Finance concerning the Windsor Energy Centre. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

Pursuant to standing order 38a, the member for Simcoe North has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services concerning the SIU and the oversight of the director. This matter will be debated at 3 p.m. today.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): At 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a number of deferred votes.

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to the amendment to the government notice of motion number 142 by the member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

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

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1151.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Sterling, Norman W.
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hillier, Randy	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John

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

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David
Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Pendergast, Leeanna
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Ramsay, David
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Brownell, Jim	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Moridi, Reza	
Dombrowsky, Leona	Naqvi, Yasir	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 24; the nays are 61.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the amendment to the amendment lost.

We have a deferred vote on the amendment to government notice of motion 142 by the member for Kenora–Rainy River.

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

The division bells rang from 1154 to 1159.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	Murdoch, Bill
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Runciman, Robert W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Norm	Savoline, Joyce
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Paul	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John

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

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Naqvi, Yasir
Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Pendergast, Leeanna
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Johnson, Rick	Rinaldi, Lou
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Carroll, Aileen	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Mitchell, Carol	
Dombrowsky, Leona	Moridi, Reza	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 24; the nays are 64.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the amendment lost.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 142.

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

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.

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

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Naqvi, Yasir
Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Pendergast, Leeanna
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Johnson, Rick	Rinaldi, Lou
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Carroll, Aileen	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Mitchell, Carol	
Dombrowsky, Leona	Moridi, Reza	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Bailey, Robert	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Paul	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gélinas, France	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	
Hillier, Randy	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 64; the nays are 31.

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

Motion agreed to.

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to government notice of motion number 141 by the member for Halton.

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

The division bells rang from 1212 to 1217.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

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

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona

Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza

Naqvi, Yasir
Orazietti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 23; the nays are 64.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the amendment lost.

We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 141.

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

The division bells rang from 1220 to 1225.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion 141. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona

Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza

Naqvi, Yasir
Orazietti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie

Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 64; the nays are 30.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

The House recessed from 1229 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm very pleased to welcome two groups from York South-Weston here today. Welcome to Guidance of Canadian Somali Youth; and from York Memorial high school, welcome to the students and their teachers. Both groups are here to enjoy a tour of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me in welcoming Mr. Harry Danford, the former member from the riding of Hastings-Peterborough in the 36th Parliament. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I wanted to introduce some special guests we have here from the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. The president of the association, Mr. James Kang, is here. I don't have all the business cards

from the other representatives, but a number of the executive officers are here as well from the association. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NEUSTADT SEWAGE LAGOON

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I rise in the House today to recognize the good work of the Honourable John Gerretsen, Minister of the Environment, who has laid to rest years of fighting over the Neustadt sewage lagoon. Unlike his predecessor, Laurel Broten, Minister Gerretsen got the job done.

The former minister, Minister Broten, was at times inept at her job, but most of the time she just bullied and refused to help, once going as far as to encourage the municipality of West Grey to sue if they didn't agree with her orders.

Unfortunately, the same can be said of the Ministry of Natural Resources, whose minister failed to protect the Saugeen River when he refused to recognize that rivers were under his ministry's mandate.

For all these years, the municipality and I fought these ministries, trying to prove to their ministers that it was their job to fix the lagoon and their job to pay for the \$2.5-million project to prevent a sewage spill into the river. Without the erosion control, there was grave concern that the lagoons would be breached and cause an environmental disaster for communities and waterways downstream to Lake Huron. In the end, a federal-provincial COMRIF grant covered their share of the tab, and Minister Gerretsen helped the local municipality cover part of their share.

The lagoon site is now a beautiful park space. So, thank you, Minister Gerretsen, for getting the job done, and thank you to the municipality of West Grey for hanging in there all these years.

BRIAN COCHRANE

Mr. Paul Miller: On behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party, I wish to pay tribute to the life of Brian Cochrane, past president of CUPE Local 416, who passed away last weekend. It is always a difficult thing, affecting more than family, when someone who has dedicated their life to a cause passes away.

Brian Cochrane was the first president of CUPE Local 416, which was created when the city of Toronto was amalgamated. Prior to amalgamation, he represented workers in the former city of North York.

As anyone who has had to work through an amalgamation knows, it is very difficult and all these years later still not complete in Toronto. Navigating through the bureaucracies that were trying to find their place was to understand the internal workings of seven municipalities—not an easy task for even the most experienced bureaucrat.

Brian Cochrane was a strong leader for his outside workers through this extremely difficult period and through an equally difficult strike in 2002. My caucus was proud to work with Mr. Cochrane to hammer out the details of the back-to-work legislation, ensuring the fairest deal possible for his members.

Brian Cochrane will be remembered as a strong and dedicated labour leader, who was lost to us much too soon.

On behalf of the NDP, I extend our condolences to Brian's family and his union brothers and sisters.

WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Mr. Kim Craiton: The Christmas spirit was in the air in my riding of Niagara Falls with the 27th annual opening of the Niagara Winter Festival of Lights. On hand were Minnie and Mickey Mouse as well as Daisy Duck, live from Walt Disney, to help officially launch this spectacular event.

Proudly, this festival is Canada's largest and the premier light festival in North America. This is due in large part to the hard work of Dino Fazio, his hard-working staff and the numerous volunteers who pour their hearts and souls into ensuring that visiting families have a great experience.

Over 1.3 million visitors are attracted to this festival, which boasts over 120 animated displays, including the famous Enchantment of Disney displays and the ever-popular Zimmermann light fountain display.

The festival also includes a calendar of festive events, including concerts by Loretta Lynn, the Gatlin Brothers and Ronnie Prophet; weekly fireworks performances; and Canada's largest outdoor New Year's Eve party.

This year, the festival includes Rink at the Brink, an outdoor ice rink that will offer public ice-skating right at the brink of the Horseshoe Falls. This spectacular setting will offer breathtaking views and a magical outdoor Niagara Falls ice-skating experience.

For a thrill of a lifetime, I urge everyone, including all my colleagues on both sides of the House, to skate at the Rink at the Brink and enjoy Niagara's spectacular Winter Festival of Lights together with their families in Niagara Falls. Have a great time.

CANADIAN YOUTH BUSINESS FOUNDATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: Last night, I was pleased to attend the Chairman's Awards Celebration at the Canadian Youth Business Foundation Youth Entrepreneurship Summit. The CYBF is a national charity dedicated to championing tomorrow's entrepreneurial nation-builders. They point out that this is particularly important, as 71% of small business owners will retire within 10 years, with 41% retiring within the next five years.

CYBF invests time and money in aspiring young entrepreneurs aged 18 to 34 who have a great business

idea but find it difficult to obtain financing or mentoring through traditional sources.

I was very inspired last night seeing the confidence of the many young entrepreneurs I met, along with their mentors and supporters. These young Canadians are our future. They are the ones who will be creating the jobs and prosperity Canada needs. What we must do as legislators is help them create Ontario's wealth by cutting taxes, red tape and regulations. Government cannot create prosperity; only healthy businesses and entrepreneurs can do that. The young men and women I met last night will help build prosperity. Government just needs to get out of their way.

BRAMPTON BOARD OF TRADE SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: There is nothing more magical than Santa Claus to the hearts of many children and their families. Being part of putting that special smile on the faces of literally thousands of children is one of the nicest feelings.

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the nighttime version of the Brampton Board of Trade Santa Claus parade. On Saturday, November 21, around 5 p.m., the parade will start along its route, past children of all ages who will have been lining the route for hours.

The modern-day Brampton Board of Trade Santa Claus parade was revived in 1986, and in 1995 the parade became one of the first of its kind to be a nighttime event. Annual attendance is estimated to top over 150,000 people, and we in Brampton believe that makes it the highest-attended nighttime parade in the province, and possibly in Canada.

The parade consists of over 40 floats, 12 bands and 200 costumed characters, as well as hundreds of volunteers lighting Santa's route through downtown Brampton. As this is the 15th anniversary, we expect it will be the best community parade ever. There are many along the parade route who believe that Santa's arrival begins at the North Pole and is planned by elves, but in reality all great events and activities begin with an idea and are carried out by dedicated organizing committees, a group of incredible volunteers who meet year-round to organize and plan this magical evening of entertainment.

The success of the Brampton Board of Trade Santa Claus parade would not be possible if it were not for the generous financial, material and advertising support of the sponsors. Please join me in recognizing and thanking the hundreds of volunteers, including my staff, like Barbara Tait, who donate their time and efforts for the children of Brampton.

1510

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: First, I would like to recognize the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. Thank you for being here today as we debate the issue of the HST.

This government proved the harmonized sales tax is indeed a bad idea when it announced last week that it would remove the tax from food and beverages under \$4, saving taxpayers almost \$400,000 for this simple expense. If this tax is wrong for coffee and muffins, it's equally wrong for home heating, electricity, exercise classes, kids' recreation, physiotherapy, cable television, Internet services and 8% more for almost everything we purchase.

The citizens of Ontario can't be bribed with a tax-free coffee and a muffin. Ontario knows the truth about the HST: It's simply a \$3-billion tax grab from the people of Ontario. The National Citizens Coalition estimates the tax will cost the average citizen—listen up—\$800 to \$1,000 per year. That's the truth of this tax.

I urge the government to listen to the wisdom of the people of Ontario. It's time to go beyond chopping the tax on coffee and muffins; it's time to simply halt this tax. In this climate of small business, they are the first customers of the people of Ontario. They are the interface with the taxpayers of Ontario. They're going to be tax collectors for the province of Ontario. It's shameful. You people should be ashamed of what you're doing.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Dave Levac: In Ontario, there are 19,000 volunteer firefighters and over 200 part-time firefighters, along with 46 fire investigators on active duty today. All of the firefighters of Ontario deserve our gratitude and support for the work they do day in and day out. They risk it all, even their health and their lives, to keep our health and lives safe.

On November 5, in the riding of Brant, I was honoured to join the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Peter Fonseca, along with my colleague Leeanna Pendergast, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, to announce that our province's volunteer and part-time firefighters, along with fire inspectors, will be covered by our progressive presumptive legislation. It's been an honour to work with all of the stakeholders to achieve this important coverage. The support from all sectors, stakeholders and colleagues from all sides of the House is a testimony to our collective respect and understanding of the dangers that firefighters face every single day.

This historic coverage was announced in Paris, Ontario, where over 100 years ago the very first firefighters' organization was founded and formed. I said on the 5th, and I say it now: These great firefighters, and especially their families, can rest just a little easier as of today, thanks to Bill Burns, the president of the FFAO, and Dave Thompson, the past president, and all of the stakeholders inside of the firefighters. We salute you and thank you for dedicating your lives to firefighting.

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Ontario seniors have heard too much opposition baffle about the province's tax

reforms. The opposition may oppose 600,000 new jobs and tax cuts for seniors, but seniors themselves kind of like the idea.

In 2010, provincial income tax for seniors will go down permanently. The senior homeowners' property tax credit will double—permanently—from \$250 per year to \$500 per year. Each senior will receive a refundable sales tax credit of about \$260 a year, permanently. To ease the transition to a harmonized sales tax in Ontario, single seniors will receive \$300 and families \$1,000, paid in three instalments. Next year, those credits will pay all the HST on more than \$18,000 worth of purchases that may not be taxable today.

Empty-nesters who sell their homes will find that the HST is not applied to the sale of existing homes. For new homes, the first \$400,000 of the price of a home is free of PST, and that covers more than 75% of all Ontario homes.

Seniors want their children and grandchildren to have the same opportunity to get—

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

ONTARIO KOREAN BUSINESSMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to recognize the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. It was established in 1973 and it now serves 2,500 small business owners. It's a registered non-profit organization, and it provides membership services as well as group purchases. Its estimated annual sales volume is about \$2 billion a year.

Within its membership, 75% of its members—that's almost 1,900—are convenience store owners. These establishments represent approximately 25% of all convenience stores in Ontario. There are 21 regional chapters scattered across Ontario. These stores are open long hours, seven days a week. Profit margins are small. Ninety per cent of the stores are operated by families. This is their entire livelihood.

Koreans started getting involved in convenience store operations in the late 1960s, as they started to migrate to Ontario. The stores have become the grassroots of the Korean community ever since, and the OKBA is a symbol within the Korean community. They employ 10,000 people across Ontario, and they're responsible for the livelihoods of 30,000 family members.

There are one or more Korean stores on almost every corner in our large cities in Ontario. Convenience stores are the centre of their community geographically, politically and socially. We welcome the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association here today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1517 to 1522.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Qaadri has moved the adoption of the Standing Committee on Social Policy report regarding Bill 177. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill
Arthurs, Wayne	Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Van Bommel, Maria
Craitor, Kim	Leal, Jeff	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Opposed?

Nays

Bailey, Robert	Dunlop, Garfield	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Miller, Norm	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
DiNovo, Cheri	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 14.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 196, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of Barrie and the Town of

Innisfil / Projet de loi 196, Loi concernant la modification des limites territoriales entre la cité de Barrie et la ville d'Innisfil.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1525 to 1530.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil
Arthurs, Wayne	Dickson, Joe	Mitchell, Carol
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Orazietti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Craitor, Kim	Leal, Jeff	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Dunlop, Garfield	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Martiniuk, Gerry	Savoline, Joyce
Bisson, Gilles	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
DiNovo, Cheri	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 39; the nays are 17.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the report adopted.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Sergio assumes ballot item number 54 and Mr. Dhillon assumes ballot item number 63.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming a delegation from China, the census and statistics delegation, led by Mr. Li Tianyuan and his guests, located in the west gallery. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EHEALTH ONTARIO SPENDING ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE RENDRE COMPTE DES DÉPENSES DE CYBERSANTÉ ONTARIO

Mr. Chudleigh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 220, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about Ontario's Electronic Health Records Initiative / Projet de loi 220, Loi prévoyant la tenue d'une enquête publique pour découvrir la vérité concernant L'Initiative des dossiers de santé électroniques de l'Ontario.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The bill requires the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish a commission to inquire into the report on the spending relating to Ontario's electronic health records initiative and to make recommendations directed to the avoidance of unaccountable spending in other agencies in similar circumstances relating to Ontario's electronic health records initiative. The commission has the powers of a commission under a public inquiry. Once the inquiry begins, the commission must make an interim report in six months and a final report in 12 months.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POLICE ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Today I rise to pay tribute to the Police Association of Ontario and its members as they join us for their 11th annual legislative day here at Queen's Park. I would especially like to acknowledge the Police Association of Ontario's president, Larry Molyneaux, and chief administrative officer Ron Middel. Their leadership is impressive, and I can say first-hand that they are certainly effective in their roles.

The Police Association of Ontario is here today to meet with members from all three parties to discuss issues important to their organization. As members of the House know, the Police Association of Ontario is the official voice of Ontario's front-line police personnel. More than 33,000 police officers and civilians serving in police services throughout Ontario make up its member-

ship. These are the people who put their lives on the line, day in and day out, to ensure our province remains safe, secure and prosperous.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the members of the Police Association of Ontario for all they do for our communities. They work with passion and commitment, not only as police officers upholding the law but also as coaches and mentors, helping to guide our young people and working to build a stronger Ontario. PAO lobby day gives members of the Legislature, on behalf of the people of Ontario, the opportunity to say thank you.

On a personal level, I am grateful for the collaborative efforts our government has enjoyed with the Police Association of Ontario, which has been key in helping us shape and execute community safety initiatives. This past September, I had the honour of introducing in this House Bill 203, the Interprovincial Policing Act, 2009. That proposed legislation, if passed, would make it easier for police to carry on their investigations in Canada across provincial and territorial borders. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the PAO and its leadership for their support and their contribution as we developed a legislative proposal on cross-border policing.

In addition to their work on the provincial cross-border policing legislation, we continue to benefit from the contributions of the PAO in a variety of ways. The Police Association of Ontario provides valuable assistance and advice to me and to my ministry on an ongoing basis as a member of the policing standards advisory committee. Their participation as members in this committee gives us the valuable perspective of active-duty police officers in our policy deliberations. Their valuable input has also been critical in helping us develop and execute initiatives such as the Safer Communities—1,000 Officers and the community policing partnership program. Our police partners' advice was key as we allocated approximately \$30 million annually for five years through the federal police officers recruitment fund to hire more than 300 officers.

This government stands beside our policing partners as we continue to lobby the federal government to make the funding for this program permanent and to provide Ontario with its fair share of the promised 2,500 police officers.

Police officers are a valuable and essential component of our communities. They pound the pavement on our streets, they patrol our neighbourhoods and they respond to our calls of distress. The McGuinty government is grateful for the hard work, honest feedback and healthy dialogue we have been able to maintain with the Police Association of Ontario. We will continue to do our part to ensure that our partnership continues to thrive.

Today, I am pleased to salute the dedicated and hard-working people who make up the Police Association of Ontario. I am confident that all members of this House will join me in expressing our sincerest thanks to the PAO and its membership for helping us make Ontario a stronger and safer place in which to live, work and play.

1540

AFFORDABLE HOUSING LOGEMENTS ABORDABLES

Hon. Jim Watson: This Sunday, November 22, National Housing Day will be celebrated across Ontario, and in fact across Canada. It's a day that gives us an opportunity to recognize the combined efforts of many dedicated individuals and organizations that are working together to advance affordable housing solutions.

Here in Ontario, our government continues to improve access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing. Last June, our government signed a new affordable housing agreement with the federal government to deliver a range of new housing to the people of Ontario. In total, our government is investing \$622 million to match the same amount that the federal government is contributing. That's a combined \$1.2 billion in new funding for affordable housing, something I think we can all be very, very proud of. In fact, that is a record amount of money for that period of time in the history of Ontario.

This program focuses on improving the health and safety of residents living in social housing communities and works to provide enhanced accessibility for seniors of low income and persons with disabilities. This program is for people like Larry, in Kingston—Larry, who has been homeless for most of his adult life due to a battle with mental illness and addiction, has finally found a safe refuge for his final years in one of our supportive housing projects—and for people like Delphine, who lost the use of her legs. She now uses an electric scooter to get around in her accessible and affordable home.

Ce programme vise aussi des gens comme Delphine, qui a perdu l'usage de ses jambes. Elle utilise maintenant un triporteur pour se déplacer dans son logement accessible et abordable.

In total, with this \$1.2 billion in new funding, we will be renovating 50,000 social housing units and building 4,500 new affordable housing units. I know the member from Cambridge is interested in this figure because some of those projects will go into his riding.

Many of those social housing units we are repairing were no longer liveable. By investing in the renovation, we are helping to reduce the housing shortage in Ontario. We know in Toronto, for instance, there was a story that showed that 50 to 250 units were uninhabitable because of the poor condition they were in. This will bring these units back on to the inventory, and we're providing a better, safer home for an Ontario family.

We've also moved forward with other housing initiatives.

Nous avons consulté des groupes autochtones et avons convenu de la façon la plus efficace de répartir 80 \$ millions pour des initiatives de logement qui profiteront aux ménages autochtones hors-réserve.

We've consulted with aboriginal groups and agreed on the most effective way to distribute \$80 million in housing initiatives that will benefit off-reserve aboriginal households.

In Toronto, Miziwe Biik Development Corp. is administering a \$20-million program that will help approximately 320 aboriginal households. In the rest of the province, Ontario Aboriginal Housing Support Services, or OAHSS, is administering a \$60-million program that will support some 560 aboriginal households outside of the greater Toronto area.

One of the most important initiatives during the last year has been our efforts to create a long-term affordable housing strategy. It was an initiative the McGuinty government campaigned on in the 2007 campaign, that we would put together for the first time a long-term affordable housing strategy for our province.

This strategy is being developed together with the people of Ontario, our community partners, municipalities, the not-for-profit sector and the private sector. I had the personal pleasure of attending a number of these affordable housing sessions, not held in fancy hotels or banquet halls but actually in community centres and not-for-profit housing communities themselves, and I was very impressed with the depth of the discussions and the quality of the ideas offered. In fact, we were so overwhelmed that in my community of Ottawa we actually had to get a tent put up in the parking lot because so many people wanted to come and offer their opinion.

Mr. Jeff Leal: A big tent.

Hon. Jim Watson: A big tent, at Our Lady of Fatima Church.

We received a number of positive comments from the consultations, including from Yutaka Dirks of the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, or ACTO, who said, "Well, I thought ... it was really quite positive. The room was packed, which we're always happy to see, and there was good attendance of people there who were actually tenants ... that's where this long-term affordable housing strategy has to come from." We want everyone to have sufficient opportunity to inform and participate in the development of this important initiative and create a common vision for affordable housing.

Nous voulons que tout le monde ait la possibilité de bien participer à l'élaboration de cette importante initiative et de créer une vision commune pour le logement abordable dans toute la province de l'Ontario.

The response to our province-wide consultations was, in fact, overwhelming. More than 1,000 people came out and participated in the consultations.

I want to thank those members of provincial Parliament who took the time to hold their own consultations above and beyond the 13 consultations. I know my colleague from Peterborough had one, and my parliamentary assistant. A number of MPPs hosted these one-on-one consultations in North Bay and so on, and I thank them very much, because that information will then be fed into the consultation process.

We will continue to provide opportunities for the public, stakeholders and our municipal partners to participate in the consultation process until the end of the year. In fact, right now we're holding a series of bilateral discussions with groups that have expertise in housing. Whether it's Habitat for Humanity or the Ontario Non-

Profit Housing Association or the home builders, all of these groups are meeting with us. We had two of those meetings two weeks ago. I attended the ONPHA annual general meeting in Toronto just on the weekend. All of these ideas and suggestions will be considered carefully as we develop our long-term affordable housing strategy for Ontario.

As we heard in the poverty reduction consultations, affordable housing has a direct and positive impact on Ontarians' health, their education, their personal wealth and certainly their well-being. It plays a crucial role in addressing poverty and in providing families with a decent standard of living. That is why our government remains committed to improving affordable housing in Ontario. We're proud of the \$1.2 billion—which is not crumbs. It's not meagre. It is a significant amount of money, the largest amount that's been spent in that short a period of time in Ontario's history.

We look forward to developing the long-term affordable housing strategy and releasing it for the public to view, to see the benchmarks that we set for ourselves on a go-forward basis. We would encourage the federal government to join with us in developing a national long-term affordable housing strategy, because we're the only country in the G8 that does not have a national affordable housing strategy. We look forward, as provincial and territorial housing ministers, to meeting with the federal minister, Minister Finley, early in December. This is a commitment that she made to us, and we look forward to pushing her to continue what we consider to be good work that's been established by the renewal of the affordable housing program for five years. We'd like to see that, obviously, for 10 years and we'd like to see commitments for a national housing strategy to join with us at the provincial, municipal and territorial levels. We're looking forward to celebrating National Housing Day in this country.

I hope members have a chance to go and visit some of the housing projects that this government has funded through tax dollars. I thank you for the opportunity to speak about this important issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm happy to comment on the housing investments in the province of Ontario.

This is both a good-news and a bad-news story. Let me just begin by recapping a little: In their 2003 platform the McGuinty Liberals committed to "match federal support to create almost 20,000 new housing units for needy Ontario families." In April 2005, the McGuinty Liberal government signed a federal-provincial agreement and committed themselves to a total investment of more than \$734 million, including funding from the federal and municipal partners.

1550

I just want to remind the member opposite that on December 6, 2002, it was the PC government that originally announced this investment.

To date, only 10,002 affordable rental and supportive housing units have been built—that's approximately half of what was promised—or are in the process of being developed. This represents less than 2,000 units per year, whereas the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's Where's Home? 2008 report estimates that the annual need for purpose-built additional rental housing is approximately 10,000 units per year—a big shortfall.

It should therefore be no surprise that wait lists are growing much faster than units are being built. At the beginning of 2009, there were 129,253 households on the municipal waiting lists for assisted housing. I should mention that these figures do not account for those households which have either given up without solving their housing problem, or never actually registered because they were discouraged by these long, long wait lists. Peel region, for example, has up to a 21-year wait list for singles and families.

Among 43 of the service managers, an average of 72% of households on the waiting lists had annual incomes below \$20,000, meaning they could afford a monthly rent of no more than \$500.

This is a serious issue, and I have great concern that the problem will only escalate with the implementation of the McGuinty Liberals' HST.

POLICE ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very, very pleased this afternoon to respond to the comments made by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on the Police Association of Ontario's annual lobby day.

I was very, very pleased yesterday afternoon to attend a speech made by our new leader, Tim Hudak, to the PAO. He made a lot of comments, but certainly some of the issues he pointed out as important were the use of tasers and our support for that program; the 2,500 officers from the federal government, and how we hope to work with the federal government as well to continue that program; the serious issues around the special investigations units—and I asked a question today about that; and some of the legislation that the police association and police services are looking at.

I think what's important is our support for the community, our support for the police across this province.

I want to just give you a quick story on just why it's so important to have good, solid, well-trained police officers who care about our communities. A couple of weeks back, a young boy at James Keating Elementary School collapsed in the playground area outside the school. I think he was almost pronounced dead. They called 911, and within 90 seconds two police officers arrived on the scene. Provincial constables Peter Hunter and Robin Chiasson revived this young lad; they had the use of a defibrillator. He's now recovering in hospital from some health issues. The reality is that they were there at the exact moment and saved this boy's life, and they will be rewarded for that sometime in the future.

That is what I think we're all about in this provincial Parliament. When we talk about protecting our police

officers, we need to know that they're protecting our communities and therefore us.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank those young officers for a job well done, and I want to thank my friend, the communications director for the southern Georgian Bay regional department, David Hobson, for a job well done in reporting this to me and making sure that people in the Legislature know about some of the great young police officers we have in the province of Ontario.

POLICE ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I too, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party of Ontario, would like to welcome the police who are here today from across Ontario with the Police Association of Ontario to talk to us about the issues that are affecting them on the front line.

It is clear they're coming here and asking for three or four things. One of them is funding, and I think we need to hear seriously what the police are telling us. At this time of economic depression, at this time when people more and more are having to turn to the social service system for assistance, far too often you find that you can't get those services when you get to the agencies. Far too often in communities across Ontario, the police are the last line. They're the ones who are dealing with the suicide attempts. They're the ones who are dealing with the issues having to do with family violence. They're the ones who are having to deal with many of the symptoms that come out of such things as we have now in a recession. I think it's important that we hear what police officers are telling us and that we provide them with the finances necessary for them to do the job that we're asking them to do. We know that every day they put their jobs on the line—not their job but their life. We in the New Democratic Party of Ontario want to thank them for the work they do, but also we want to support them by making sure they get what they need to do their jobs adequately.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I am responding to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Here are the facts. These are the facts about this McGuinty government's spending on housing. These are not our facts; these come from the Housing Network of Ontario, the one that Yutaka sits on. The McGuinty government has, in fact, slashed the housing budget, making a big 7% cut, \$52.1 million, to spending.

“Over the past four years, MAH has seen its annual operating funding cut by \$222.4 million (that's almost a quarter of a billion dollars)—adding up to a painfully deep 24% cut since fiscal 2005. Over the past four years, the cumulative spending cuts at MAH add up to \$657.1 million.” That would have built 4,380 new affordable homes.

“According to the government’s official spending estimates, the biggest cuts at the MAH this year will be in the affordable housing program—\$38.9 million” cut from that program. “In particular, the social housing program—which assists some of the poorest households—will take almost all of the spending cuts....

“Government officials say that the massive operating funding cuts at MAH are offset by one-time spending including \$100 million in fiscal 2007 ... and \$585.3 million.... But those one-time initiatives were supposed to supplement” the regular funding instead of replacing it. If the Ontario government had maintained their spending at \$926 million—the 2005 spending rate—“over the past four years, there would be a cumulative total of \$657.1 million more than the actual amount spent” by this government. That’s how much money they’ve cut from affordable housing.

Almost 30,000 households are waiting for affordable housing on a list that lasts 10 to 20 years—that’s the average wait time—70,000 households in the GTA alone. We have thousands dying on the streets across the country and thousands on the streets in Toronto and across Ontario. This is the national disaster. It costs, in fact, more to keep somebody homeless than it does to provide them with a home, so it’s a false economy as well.

Here’s what the government could do. They could do it, and they should do it. It’s a moral and ethical imperative. Pass these four initiatives. All four have been put forward by the New Democratic Party.

(1) Inclusionary zoning: Bill 198 wouldn’t cost a tax dollar and would provide, by our estimations, about 12,000 new housing units a year.

(2) Pass housing as a human right. This is in line with the UN mandate. This province is not in line with the UN mandate.

(3) Build what they promised in 2003. They promised, in 2003, 20,000 new units built. They have not done so.

(4) Finally, what all the anti-poverty activists are asking for, what our friends from the Daily Bread Food Bank are asking for: a housing credit for those on social assistance.

Those four items have been put forward by every housing consultation group across this province. Do it, we say in the New Democratic Party. Do it.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have many more—hundreds of these coming in every day—petitions against the HST.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the residents of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

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

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for ... funeral services, gym memberships”—we have “newspapers” here, but I guess the Toronto Star looked after that one for the Liberals—“and lawyer and accountant fees; and

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

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

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

I have signed this and will give it to Iman.

SALE OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. David Zimmer: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by 599 convenience store owners. It says:

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

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

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

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

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

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

YOUTH ACTION ALLIANCE

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Minister of Health Promotion is planning on cancelling funding for the Youth Action Alliance program without looking at its effectiveness in rural Ontario; and

“Whereas the Youth Action Alliance has mobilized youth in the Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound area around health issues of importance, including the dangers of smoking, second-hand smoke and illegal cigarettes; and

“Whereas the Youth Action Alliance program is an opportunity for youth in the area to build leadership skills and make valuable contributions to their communities;

“We, the undersigned, ask the Minister of Health Promotion to look at each Youth Action Alliance program on an individual basis and see if it is working effectively and making a difference in its local community; and

“To continue funding those that are working effectively.”

I will send it with Cairistonia. I guess that’s the best I can do on that one, but I’ll leave it up to you, Mr. Speaker, to sort that out. I’ve signed it, also.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas we currently have no psychiatric emergency service at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to support the creation of a psychiatric emergency service in emergency at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have received petitions from the Magnetawan area to do with the McGuinty sales tax. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas rural and northern Ontarians will be particularly hard hit by Mr. McGuinty’s new sales tax, as will seniors and families;

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

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

I support this petition.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt asking for a PET scan for the Sudbury Regional Hospital. It goes as follows:

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: “to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Speaker with Samuel.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of members from the Community History Project. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Community History Project (Ontario #729493) as an active member heritage community has been concerned about the loss of heritage resources including aboriginal, pioneer and inactive burial places, and the legal, social and historical implications of such losses,

“We, the undersigned, therefore request immediate and unanimous passage of Bill 149, An Act to protect Ontario’s inactive cemeteries, as a first step towards preserving over 4,000 public and private heritage assets and resources.”

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

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I affix my name to this petition, as I support it, and send it to the table with Samuel.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition against the HST and it goes as follows:

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

“Be it resolved, I am opposed to Dalton McGuinty’s 8% sales tax grab and call on the Parliament of Ontario to cancel its plan to introduce a harmonized sales tax on July 1, 2010.”

This is signed by 950 people. I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Maggie.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I would like especially to thank the patients of Dr. C. Nguyen, whose office is at 2300 Eglinton near the Credit Valley Hospital; and certainly Matthew Brown and Wanda Ainsworth, both of Mississauga, for having signed it. 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 support this petition and to ask page Melissa, on her first week with us, to carry it for me.

1610

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe–Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4,

electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

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

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

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

I want to thank Cathy Scott of Wasaga Beach for sending this petition to me, which I will sign.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of Ontarians from the Bond Head and Tottenham area. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As recently as yesterday I got another call in my office from somebody wanting to know if I would be willing to present petitions in this Legislature dealing with the harmonized sales tax, even though this legislation had been introduced. I assured her that I would, and I want to do that today.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4,

haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

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

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

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

I affix my signature as I wholeheartedly agree with this petition.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It was sent to me by ErinoakKids. I’d like to thank Coleen McAskill of Burlington and Marilou Jack of Thomas Street in western Mississauga for having affixed their signatures to it. 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 ... 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 support this petition. I’m pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Cairistiona to carry it for me.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has expired for petitions.

OPPOSITION DAY

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario direct the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to call Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan

Hudson before it to give evidence with respect to the Auditor General’s Special Report on Ontario’s Electronic Health Records Initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 4.

Mr. Tim Hudak: As you are aware, the Auditor General’s report on the McGuinty Liberal eHealth scandal contained many startling revelations about Canada’s worst government. It exposed the government’s blatant mismanagement of an agency that let a billion tax dollars go to waste, and a culture of entitlement that saw Liberal-friendly firms get rich off untendered contracts and sweetheart deals, and the Ontario families who footed the bill got nothing in return. While the Auditor General did important work, he raised some very important questions, and there is much more work to be done. There are still too many unanswered questions.

For one, the Auditor General did not probe the Liberal connections of the people who got rich off the eHealth scandal. This is important because the Premier himself has stood in this House and selectively misquoted the Auditor General to make the case that this was part of the investigation, when in fact it was not. It is the job of the public accounts committee to provide the close legislative scrutiny of how taxpayer dollars are spent, or, as is sadly the case these days, misspent. That is why the Ontario PC caucus has called for a full public inquiry into the eHealth scandal, and we will continue to do so. Only when the Ontario families who paid the bill learn the truth about who got rich, what their Liberal connections were, how deeply involved the McGuinty cabinet ministers were, who ordered government officials to obstruct the Auditor General, and whether or not crimes were committed—these are the questions that Ontario families want answered, who got ripped off, and we’re not going to stop until we get those answers for Ontario families.

I will admit that I did expect that the Premier would try to obstruct a public inquiry. Certainly you always hold out hope for a different answer. But if past practice is any predictor of future behaviour, we should not be surprised that the Premier treats meaningful public accountability like it’s a bad rash. But to shut down the public accounts committee, to shut down their attempt to get the truth, is a new low even for the Dalton McGuinty government.

Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson are pivotal figures in the eHealth scandal, and only they, not their successors, know the full extent of the rot that’s settled over that agency under Dalton McGuinty’s watch. And only Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson, and not their successors, know who got rich and to what extent they were given their marching orders from the Premier’s office or Liberal insiders. Given that their personal reputations have taken a hit from their involvement in the eHealth scandal, it would not surprise me if they would welcome the opportunity to ensure their side of the story was formally entered into the record.

I notice that many Liberal backbenchers are getting increasingly restless with this scandal, and I imagine

many of them are having a very difficult time defending this scandal, defending the Liberal insiders who got rich, defending the waste of \$1 billion in taxpayers' money—as my colleague from Simcoe–Grey says, defending the indefensible. I know those members, those honourable members, would also want to hear from Ms. Kramer and Mr. Hudson themselves and even ask questions on behalf of their constituents. Only one person has stood in the way of the public accounts committee hearing the testimony of Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson, and his name is Dalton McGuinty.

Through a whipped vote—

Interjections.

1620

Mr. Tim Hudak: Mr. Brown says that Dalton McGuinty wasn't on the committee. Well, he was pulling the strings, sir. He was pulling the strings that forced a whipped vote, where the Liberal MPPs in the public accounts committee, taking marching orders from the Premier's office, blocked a motion to have these two key eHealth figures testify and get on the record.

No doubt Dalton McGuinty would rather not have Ontario families know the full truth about this Liberal scandal. Just think what Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson could tell us. Maybe they could talk about Karli Farrow, a former political aide to both the Premier and the former Minister of Health and Deputy Premier George Smitherman, who among other things was paid \$327 per hour by eHealth. Not only that, she was paid \$327 per hour by eHealth to meet and correspond with the assistant deputy minister of health, Helen Stevenson, and Dalton McGuinty's former chief of staff and campaign director, Don Guy. Such was the work she did for \$327 an hour. Or maybe Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson could talk about John Ronson, the former chair of the Liberal election campaign who works with Karli Farrow at Courtyard Group, and, by the way, was paid more than \$300 an hour by eHealth for the benefit of his consulting services.

The committee has done good work so far. We heard the other day from Ron Sapsford, the former Deputy Minister of Health, who, under questioning from members of the committee, told the public accounts committee that the Premier's senior health adviser, Sacha Bhatia, met with Sarah Kramer, the Premier's hand-picked eHealth CEO, on six separate occasions during the time Kramer was handing out contracts to both Farrow and Ronson.

Kramer's itinerary also shows she not only met with Bhatia, but she met with the Premier's principal secretary, Jamison Steeve, the former Deputy Premier, George Smitherman, the Attorney General and staff from the finance minister's office. Just when the trail started leading directly into Premier McGuinty's office, he brought forward the guillotine motion to cut off debate and to shut down that committee. No doubt the Auditor General's report found that the eHealth board was reluctant to stop the spending spree of untendered contracts because they knew Sarah Kramer was Premier

McGuinty's hand-picked CEO. Sarah Kramer was the Premier's original untendered contract.

The PC caucus may not be Ms. Kramer's fan club, but we do believe she deserves to have her say at the committee and tell us the truth of exactly what happened. I think you have noticed what has been taking place these last two weeks. Slowly but surely, the Premier is severing all ties that connect him to the rot at eHealth. Minister David Caplan resigned. Minister George Smitherman—gone; Deputy Health Minister Ron Sapsford—gone; Sarah Kramer, Dr. Alan Hudson and the entire eHealth board, all gone.

The resignations are well deserved. I'd hope the member from Thunder Bay would support those resignations. Hopefully he's on the record calling for them. But the fact that these key figures at the heart of the scandal lost their jobs does not mean they were the only ones responsible, nor does it mean they should get off the hook from testifying. The last remaining senior eHealth figure who has yet to lose his job is Dalton McGuinty, and now that the trail leads to his office, he wants to shut that committee down.

A billion dollars went to waste in this eHealth boondoggle. At a time when emergency rooms were closing, at a time that health care services were getting cut from Thunder Bay to Fort Erie, Dalton McGuinty wasted \$1 billion in taxpayers' money and Liberal friends got rich. Family health care should not have to take a back seat to Liberal friends and sweetheart deals. If the Premier is not scared of the truth, if the Premier is not trying to hide his connections to the eHealth scandal, he should let Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson testify. If he is actually serious about transparency, about getting answers to what happened, if the Premier remains committed to integrity, then he will agree and support this motion and ask the Liberal members today to call Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson before the public accounts committee and get the answers that taxpayers deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to have a chance to speak to what can only be described as an ongoing disaster—an ongoing disaster that started with eHealth and that has continued today because of the reluctance of this government to come clean and put out the facts for everybody to see so that we can finally know what happened, turn the page and move on.

It is clear that what first reared its ugly head at eHealth has continued to work its way through the entire Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. New Democrats as well as the PC caucus have used the opportunity of opposition day motions to address the issues underlying not only the eHealth mess but also the lack of oversight, accountability and transparency that seems to have grown rampant within this government.

We believe that Ontarians deserve answers. We all want to get to the bottom of what happened, not only because Ontarians have a right to know but also because

we want to prevent future messes like this from happening. Only if we fully understand how this thing derailed, how eHealth derailed so badly, will we make sure that it never happens again.

We simply cannot afford to be carelessly wasting our precious health care dollars, our tax dollars, especially in times like these when government revenues are going down and the demand for services is going up. Ontario is in the midst of a recession, and we see good dollars going after bad, going out the window at eHealth and into the pockets of Liberal friends.

We have to learn from this. Ontario has to come out stronger from this, but only if we get to the bottom of what happened.

New Democrats support this motion. We have long sought answers about the \$1 billion that Dalton McGuinty allowed to walk out the door. We sought answers back in the spring, when the details of this scandal started to emerge and as the eHealth scandal started to branch out in a disturbing way. It branched out to encompass more and more of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. From the \$100 million in consultant contracts to the persistent reluctance to introduce appropriate transparency measures, we have sought and will continue to seek answers.

The opposition parties have tried to get answers from this government in many different ways. We have tried through question period, through opposition day motions, through the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and so on. Yet there are so many questions that beg for so many answers.

This government has dodged its responsibility for transparency and its responsibility to give answers to the people of Ontario at every opportunity. We saw this at the public accounts committee, where Mr. Hudson and Ms. Kramer were called in front of the committee. We could have had answers today. We wouldn't need this opposition day motion. We would have had the answers we needed if the government members on that committee had placed transparency ahead of partisanship. But unfortunately, they did not, and Ontarians still don't have the answers they deserve. We still haven't heard from Ms. Kramer. We still haven't heard from Dr. Hudson.

We have seen this not only in this Legislature but with the Premier himself and his role in blocking the request of the committee. We have seen this, and various heads have rolled, first at eHealth and then at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. While New Democrats have made some gains in trying to find out what happened, there are still many, many questions left unanswered. There's still so much information that would be needed to clear the air, to learn from our mistakes and to turn the page so that we can focus on a future where we've learned from our mistakes and can give the people of Ontario the assurance that it will never happen again.

1630

I brought two motions to the standing committee this past October, and they did receive support from the standing committee. These motions were created to help

to prevent another agency mess. The first is for the auditor to conduct spot audits of consulting contracts, and the second is to examine how senior provincial bureaucrats in the Ministry of Health, hospitals and local health integration networks are compensated. They are important steps forward, and this is something that we can be proud of. We will have made some gains. We will, through the auditor, certainly make sure that what we learn pays off for the people of Ontario.

On Saturday, the Globe and Mail reported that the Auditor General has now informed the Ontario Hospital Association that his office will be carrying out spot audits on the use of consultants within hospitals. So the work has already started. We hope that this will act as a wake-up call to the government as well, that they can no longer hide salaries of the bureaucrats in hospital budgets and that they, too, will look at their dependence on high-priced consultants.

Through this whole process, what the New Democratic caucus has been looking for is transparency. Where do taxpayers' dollars go? We owe this to the people we represent, the people of Ontario. This is why, on November 3, New Democrats presented an opposition motion that would basically ensure that future fiascos are avoided. Here's what the motion said:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has an annual budget of almost \$43 billion, the largest of any ministry;

"Whereas the Auditor General in his report on the electronic health initiative explicitly said, 'Throughout the years, oversight of the EHR initiative has not been effective';

"Whereas the MOHLTC transfers more than \$14 billion to hospitals and almost \$3 billion to long-term-care facilities;

"Whereas neither hospitals nor long-term-care facilities are subject to Ombudsman oversight, nor are they covered by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; and

"Whereas, in a number of other provinces, hospitals and long-term-care facilities are subject to Ombudsman oversight and are covered by freedom-of-information legislation;

"That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should act immediately to ensure that all MOHLTC transfer payment agencies, LHINs"—local health integration networks—"and all MOHLTC-funded agencies, boards and commissions are subject to Ombudsman oversight and are covered by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act."

All that we wanted was to give the Ombudsman oversight and make those agencies that receive enormous amounts of taxpayers' dollars covered by freedom-of-information requests. Ontarians have every right to be assured that if they or one of their loved ones gets sick, they will have access to timely, high-quality and effective care. The government could have taken concrete steps toward improving the cost effectiveness of health care in this province by expanding freedom-of-information

coverage and Ombudsman oversight to the transfer payment agencies of the Ministry of Health, to their boards and to their commissions.

At present, Ontario lags behind other provinces in ensuring accountability of health care spending and in ensuring that patients are getting the care they need. Did you know that Ontario is the only province in all of Canada that does not have Ombudsman oversight of its hospitals? Every other province in this country realized that Ombudsman oversight makes sense. It gives you better value for money, but it also leads to better care. Ontario lags behind. We are number 10. We're the only one that doesn't have it—nor does Ontario allow oversight of nursing homes and long-term-care facilities, something that Alberta, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland all allow.

In 2008-09, the number of complaints to the Ontario Ombudsman about health care doubled over the previous year, with 532 complaints. All of those complaints were serious. None of them could be followed up. They were complaints concerning people dying from *C. difficile* or influenza due to poor infection control. It took years to get to the bottom of those. Ombudsman oversight would have helped prevent some of the suffering and the deaths that happened through *C. difficile*.

There were complaints about long-term-care facility residents dying because of unsafe conditions where they lived. Here again, had we had Ombudsman oversight to follow through on some of the earlier complaints he had received, things could have panned out very differently for hundreds of people who lost their lives to *C. difficile* or who died in nursing homes, but all of this was turned down. He could do nothing for them. He was not allowed to investigate. Indeed, some 2,366 complaints to the Ombudsman had to be turned away because they involved municipalities, universities, school boards, hospitals, long-term-care homes, children's aid societies or the police. The Ombudsman cannot investigate those complaints.

In the words of the Ombudsman himself, "These are areas where thrift, sensible government and good judgment are acutely required, yet the government of Ontario declines" the help of the Ombudsman, "and it is costing all of us." It is costing all of us through paying for services that are not needed, and it is costing all of us through pain and suffering that did not need to take place.

Unlike other provinces, the Ombudsman can only investigate complaints about hospitals in relatively rare situations. The situation at the Ministry of Health is that if a hospital is under the control of an appointed supervisor, then the Ombudsman is allowed to investigate. His role has to be extended so he has jurisdiction over hospitals, but the Liberal government turned that down.

André Marin, our present Ombudsman, has been clear and compelling in his repeated calls for Ombudsman oversight of health care facilities, yet every time he asks, the answer is the same: no. The Liberal government is not interested in Ombudsman oversight and transparency and accountability to the people of Ontario.

The Ombudsman's arguments are good arguments and certainly are arguments that we brought forward in our motion, but the Liberal members in government voted down our motion, denying the dire need for transparency and accountability that could make such a huge difference in turning the page, in restoring people's confidence in our health care system. Instead, they're leaving Ontarians vulnerable to not only spending fiascos like what we've seen at eHealth but also without proper oversight for care.

New Democrats have also been looking for answers through the legislative standing committee process. When the Auditor General delivered his much-awaited report, New Democrats were anxious to get this report in front of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. At standing committee, New Democrats introduced multiple motions. The government members on the committee voted in favour of some of these, such as spot checks for using a consultant within a hospital for work that is presently taking place. Many others were turned down. Some of them—I would say most of them—were sound motions that were brought forward so that we could clear the air and turn the page, but they were rejected on a purely partisan basis.

1640

The five Liberal members should really apologize to their constituents for voting against proposals that would have strengthened the accountability and transparency of our health care dollars. These MPPs rejected ways to make sure our cherished health care system and health care dollars are spent on care, not on bloated executive salaries.

In October, Ontarians learned that Hamilton hospital was paying the half-million-dollar salary of our Ontario deputy minister of health. Other Ontario bureaucrats are paid by government-funded organizations. You can't help, when you hear things like this, but be suspicious. What are they trying to hide? There could be completely legitimate reasons why this has been done, but you have to come clear.

As long as you turn down NDP motions that are trying to go to the bottom, you leave the doubt that this has been done to skirt a law or hide something. If you refuse transparency, then you encourage people to be suspicious of everything the government does, and this is bad for all of us; it is bad for every person in Ontario. You have to realize the value of transparency; we all will gain in the end. But it's a lesson that is really hard to get through to them. The NDP brought forward a motion to have the Auditor General review the practice, and again the Liberal majority on the committee voted it down.

I'd like to quote from OPSEU president Smokey Thomas: "It's scandalous that at a time when the health care system is being squeezed for every last dime ... the Ministry of Health is deflecting public disclosure by spending millions of dollars in executive salaries and benefits through the backdoor of publicly supported hospitals.

"This says to me it's time for real public scrutiny," Mr. Thomas said, "including an expanded role for the

Ontario auditor and the opening of hospitals to the freedom-of-information commissioner and the Ombudsman.

“This kind of secrecy with the taxpayers’ dollar is unacceptable and it makes you wonder what else they’re hiding.”

When you turn down motions that ask for transparency, the direct result is always suspicion. I have been in the health care system long enough to know that there are many good reasons that could justify the paying of executive salaries through a hospital, but you didn’t want to come clear on them. When you vote down transparency, you always get the same result: People are suspicious, people lose faith, people lose trust.

Had this motion from the NDP gone through—it was my motion, actually—and showed what were the reasons behind it, people would have understood. People would have turned the page, and trust would have started to build back. But when you turn down those motions one after the other, we get what we have now: the public of Ontario losing faith, losing trust in its government.

Mr. Thomas, of course, was referring to a report that the deputy minister had earned more than \$500,000 in salary and benefits and was paid by Hamilton Health Sciences, not the Ministry of Health, and that many other senior health officials also earned income and benefits in the \$300,000 range from the University Health Network rather than being paid through the Ministry of Health, which was their employer.

Mr. Thomas continued, “For too long, our hospitals have been exempt from a thorough review of their operations.” He was clear: Unless the auditor, the Ombudsman and the freedom-of-information commissioner are given the right to investigate, “report and recommend changes, these hospitals will continue to operate in the shadows, well away from public oversight.”

Yet in spite of all this, and the supporting strong evidence, the Liberal members voted against a motion that would have gotten to the bottom, that would have allowed the people of Ontario to turn the page on this practice and to trust that the future will be transparent. They missed that opportunity again.

At this same committee meeting the Liberal members also voted against a motion to have the former eHealth top executives, Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson, appear before the committee. The Liberals chose to shield the key players in the eHealth scandal from answering questions from committee members.

You have to realize that other witnesses made direct accusations about those people, and laid the blame on Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson for everybody to read in Hansard for the rest of their lives. But when we wanted to give those people an opportunity to defend themselves, to defend their names, to give their side of the story of what had happened, the Liberal members on the committee shut it down. They used their majority and voted down that motion.

They have essentially prevented the public from ever getting the answers as to why the \$1 billion that was

spent on eHealth—that much we know—benefited their \$300-an-hour Liberal-friendly consultants while eHealth is still a long way from being a reality.

One of the last fiascos to hit McGuinty’s sinking ship is the resignation of the Deputy Minister of Health, Mr. Ron Sapsford. This resignation is in many ways troubling, because all the cabinet shuffles and resignations mean that Ontarians may never know the full extent of insider contracts and wasted spending in the Dalton McGuinty health ministry.

It is also troubling because of the assurance of Mr. Sapsford, just weeks before his resignation, that he was not going anywhere; that he had done the best he could as a public servant to serve the people of Ontario.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Oh, exactly, but the Premier disagreed.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. My colleague says, “But the Premier disagreed.”

Can you blame Ontarians for wondering whether he was about to expose some dirt? Here again, by not getting to the bottom, people get suspicious.

It seems to be the case for everyone involved with this. They’re either resigning or forced to leave. The same thing happened to Mr. Caplan: forced to leave, the day that the report was put forward—not that I hadn’t asked for his resignation many, many times.

We have been waiting for Dalton McGuinty to take responsibility, and in our view, the ball is now squarely in Mr. Dalton McGuinty’s court. The Premier needs to assure Ontario’s families that they can have confidence in this government’s ability to run this big system that we call our health care system.

The Ministry of Health is the biggest ministry and department, and right now, people have lost trust in its leadership. One day we hear about \$1 billion wasted at eHealth. The next day, it’s the bungled rollout of the H1N1 vaccine. The next day, it’s emergency rooms closing their doors to a community in need, without having the support of that community.

The government seems to be using its left hand to defend the hundreds of millions of dollars that went to eHealth with little to show for it, while it uses its right hand to cut funding for long-term-care facilities—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Name a cut.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, they are—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: A funding cut. Name one.

M^{me} France Gélinas: They are laying people off. They are cutting programs and services. The same thing with a number of health promotion initiatives.

1650

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My colleague from Algoma is arguing that there have been no cuts, but I beg to differ. We used to have a smoke-free strategy that included action groups in all of our communities. Those have been cut. The funding is no longer available to run those peer support smoking cessation strategies; same thing for a number of other programs.

New Democrats are again urging Premier McGuinty to take some responsibility, to use this resignation as an opportunity to make some real change. It is time to finally start directing health dollars away from well-connected insiders and back to local hospitals, front-line health care workers, community health centres, things like smoking cessation and programs and services that people depend on and count on.

A billion dollars is a lot of money. We all agree that Ontario needs an electronic health record. We all know that it will have tremendous benefits. The first one is in prescription errors. We've all gone to our physicians or our nurse practitioners, brought the little paper with our prescription and nobody can read what's written on that piece of paper. Well, with an electronic health record, everybody can read what's printed. Errors go down right there. The duplication of tests can be lowered.

We had concrete examples in Sault Ste. Marie at the Group Health Centre, which has been a pioneer in using electronic health records, of how much more smoothly their H1N1 vaccination campaign went compared to everybody else. When people were lining up in my riding in Nickel Belt and in Sudbury the week that the H1N1 vaccine rolled out, we had the weather from hell. When it wasn't raining, there was sleet or it was windy like you couldn't believe. And what we saw was terrible. We saw pregnant women, we saw families with little kids in strollers, standing outside in the wind and the cold to get their flu shot.

This is something that Ontarians will never forget. This is an image that no matter how well we try to say things went, it did not go well for those hundreds of people who stood at New Sudbury shopping mall in the wind and the cold, with their babies in strollers, in order to get the H1N1 shot, and they tried to have us believe that it went well.

Had we had the 10 years we used, the billion dollars we used for eHealth that never led us to an electronic health record, had we had an electronic health record this year, those people would not have been standing in the sleet and the cold and the wind. We would have had a way to make sure that the priority populations were identified and that those people were brought in on schedules, like the people at the Group Health Centre were able to offer to the public of Sault Ste. Marie, because they had gone ahead and implemented an electronic health record, something that eHealth was supposed to do for us.

But we didn't see any of this. What we have seen is money being given to high-priced consultants, money being given to friends of the Liberals. We've seen everybody surrounding eHealth jump ship, either through being booted out or leaving before the ship had sunk. When we try to go to the bottom of it, what do we see? We see a Liberal government that wants to shield us from the bottom of this. We see a Liberal government that does not want transparency and does not want accountability. We see a Liberal government that lays the blame squarely on the shoulders of people who have no way to

defend themselves, who have no way to be heard because they won't let them be heard.

The motion from the PC caucus is clear: That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario direct the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to call Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson before it to give evidence with respect to the Auditor General's special report.

I have a feeling that the Liberal members of this House will continue to behave the way they've been behaving since the beginning. They will prevent those people from giving their version of what happened. What will we have on record? We will have all sorts of people accusing Mrs. Kramer and Dr. Hudson of having done all the wrongs in that story, yet they will have never had an opportunity to defend their names. They will never have been given an opportunity to give their side of the story.

This is what this motion is about: to listen to the other side of the story, the people who were there, the people who are being blamed, the people who are being accused of all the wrongdoings that went on at eHealth. This motion is giving them a chance to be heard; it's giving them a chance to defend themselves.

I certainly hope that the Liberal members in this Legislative Assembly will see fit for those people to come and give their side of the story, if for nothing else to defend their name, to clear the air and to learn from the past so that we can turn the page, rebuild confidence and stop being suspicious of every move this government makes. I hope this motion goes through.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I appreciate the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on this motion today. I'll be sharing my time. We have four or five other members who are interested in speaking today as well, so I will dive into mine very soon.

Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to introduce, in the members' east gallery, visiting today from the Thunder Bay Police Association: their president, Keith Hobbs; my brother, Jim "Cheech" Mauro; Brian Crocker, a director, has stepped out; but they also have Duane Wenmann here from the Wawa detachment. I was hoping that the member from Simcoe North would be here. I know the members of the Thunder Bay association always enjoy his company.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: He's going to be here? Maybe they'll see him at 5:30 downstairs in the lobby. We'll look forward to that.

As I said, I'm pleased to be able to have a few minutes on this topic. As I said, many members are interested in speaking to it as well.

I would like to begin by reinforcing a message that I think most members of the Legislature and people who have been following this issue on television or in the media have heard. When the Premier has spoken on this topic, when the Minister of Finance has spoken on this topic and when any of us as Liberal MPPs have spoken on it, there has been a very clear acknowledgement that

on this process associated with eHealth there has not been what we consider value for money. That is not something that anybody on this side of the Legislature or those in the front bench has tried to shirk or skirt, as was asserted here earlier by some of the other speakers. There has been a very clear acknowledgement that we could have done better, that we will do better and that we have taken significant steps forward so that this will not happen again.

But to go as far as the opposition members have been going, on a regular basis, both the official opposition and the members of the third party, and suggest that this has been a \$1-billion waste of money or a complete boondoggle, as if to convey to the members of the listening public that \$1 billion went down the drain and nothing was achieved for that money, is obviously completely disingenuous and completely misleading the public who are interested in this issue.

As we know, there was a predecessor to eHealth. It was called Smart Systems for Health. In fact, that agency was set up under the previous government, the Conservative government, sometime around 2002. Under Smart Systems for Health—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Speaker: I believe the member has used the word “misleading,” which I think is inappropriate in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you for the comment. We’ll continue with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: In fact, Smart Systems for Health was established as an agency under their previous government. Within Smart Systems for Health, in the time that they were still in government, in excess of \$100 million was expended on this particular initiative. To suggest that it all happened under our watch is not correct. Beyond that, to further suggest that nothing has been achieved through the expenditure of these funds to this point is further misleading the public. Here is what has occurred—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I just remind the member to watch his language and phrase his comments in such a way that doesn’t interfere.

1700

Mr. Bill Mauro: I will use whatever language—I’m open to suggestions from the members opposite. If they want me to say what they’re saying is not accurate, I’m happy to say that. If I can’t say “misleading,” I’ll say it’s not accurate for them to suggest that nothing has been achieved.

Here is what has been achieved so far, when they want to say one billion went down the drain. More than one million children have electronic health records. Since 2005, more than four million Ontarians are already participating in the electronic medical records program run in partnership between the province and the Ontario Medical Association. Since 2008, some 80,000 Ontarians are in a pilot project for ePrescribing which will help save lives. All Ontario hospitals have gone filmless and are now using digital diagnostic scans, ultimately

allowing for scans to be shared across the province. The RFQ for a diabetes registry closed August 28, and the responses are now being evaluated. Far from nothing being accomplished when it comes to the expenditure of funds under eHealth, there has been significant progress made, and I think it’s important that we get that on the record.

But again, we have stated very clearly on a consistent basis that we can do better. On this issue, the opposition parties have been having a great deal of fun in terms of trying to paint this—a significant attempt at political partisanship in terms of what’s gone on in eHealth.

In fact, separate from eHealth, last week I was hoping the member from the third party would be here, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, the former leader of the New Democratic Party, who last week went off in terms of his suggestions—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You’re not to mention the member’s attendance.

Mr. Bill Mauro: This is what this is about. There’s a fair connection here where the member started to imply that our government was somehow tied inappropriately to Buchanan. We’re seeing the same thing occurring here with members of the third party; they want to talk about political partisanship and the awarding of contracts in eHealth.

The auditor spoke very clearly on this issue, and it’s important before we read what he said to remind people in the province of Ontario that the auditor is an independent officer of this Legislative Assembly. The independent officer does not report to the government. He reports to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Beyond that, the auditor has a whole fleet of other auditors who work on his behalf. They did the work. Here’s what they had to say on this particular issue: “We were aware of the allegations that ‘party politics’ may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work.”

That’s what the auditor had to say. That’s part of the record that the members of the opposition parties are neglecting to include in their rhetoric whenever they have an opportunity to speak on this issue.

Fundamentally, what absolutely has to occur here is there needs to be a different take on how governments, no matter their political stripe, choose to deal with agencies in the province of Ontario. There are 650 of them in the province, give or take a few—650. As an elected member provincially, I know that I sometimes have a difficult time, and I’m sure members of the opposition parties and other members of the government side do as well. When you’re dealing with constituents in your own riding or across the province of Ontario and you have to try and explain to them that that was an agency that was responsible for something and that the government is not directly involved in the day-to-day

operation of that particular agency, the constituent looks at you, their eyes begin to glaze over, and they don't completely grasp what it is you're trying to say to them because, in their minds—and correctly so—at the end of the day, the government maintains responsibility for those agencies because, in fact, we fund them.

What has to happen, and I know that some of our members will address those steps that we're taking, because my time is almost up—we are taking steps in that regard. It's my opinion that when it comes to expenditures within agencies, all governments, ours and theirs before them—and I know that Mr. Levac is likely to stand up and provide some historical perspective on what happened under that government's watch when they were in power between 1995 and 2003. Something has to happen from a government top-down level so that we have greater control over the expenditure of funds through 650 different agencies in the province of Ontario.

I believe it's incumbent on all of us to ensure that we get better at this and that we ensure on a go-forward basis, whether it's a Liberal government, a Conservative government or an NDP government, that we all have a better handle on how those funds are spent.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I share the thoughts of Madame Gélinas from Nickel Belt, that it is in fact sad that we're here today at all debating this motion. Did we have to take it to this extent to try to get to the bottom of an issue that the Premier of Ontario refuses to do? It is regrettable that in spite of his posturing about accountability, transparency, a new way and his insistence on public inquiries and the like when he was in opposition, when he got the keys to the Premier's office, Dalton McGuinty changed. That is sad.

What we're asking for is that Alan Hudson and Sarah Kramer be called before the public accounts committee to testify as to what they know about what went wrong with \$1 billion of money that was spent, and much of it misspent, at eHealth.

The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan wants to say that a lot of good things happen. Well, he'd better read and listen to the whole report of the auditor. For much of that money—in fact, most of that money—there are no results. We didn't say they did absolutely nothing for the six years they've been in government; it's been close—the auditor says it's been close to nothing.

Here we are, reaching this point in the Legislature today where we have to bring it to the House to try to get the Premier to do what the committee could have done only if he allowed them to do it. But the trained seals who man those committees—and you've got to understand the committee makeup here in the province as opposed to the federal government. We don't have the power, we don't have the majority in opposition to try to force the committee or to win a vote on committee. Only the government can do that.

You know, the other day I was talking to a senior member of staff here who was explaining the murals. The

murals up in the corner of that ceiling that are somewhat exposed—they have been working on trying to remove the covering. You see, what happened was Premier Mitchell Hepburn, a Liberal Premier, had them covered over. He had the whole place whitewashed. The Premier of today is trying to repeat history. He wants to white-wash what the public accounts committee is doing. He wants to eviscerate the committee so that Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson cannot testify.

The people of the province of Ontario want the facts. They want the truth and they deserve no less. I would say to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and every other Liberal backbencher, I hope you're prepared. I hope you're prepared in 2011 to talk to your constituents. The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan talked about explaining to his constituents. Well, I hope they're prepared to explain to their constituents why the Premier of Ontario refused to allow the people access to the facts about what happened to \$1 billion and the role they played as legislators in blocking that access and that information for the people of Ontario.

We've asked for Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson to come before that committee. I share the belief, unfortunately, that Madame Gélinas does, that they will not accept this motion and they will not support it. In fact, we're more likely to be able to get Stanley Kramer and Henry Hudson before this committee than Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson, because the Liberal people on that side are going to block it. Shame on them.

This is your last chance to stand up for the truth, to stand up as backbenchers for your constituents and help us find out what happened to \$1 billion. If you're not afraid of the truth, then you have nothing to hide.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to join the debate this evening on the opposition motion. I appreciate the views from the members opposite on the issue that's before us, but I think we've been very clear on this: We have asked the auditor to intervene to review the expenditures at eHealth and also expanded the power of the auditor to a number of other organizations. That report was brought back on October 7, 2009, and we know what the auditor said. So everyone on this side of the House is certainly aware of the fact that we want to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent wisely in the province of Ontario. I think every member in this House is concerned about how taxpayers' money is spent.

1710

The issue and the challenges around electronic medical records are, in part, the delivery. I can tell you that in my community in Sault Ste. Marie over the last number of months, the vaccinations that have been taking place with respect to H1N1 have been going very, very well and very smoothly in our community. It was reported in the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail and so on. The benefit and the importance of electronic medical records at the Group Health Centre in Sault Ste. Marie and the partnership that has been formed with the

public health branch in Sault Ste. Marie is the reason why those vaccinations have been going very smoothly in our community. Our community is an example of how electronic medical records should be delivered in the province of Ontario.

So let's not confuse the issue. Because there are issues around certain individuals who were involved in the delivery and the development of electronic medical records in the province, it's not fair to say that nothing was done with the expenditure of the money. And it's not fair to say that electronic medical records don't have merit and this is not a worthy initiative, because we all know that electronic medical records being put in place in Ontario will save us millions of dollars and will also help to save lives in this province. It's that timely access to care and that one-stop shopping of an electronic medical record that has the background information of an individual that helps doctors and medical professionals diagnose and treat and take care of individuals in the province of Ontario.

With respect, a number of steps have been taken to ensure that what happened and what took place at eHealth doesn't happen again at any other organization in the province of Ontario. We know that in 2002, the Conservative government invested \$41 million on Smart Systems for Health, which is really the predecessor for eHealth. Also, \$77 million in the 2003 budget was allocated, or \$118 million. I think they recognized the benefits of electronic medical records. We certainly recognize the benefit of electronic medical records, and I can certainly see the benefits in my community first-hand.

We know that in the auditor's report there were a number of recommendations that were put forward. The auditor made the comment that he did with respect to party politics supposedly entering into the awarding of contracts and that the awarding of those contracts may have obtained personal benefit from the firms that were getting the work, and the auditor concluded, "but we saw no evidence of this during our work." That's on page 11 in the auditor's report. We're confident, on this side of the House, in the auditor's recommendations in the third party review that was done by the auditor with respect to the expenditure of dollars.

There's another issue that is probably a little broader in context around this, and it speaks to credibility and accountability. On this side of the House, that's something that we are striving to increase transparency and accountability on. I think members opposite who had the opportunity while in government to take those steps didn't take those steps when we're talking about, for example, freedom-of-information requests. There are a number of organizations now in the province of Ontario where freedom-of-information requests are made available to the public, and neither the Conservatives nor the NDP, when they were in government, took those steps to ensure that the public had access to that information. Some of those organizations include the Lottery and Gaming Corp., Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One,

Cancer Care Ontario, the WSIB, the LCBO, eHealth, the Ontario Realty Corp. and so on. There are countless organizations here that have been brought under this umbrella of greater scrutiny in the province of Ontario because I think all members in the Legislature want to ensure that the dollars that are spent in any arm's-length crown corporation or crown agency are spent wisely and that taxpayers are getting value for the money that is being spent.

Those are a number of examples in terms of where we're going with freedom-of-information requests, transparency and accountability for numerous organizations across the province.

With respect to the progress that was made in eHealth, we know there were dollars that were spent to develop electronic medical records. There are more than one million children in the province of Ontario that now have an electronic medical record, and since 2005, more than four million Ontarians are already participating in electronic medical records. We know that this is a very, very important medical tool for treatment and diagnosis of disease, and the health and well-being of Ontarians in this province. Our commitment is that by 2015 we will ensure that all individuals in the province have electronic medical records, because we know there is a tremendous benefit to having those medical records.

There was a comment that was made in the Toronto Star by a physician, Ron Charach, who said, "Let's hope the endless buzzing around the cost of the ambitious eHealth initiative doesn't end up sidelining the project. There are far greater costs to the public of not having centralized medical data, in terms of tests being frequently reordered, and specialists asking questions for which patients have no answers."

I think we all understand the tremendous benefit of having electronic medical records in the province of Ontario, and I understand, with respect to the motion, that we're talking about having a couple of individuals interviewed with respect to this. I'm satisfied with the auditor's report. I'm satisfied that the auditor has taken the steps necessary to ensure greater accountability and greater transparency of not only the eHealth organization but a number of other organizations in the province that we expect to be spending taxpayers' money wisely.

I know, with respect to the expenditure of dollars in health care, our community has benefited tremendously. In 2003, the expenditure on health care in this province was about \$29 billion. Today the expenditure is \$42.5 billion. It has meant new hospitals, in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie a nurse practitioner clinic, funding for the Group Health Centre, more equipment, more nurses, greater home care services and more long-term-care beds. On this side of the House, we know that we have made a 45% increase in health care spending in only the last six years—very substantial and very significant. I know that in my community of Sault Ste. Marie, residents are very pleased with the progress we've made with respect to health care funding.

I think the issue that's been raised today and this evening with respect to an inquiry, or individuals being

requested to provide information—those individuals can certainly provide whatever information they would like to provide to the public whenever they feel they would like to make those comments. No one is preventing them from saying that. I think we've been clear. We've taken the steps that were necessary, that required the auditor to come forward and do this review and provide the report. We have committed to implementing every recommendation that the auditor has made and we are doing that.

I know there are other members who want to make comments on the motion, and that's my time this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to speak to this motion which has been brought forward today by our leader, Tim Hudak. The motion calls for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the public accounts committee to call Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson before it to give evidence with respect to the Auditor General's report on Ontario's Electronic Health Records Initiative.

This is a disgraceful situation, and the Auditor General has certainly uncovered the fact that the McGuinty government allowed consultants and others to run amok as the province spent \$1 billion over the last seven years in an attempt to create electronic health records, without any tangible results. And the auditor's damning report into eHealth Ontario and its predecessor, the Smart Systems for Health Agency, also linked the awarding of millions of dollars in untendered contracts to the Premier's role in the hiring of eHealth Ontario's former chief executive officer, Sarah Kramer. It is regrettable that Ontario taxpayers did not get any value for the \$1 billion that has been spent on projects to create electronic health records. In fact it's unfortunate, because these records would actually improve care for people with chronic disease; they would allow for greater efficiency in interactions with patients; they would improve patient safety and patient participation in their own health outcomes.

1720

We have been aware of the scandalous abuse of taxpayer money now for some time. In fact, I want to thank the staffers, the former staffers and people who have come to us and provided us with information since 2008 because they became concerned about the spending of this government.

I also just want to set the record straight, because the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan tried to take credit for any progress that had been made in the area of electronic health network records. The linkage of pharmacies is as a result of initiatives that were begun by Ruth Grier and completed by Jim Wilson and myself and our government under Michael Harris. I also want to let you know that the electronic child health network was created in 1997, and the reason, now 10 years later, almost all of the children who have been in a hospital have an electronic health record is thanks to the Conservative

government. It had absolutely nothing to do with the McGuinty government. I also want to remind you that it was our government that established Telehealth. I also want to let you know that the reason there has been any success in the immunization of people with the H1N1 vaccine is because of the universal flu vaccine that we put in place, and that's the reason that there's any infrastructure whatsoever.

This government has a big, big problem. You have spent \$1 billion. You have absolutely nothing to show for it, and we are calling today on the government to allow us to bring before the committee Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson. It is imperative that taxpayers know the full story, and we know that the tale leads right to the Premier's office.

We have been looking at this issue since June 2008. In fact, I made a statement in the House in that month saying that the money that you had spent produced few, if any, deliverables. Remember the operational review conducted by Deloitte in 2006? It also demonstrated that we had no deliverables. So we asked Premier McGuinty to put in place an aggressive plan and deal with the fact that there were no tangible results. What did he do? He totally ignored us. After waiting for him to take action on an aggressive turnaround plan, what did he do? He merely rebranded the Smart Systems for Health Agency and called it eHealth Ontario. That's what happened.

We asked that you call in the Auditor General to conduct a value-for-money audit. Well, you didn't do that either. That was when we had uncovered the expenses: food expenses for consultants, \$45,000; \$231,000 on hotels for consultants; \$24,000 on furniture for Sarah Kramer's office; \$1,000 on artwork for her office; and the list goes on and on. Your Premier and your government have known about the waste and the scandalous abuse of taxpayer money since 2008—in fact, we can go back to the Deloitte report in 2006—yet you stonewall, and you refuse to allow the committee to bring before it two of the key players who could shed some light on how all of this happened. You have ducked and you have dodged our questions and our concerns.

Today the stonewalling should stop. There are unanswered questions. We bring this motion forward today. We want to make sure that this abuse of taxpayer money never happens again. We want to make sure that all ministers provide the oversight that is necessary. I urge you today: Vote according to your conscience. Support our motion. Allow the public accounts committee to bring in Sarah Kramer and Dr. Hudson.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate immensely the opportunity to put on the record some comments regarding the opposition day motion.

First and foremost, I will be following the rules that are guiding us in the standing orders regarding debate, and it says in section VI, part 23:

“In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she....

“(h) Makes allegations against another member.

“(i) Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member.

“(j) Charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood.

“(k) Uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.”

I plan to follow that rule in this House today, Speaker, because it's important for us to engage in why we're debating this.

So, let's call this what it is. It's politics. We're in this place because it's political, and what politics are being played here? The politics of smelling blood; “I gotcha” politics. This is not about any government of any sort not having any problems to solve, because the glass breaking from a stone being thrown by somebody who lives in a glass house is deafening.

The reality is, right now what we heard from the last speaker plus others who have gone before is basically the rooster crowing because the rooster's taking credit for the sun rising. As I've said many, many times before, the place is fluid and the fluidity we're talking about is identifying a problem, and the people of Ontario—and the Leader of the Opposition tells us what it is that families want. What is it that Ontario families want? They want this cackling back and forth? No, they don't. You know what they want? They want good health care. They want good education. They want good social services delivered for the good of the people. They want these problems solved now.

Do we acknowledge that there have been some problems? Absolutely. The member for Thunder Bay captured it beautifully when he said, “It's about getting the problem solved.” To me, it's not what governments do to prevent that problem. That's an important aspect of it, but when it rears its ugly head, what do you do to solve it?

So, let's talk about what's been done to solve it in a very clear case. Under Premier McGuinty's direction, we've eliminated any sole-source contracts. All new Ontario government consultant contracts must follow a competitive hiring process, regardless of the dollar value—unheard of in any other government. Consultants will no longer be able to bill for hospitality, food expenses or incidental costs. Management, information technology, technical services, research and development, policy development and communication consultants are covered by these new rules, and all employees of Ontario's largest agencies, boards and commissions will be required to have their expenses reviewed by Ontario's Integrity Commissioner. That tells me it's a response to making sure that the problem gets solved.

But let's talk about the further steps that have been taken, and we've also taken additional steps. The McGuinty Liberals have also simplified the rules on expenses. These new rules are shorter, clearer, cleaner and posted online for all to see. A 25-page outline will be shortened down to two, and it will require that all OPS employees and employees at our largest agencies, boards

and commissions receive online mandatory training on expense claims.

Starting April 1, 2010, there will be a posting of expenses of OPS senior management, cabinet ministers, political staff and senior executives at Ontario's 22 largest agencies online. This will hold these employees to the same standard as cabinet ministers and political staff—problems solved. We'll increase the number of random audits and expenses to ensure rules are being followed.

During annual audits of Ontario's agencies, boards and commissions, external auditors will be required to look at expense practices to ensure rules and controls are in place and are being followed. If the Integrity Commissioner determines that all or part of the expense is not allowable, she—at this time, she—or he may require repayment of the expenses in whole or in part. That's an action to solve the problem.

What we have here today is a motion that basically says, “We gotcha. Let's keep bleeding you, but don't worry about the solutions.” This is what it is common to have happen. Quite frankly, sitting on that side, that's what they're supposed to do. They're supposed to try to cut us up. They're supposed to try to find fault, and they're doing it pretty good. But the way I look at it, it's the rhetoric that I'm hearing that simply says that this is about scoring points. It's not about the collection—and the two members on this side who spoke before me reviewed quite clearly the good that's happened as electronic records are supposed to develop and evolve. Of course, we still hear the rooster crowing, because they're sitting back, from a member who actually wasn't even sitting in this place before, taking credit for the sun rising. We're bad; they're good. That's what we're talking about.

1730

What I would rather talk about is finding out: What did we do to correct it, and have we admitted it? Absolutely; it's not acceptable in this day and age for the things that were happening to happen. I was asked if I would consider doing a historical retrospect, and you know what? I don't have enough time. Quite frankly, over eight years of Mr. Harris, the same kinds of things happened. They took steps to try to correct them and they did add some things that plugged the holes. For people to stand up and start beating their chests, ripping their robes and gnashing their teeth that this is the worst, this is Armageddon—it's not Armageddon. What it is is a place for us to find the problems, fix them, make them better and put into place people who can do what I said is the priority. The priority is good health care, good education, good social safety nets, the things people are looking for—not the games that are getting played, not the dog whistles that are being blown, but speaking to the reality of the problems that have been identified.

The Auditor General gave us a report. We honoured that. We're doing all of those reports, and thankfully we're getting it done—quite frankly, faster than what was done in the previous historical reference that I made.

But it's their job. They're going on a glory-fishing expedition. Listen carefully to the arguments, because it sounds very much like the poetry of opposition versus the prose of government. Listen carefully: All it is is scoring political points.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to the opposition motion by the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook. What we are simply asking from the Legislature today is to have a public accounts committee call the main players of the eHealth saga to answer those questions about who knew what about this billion-dollar boondoggle.

What we know so far is troubling to anyone. We know that the Premier's hand-selected head of eHealth has direct ties back to his office from this scandal. We also know that under successive ministers, hundreds of millions of dollars in untendered contracts went to Liberal-friendly consultants who allegedly worked in eHealth.

When all of this came to light, the Premier and the minister announced with great fanfare that they had called in PriceWaterhouse to do an external audit on eHealth. The Premier said that he wanted to get to the bottom of the scandal. He was as troubled and shocked at the allegations as we were. A few months later, with much fanfare the government announced they hadn't actually retained PriceWaterhouse to do the audit. They were convinced it would just be a duplicate of the work the Provincial Auditor was doing at the time, and we supposedly were just to forget about it.

The Premier and the Minister of Health at that time repeatedly said that an external audit was being done and conducted, when it was clear that there was no intention of doing one. This was a PR exercise and nothing more. Of course, in committee we also called for an investigation of the legislative committee. We all know what happened there. In a vote that was clearly whipped by the Premier's office, the Liberal members of the committee voted to sweep the whole matter under the rug. They voted against our motion in committee to hear from the people involved in eHealth in an attempt to make it all go away.

When the Provincial Auditor appeared before the public accounts committee, he gave explosive testimony that the Premier himself misrepresented his report on the billion-dollar boondoggle also known as eHealth. He particularly singled out the powerful Management Board of Cabinet for changing rules around untendered contracts specifically for eHealth. As well, the Auditor General made it clear to the public accounts committee that he did not even attempt to probe the political ties of all the people involved in this scandal. The Premier knew this and still insisted that the Provincial Auditor cleared the Liberal Party of any wrongdoing. The Provincial Auditor did no such thing.

The eHealth scandal is about far more than Liberal consultants getting rich off the provincial Treasurer; it

speaks to the very real culture of entitlement that this government has. It's almost like there are two types of Ontarians: those who are connected to the Liberal Party and those who are footing the bill and paying.

I'm going to wind up my remarks—I don't have too long to speak—but over the last number of years, this Premier and successive Ministers of Health have resided over the squandering of \$1 billion on eHealth, with nothing to show for it. Even Ms. Kramer admitted on CBC Newsworld that the money had been wasted.

I would urge all members to support today's resolution. It's a good way to get to the bottom of the eHealth mess. That's the best way to prevent it from happening again.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to get a few words on the record regarding the motion that has been put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I just want to pick up a theme that was developed by my good friend the member from Brant about how politics and inside baseball are being played here.

It's interesting that a number of weeks ago I had the opportunity to speak on a similar motion. The official opposition, a number of weeks ago, asked for a full public inquiry; today it's asking for a number of individuals to appear before the public accounts committee.

During their time in office, there was a tragic situation that occurred at Ipperwash related to the death of Dudley George. If you take the opportunity to look through Hansard over those eight years, there was a consistent request from this side of the House, particularly from the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, the Honourable Gerry Phillips, to have a full public inquiry into the events surrounding the tragic death of Dudley George; that was denied on numerous occasions. The opposition, then in government, voted it down time and time and time again.

Then, when the Liberal opposition of the day requested—similar to what's being requested today—people to come forward at a legislative committee to testify on what their knowledge was of those events, it was denied each and every time. So as I tell people, my favourite part of the Bible is John 23: "Let he who has no sin cast the first stone." That is a very relevant biblical reference today.

Let me look at this notion with regard to eHealth that \$1 billion went down the drain. An expert that I have great respect for, Mr. Rob Devitt, was the former CEO of the old Civic Hospital of Peterborough and somebody I got to know rather well because I was a city councillor when he was the CEO. On November 14, he did an extensive interview with Steve Paikin on *The Agenda*, specifically dealing with the situation at eHealth and his role as the interim CEO.

The first question that was asked of Mr. Devitt by Mr. Paikin—I want to quote from the transcript because I have the full transcript here. He asked, "I want to ask you

... is there anything good happening at eHealth these days?" Mr. Devitt said, "First of all, let's start with the patient and work our way back. Monday"—that was November 9—"I was in Peterborough with one of the ... family health teams seeing first-hand how electronic health records, financed through initiatives like eHealth Ontario, are helping in the fight against H1N1. It was such a, to me, moving opportunity to understand why eHealth is so important."

Mr. Devitt goes on to say, "For instance, five years ago, if a physician was trying to identify their high-risk patients eligible for the H1N1 vaccine, it would have meant going to walls of paper charts, plowing through them, trying to identify the patients. What I learned from the visit to Peterborough was how this is being done with a couple of key strokes on the computer, allowing a physician to notify all of their high-risk patients about the need to get" their vaccine. I think that certainly points to some of the good that has come out of the investment in eHealth in the province of Ontario.

Interestingly enough, once there were some very significant questions raised about the expenditure of dollars at eHealth, the Premier of the day quite wisely called in the Auditor General to do a very extensive review. I had the opportunity, as a sub on the public accounts committee, to hear Jim McCarter, an honourable man, a man who is renowned in the field of public accounting, asking a whole series of questions, which he answered, with regard to issues related to eHealth.

We talk about Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson being hired particularly to handle the task at eHealth. Well, it's safe to say that the Premier, of course, put confidence in Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson to carry out their job, to carry out their task, and indeed at the same time to make sure that taxpayers' dollars that were being invested in eHealth would be put to the purpose they were designed for. From time to time, we all put faith in individuals who don't carry out our expectations—and as soon as that was discovered with regard to Ms. Kramer and Alan Hudson, the right thing was done: They were dismissed, and the Premier called in the Auditor General to do a full and extensive review.

1740

Again, I think it's important to get on the record what the Auditor General said on page 11: "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work."

There's no question that it is a complete exaggeration to say that \$1 billion was flushed down the drain with our investment in eHealth. If you'd just take the time, I ask members of the House to get a copy of the transcript from Mr. Devitt, take the opportunity to read this transcript, and he clearly identifies the investments that were made in eHealth that are really helping deliver—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'd like to begin by saying that for a government that continues to boast about being transparent, we certainly have not seen any evidence of their transparency. Rather, we have seen resistance and a government that is desperate to keep their secrets in the closet.

The PC Party has called on the public accounts committee to call former eHealth CEO Sarah Kramer and former eHealth board chair Dr. Alan Hudson forward for questioning. It seems as though everyone within this eHealth debacle was unaware or has convenient memory loss of what was going on. The Premier won't answer questions. The member from Don Valley East was thrown under the bus and has stepped down as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. His predecessor, the member from Toronto Centre, gave himself a get-out-of-jail-free card and is bolting to the exit door to avoid further scrutiny.

On Friday, we learned that the deputy minister, who has continuously said he was unaware of the scandalous process at eHealth, has also resigned. The former deputy minister has repeatedly told us that he was not aware of the many untendered contracts. Well, he told us in committee that he had regularly scheduled meetings with Dr. Alan Hudson and with Ms. Kramer. What did they talk about at those meetings? My colleague also asked the deputy minister to whom Dr. Alan Hudson reported, as it was made clear in committee that it was not to the deputy. So who did he report to? Did he report directly to the minister? The Premier? Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson must have answers—answers that the people of Ontario deserve to know.

From this government's actions, it is evident that they don't want to risk that Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson might well tell who was really running the show and calling the shots at eHealth. If there is nothing to hide and nobody knew what everyone else at eHealth was doing, why is the public accounts committee preventing Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson from appearing? One billion dollars has vanished with virtually nothing to show for it.

Let me elaborate on a few connections between the Courtyard Group and the McGuinty Liberals. This is a firm that was co-founded by a former Liberal staffer, a Liberal fundraiser and past co-chair of a Liberal election campaign, John Ronson. The other co-founder, Michael Guerriere, is a former co-worker of Dr. Alan Hudson at the University Health Network. Guerriere didn't just benefit from the McGuinty Liberals' generous contracts to Courtyard Group; he was also serving as the VP of strategy for eHealth Ontario, making—get this—\$3,145 a day.

I think it is also worth highlighting again that Courtyard also employed a former chief of staff to the member from Toronto Centre and a former director of policy and research to the Premier, Karli Farrow.

It gets better. While Ontarians are out there struggling, Mr. Ronson billed taxpayers \$393 an hour, Ms. Farrow billed taxpayers \$327 an hour, and Mr. Guerriere, as I said, \$3,145 a day.

I should also mention that Mr. Guerriere is the principal consultant for Anzen Consulting, another firm that benefited tremendously from these untendered contracts, as well as being a firm that employs—guess who?—Mr. Guerriere's wife, Miyo Yamashita. Ms. Yamashita is best known as the consultant who charged Ontario taxpayers \$300 an hour to read the New York Times, listen to voice-mail and have a conversation on the subway. Ms. Kramer signed off on those untendered contracts, and Dr. Hudson signed off on hers.

It's time for the McGuinty Liberals to come clean, and that begins with bringing Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson to the fore. As an elected official here, regardless of your political stripe, it is your responsibility as every single MPP to stand up and vote in favour of this motion. The public will know which members here today support the public's right to know the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The night before Halloween is known as devil's night in Detroit. I attended a rally in Windsor. There were a couple of hundred people protesting the eHealth scandal; 200 people with signs reading, "Where is the money?" and, "We want our money back." I know that there were a number of members here who would be aware of that rally along the Detroit River. They may want to try and ignore that kind of indication of the mounting opposition to not only uncontrolled spending but unaccountable misspending—I think I'll use that term. Those people marching are tired of this government's 3D approach to provincial politics. When a government like this one is caught with its hand in the cookie jar, it falls back on a 3D approach of dodge, delay and denounce.

Let's be clear: \$1 billion has disappeared because of the eHealth boondoggle, at a time when many emergency departments are being closed. I think of Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Petrolia, and perhaps Hagersville in my riding. Now is the time for scrutiny. It's time for a new set of 3D policy: a policy based on deterrence, a policy based on detection and a policy based on disclosure. The allowance of Kramer and Hudson to testify in front of the public accounts committee would be a good first step.

I obviously stand in support of this motion to have the public accounts committee call forward Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson. I do that with the realization that I am speaking to members who have their marching orders. They have cotton in their ears. They have the blinders on. It's almost as if these allegations and these whispers of bid-rigging and price-fixing and waste and fraud and abuse do not exist. So it's with this realization that we see the rapid-fire political tricks, the closure, the time allocation motions and other tricks to silence dissent.

It's very important, as I feel that as we discuss this misspending of money in the context of an economic downturn, we have to go back to a system of management that involves, at minimum, not only planning but proper control.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has expired.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. All those in favour, please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Prue, Michael
Bailey, Robert	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Paul	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gélinas, France	Murdoch, Bill	
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bartolucci, Rick	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldeep	Rinaldi, Lou
Carroll, Aileen	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 25; the nays are 43.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TAXATION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nepean–Carleton has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Finance. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the parliamentary assistant, the

member for Pickering–Scarborough East, may reply for up to five minutes. The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm actually astonished. The moment you said we were rising on the adjournment proceedings, 45 Liberals walked out of the chamber. I must say that this is appalling. Not only did they just subvert democracy by pushing away the ability for us to bring forward—

Interjections.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): No, there can't be a point of order during this period. I would just remind the member, though, not to refer to the presence or absence of members.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: In a few minutes we'll try and get a response out of someone from the Liberal government—it is not clear—on why they're trying to block public hearings in Cornwall, Kingston, Thunder Bay, North Bay, London and several communities like Strathroy, Sarnia, Thornhill and others right across the province for those hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who are opposed to the harmonized sales tax.

What is happening to democracy in this chamber is astounding. Not only did we just see a Liberal government block the ability of the official opposition to bring two of the key characters in the eHealth billion-dollar scandal before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts; the reality is we're not able to get the answers we deserve, nor are Ontarians able to come to this chamber or to their own community centres to speak to Ontario legislators about their concerns over a \$3-billion tax grab that is going to add 8% more to their home heating, to their maintenance fees, to their snow removal, to their Christmas tree, for heaven's sake—

Interjection: To kids' sports.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —to children's sports, and to so many other items right across this province.

It used to be said that there were two things certain in life: death and taxes. Now we have three: death, taxes, and death and taxes, thanks to Mr. McGuinty, Mr. Duncan and Mr. Wilkinson.

We will stand in opposition to that \$3-billion tax grab on Ontarians at the worst possible time: at a time when Ontarians are out of work; at a time when we are accepting welfare payments for the first time ever as a partner in Confederation; at a time when 300,000 Ontarians are out of well-paying manufacturing jobs, because of them. And what do they have to show for it? A \$25-billion deficit. That's why they don't want to go to Cornwall, to Kingston, to Thunder Bay, to Sarnia, to North Bay, to London, to Brampton. That's why they don't want to go to community centres right across this province: They don't want to hear the truth.

Instead, what they're going to do is try to ram this HST through this Ontario Legislature before Christmas. They're going to try to pass into law, through the back door—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Merry Christmas.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —a \$3-billion tax grab, and as my colleague Peter Shurman just said, Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas—8% more. And what they won't do is bring this to their constituents.

As we all know on this side of the House—not only the Progressive Conservative caucus, but our friends and colleagues in the New Democrats—the reality is that Ontarians don't want this. They're e-mailing us.

I can tell you another thing: The people of Nepean–Carleton are no different from the people of Ottawa South, Ottawa West–Nepean, Ottawa–Orléans, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Those people don't have a true voice in the Ontario Legislature. Those people have a Liberal MPP who is listening to Dwight Duncan force this through the Legislature. So those folks are coming to Nepean–Carleton; they're going to Carleton–Mississippi Mills; they're going to the leader of the official opposition and asking him to continue to apply public pressure. And it has worked so far. We saw this with the transition rules on prepaid funerals; we saw this with the exemptions for Tim Hortons coffee and newspapers. But what we haven't seen is them standing up on behalf of their constituents and asking the finance minister and the Premier to come to their hometowns to explain to the people of this province why they want to put a \$3-billion tax grab under their Christmas tree this year.

I look forward to hearing why they will not travel this province over a prolonged period of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Pickering–Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have a few minutes to respond to the member from Nepean–Carleton. I know that during question period things get a little noisy in this place and it's often more difficult to hear the responses that the Minister of Finance would have provided, so let me make an effort again.

First, let me say that the minister introduced, back during this fiscal year, before the end of March, a spring budget that included a comprehensive tax reform package, part of which was the HST. There are members throughout this Legislature, I can tell you, particularly on the government side, who have been meeting in their communities with community organizations, with business communities, with community associations, with municipalities, talking to the issue of and the concerns regarding and the opportunities that exist with the HST and the broader reform package.

So it's not as though this has come out of the blue somehow. The legislation that the minister has introduced just recently speaks to the Ontario Tax Plan for More Jobs and Growth Act. This will be, effectively, some implementing legislation that we are responsible to do, and the federal government will have to do something similar. But it's not as though this has just popped up out of the woodwork.

Let me tell you that the minister, during the context of putting together this package of tax reform and growth opportunities—it's going to result in some \$15 billion in

tax cuts. Approximately \$10.6 billion of those will be to Ontario individuals and their families and a further \$4.5 billion will be for business. The minister said today, if it wasn't heard well, that those businesses are both on Main Street and Bay Street.

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This is the right plan at the right time for this province. The proposed HST and tax cuts will increase business investment within this province. It will create new jobs, it will result in a rise in incomes for families over time, and it will provide opportunities for reduced prices on many of the consumer products that people purchase.

This particular legislation and the HST are going to result in proposed income tax cuts, if the legislation passes. They will be permanent, and they will be for roughly 93% of taxpayers in this province. That's 93% who will see permanent cuts to their income tax. Approximately 90,000 low-income Ontarians will stop paying provincial income tax at all. I have to tell you, Speaker, that it has been the hallmark of this government over its terms in office to speak to those who are vulnerable in our community, and I can think of no better way to do that than ensuring that some 90,000 low-income Ontarians are no longer burdened with income tax when they can least afford to pay it.

I want to just take a few more moments in the two minutes we have left available to us to make a couple of other comments. We recognize that during this transitional phase, there will be need for some support. So in the negotiations with the federal government for a transfer to us, we're going to be providing some \$1,000 to families in the province of Ontario and some \$300 to individuals in the form of individual payments, and that will help with the transition. But not only that, those lower- and middle-income families will also see ongoing and permanent tax credits available to them, much like they have with the GST currently.

So we're protecting those that we have to protect within our communities. We are putting in place a structure and a strategy that will see income tax cuts broadly. Over time, we will see reductions in consumer prices for products, and we will see a much stronger and healthier economy.

As recently as the past week or so, Jack Mintz, who is the Palmer Chair in Public Policy at the University of Calgary, looked at the effects that the HST will have on the Ontario economy. In his review, within a 10-year period he feels our modernized tax system will result in over 590,000 net new jobs in this province and result in some \$47 billion in investments here in Ontario.

In the minute or so that's left, to the benefit of the member from Nepean–Carleton and those members who remain with us this afternoon, I want to speak to a bit of the history from the Conservative governments and Conservative parties. The Tory federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty, said in his budget that the single sales tax “is the single most important step that provinces with RSTs could take to stimulate new business investment, create jobs and improve Canada's overall economic

competitiveness.” We have to work with and recognize what our federal counterparts are doing.

At the time when we were introducing our budget, the interim leader of the official opposition said, “I think, in theory, our party is supportive of harmonization.”

Today, the opposition seems somewhat paralyzed in the face of hard choices and bold action. I'll refer to Minister Wilkinson's comment today, that they believe in the status quo: That would be status and quo. This is the party—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thornhill has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Finance. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the member for Pickering–Scarborough East will have up to five minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Looking over at the Liberal benches, I must wonder aloud. I was wondering who was going to respond on behalf of Minister Duncan to what I have to say.

This is the first time that I've ever asked for a late show in this House in over two years, because there's an element of frustration. At the same time, I should say that when I arrived here, I was told that if question period was meant to provide answers, it would be called answer period, so I take all of this with a grain of salt.

Having said that, members know that since we returned after the summer in early September, I have had a series of questions, probably at this point numbering in the dozens, on the question of the \$81-million air conditioner, or, as Minister Duncan likes to call it, the Windsor Energy Centre. Now, let's put this into context: \$81 million in the context of the province of Ontario, or in any context, is a heck of a lot of money. There was a national Liberal government that was defeated because of a scandal that involved \$100 million called Adscam, so we're not talking about a paltry sum.

I asked some questions today that are not unlike questions I have put on the record before. What these all really come down to, at the end of the day, is something that this party in opposition deals an awful lot with, and that is the question of government accountability and the responsibility this government is supposed to take for its actions. The questions have basically revolved around why an energy centre was built, and I might say after the fact, in the first place, why this was not built in accordance with the original request for proposal, which was talked about and was bid out successfully to a company that responded to an RFP that said: “to design, to build, to commission, to own and to operate an energy centre.” Then we discovered that what they've done is design and build; the “commission,” “own” and “operate” have gone by the boards—why this was built off books in the first

place, in other words, never really budgeted at the time so that it could transparently be seen by the people of Ontario; why the original builder, who had proposed to buy it, did not buy it at a price that was perceived to be fair, and in fact even arbitrated; why this particular building, which houses equipment that's designed specifically to produce energy, does not produce any power whatsoever, but rather hot and cold air.

I've asked the minister whether it even works, whether it actually is that \$81-million air conditioner or in fact a power station. I asked a number of questions along these lines, but very particularly and of late why, after the Premier announced that there would no longer be sole-sourced contracts—and this was a fairly substantial announcement made during the month of August by good cop, bad cop. One day the finance minister, disappointed in what had happened, particularly at OLG, was describing the energy centre, amongst other things, as a boil to be lanced, and the next day the Premier comes along and says we're not going to do sole-source contracts anymore. And here we are with an energy centre that's operated by H.H. Angus, which received this contract to operate, a sole-source contract, without going through any tendering process, and has been operating at the rate of \$15,000 per day, open-ended for the past six weeks. I'm bothered by this.

So today I asked the Premier, who has yet to respond to my questions in this House, very directly a question, and I again got it punted to Minister Duncan. The Premier himself approximately 10 days ago held a media scrum at that very Windsor spot during the Liberal convention, in which he said that the lights had to stay on, when in fact we know that the lights in the energy centre are not a function of the energy centre because it doesn't produce any power. So I wanted to know what was going to be done about an energy centre that, in the latest chapter, we hear may be worth absolutely nothing. The people of Ontario, through me, get to ask these questions, and it's for the government to respond to them. It's that answer, that series of answers, that is sadly lacking, and the reason for my questions today and tonight. Perhaps I'll get something akin to an answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Pickering–Scarborough East has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the member from Thornhill and his presentation of four or five minutes and the fact that it is his first opportunity to engage in a late show by offering one up this evening in respect to his question to the Minister of Finance.

Let me first say, I know that on any given number of occasions members opposite will ask questions of the Premier, and it is certainly not only the Premier's prerogative, but I think to some extent an obligation, to refer those to the ministers who have jurisdiction for the matters beforehand because it's the ministers who carry those files and have responsibilities for those ministries. So it's not a surprise on this side, nor would it be a surprise on that side, when those referrals are made to

those who probably would have the best opportunity, the best answers available, at that point in time.

There's no question that, as the Minister of Finance said today, there are a number of questions in regard to this issue. There are questions being raised by the minister, questions being raised just within cabinet and questions being raised on the opposite side of the House.

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Over the past half-dozen months or so, a number of steps have been taken in regard to this particular file. There have been changes at the very senior level of the executive and significant changes obviously in the board of directors, so the overall management is entirely changed.

Since that time, OLG has put in place a short-term interim operator at the Windsor Energy Centre. In addition to that, they have released a competitive RFP for a longer-term operator to be brought into play. This is going to obviously address the matter of the overall operations. There are still many, many outstanding questions. In fact, there is a court dispute. There's a commercial dispute between the OLG and the private company that was engaged in this process.

We know very well that this matter is currently before the courts, and I would suggest that it's certainly inappropriate for me in particular to be commenting more directly on any details of that dispute, and I very much expect that you would hear the same thing from the Minister of Finance in that regard.

I'm not going to take any more time than that this afternoon, save and except to try to reinforce the comments by the Minister of Finance. I said earlier that often in this place it's difficult to hear the responses in the heat of question period. Hopefully, this is at least helpful in some way to the member opposite.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Simcoe North has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question today from the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the member from Brant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise tonight. Like my colleague from Thornhill, I seldom ask for a late show, but today's question was so important in front of the Police Association of Ontario that I thought it was warranted to come in here and actually get some kind of an answer put more on the record.

It's really quite simple. I'm happy tonight that I'm joined by some of my colleagues here. I want to congratulate Mr. Arnott from Wellington for his contributions, particularly around his work towards getting approval for presumptive legislation for volunteer firefighters. I heard the parliamentary assistant today taking somewhat of a credit for that announcement, but we all know, on this side of the House at least, and most

of the firefighters in Ontario know that Mr. Arnott's private member's bill, along with the support of volunteer firefighters, finally humiliated the government into making an announcement after 30 months.

But the question today is quite simple. I asked the minister, "Are you satisfied that the director of the SIU, Mr. Ian Scott, is performing his job in an objective and non-biased manner?" He rambled on, talking about how wonderful the police were, and never did answer that part of the question. I think that's important, because I can tell you—I'm going to give you some quotes on why police officers are not satisfied with the special investigations unit.

Secondly, I asked the question, "Minister, if the director oversees the actions of the police, who oversees the actions of the director? And what is being done to correct this abuse of the power of this office?" I never got an answer to either one of those today. He rambled on about nothing. He was saying that he can't report on individual cases.

I've got some comments here from a number of people. Here's a comment that the director of the special investigations unit made in a press release that this unit put out on September 28: "Director Scott said, 'Beyond that, I am not sure what happened. There is no contemporaneous information of this incident such as civilian witnesses [or] audio or video recordings, and there were only three individuals at the scene: the now-deceased Mr. Schaeffer and the two officers. However, I cannot place sufficient reliance on the information provided by the officers to decide what probably happened.'" That doesn't sound like a very supportive quote to me from someone who's investigating the unit. It sounds actually quite biased, and I know that a number of police officers are concerned about that as well.

I also wanted to point out that the police leader—I got a letter sent to the Attorney General's office from the president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, Mr. Daniel Parkinson. Quite frankly, he says, "It is in this context that we find Mr. Scott's comments unhelpful. To lead the reporter in the article in question to conclude that, 'officers are being given an opportunity to collude and conceal damning evidence in criminal investigations' is, frankly, outrageous. As a lawyer and officer of the crown, Mr. Scott seems to fail to acknowledge the basic rights of our officers to legal counsel under collective bargaining agreements, the Police Services Act, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

Many, many police officers, the commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, the chief of police of the city of Toronto, the Toronto Police Services Board—many organizations are very, very dissatisfied with what we call "non-biased" in this director's position. As we move forward, I would like to see these kinds of answers resolved. I don't think it's nice to have the people who guard our property and whom we have so much respect for being treated in a biased manner, and that's what I think is happening today in this special investigations unit led by Mr. Ian Scott.

I know that the parliamentary assistant will have some comments to sort of deflect what I am saying, but the reality is that we on this side of the House are very, very supportive of the police services in the province of Ontario. They're downstairs right now at their lobby reception, and we'll be going down there very shortly to join them. But I can tell you that I work with police officers on a daily basis, on a yearly basis, and I hear almost no comments, no concerns about them, and I don't think that an office like the special investigations unit, a body of this government, should be looking at them in a biased manner. I certainly think, when it comes to answering questions in this House on a subject as important as the question I asked today, I should get a reasonable and responsible and committed answer from the person responsible for the police services in the province of Ontario, that being the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Brant has up to five minutes to reply.

Mr. Dave Levac: I start with a puzzled look on my face in terms of the beginning of the honourable member's diatribe, about whether or not he has a monopoly on liking police. But let me back up to the comment that he made about me trying to take credit for presumptive legislation for the volunteer firefighters. Since 1999 I've been brought into that position, and I started to move that forward; it started with me being in opposition and the government of the day denying it. So if he wants to say that someone else didn't get credit, he needs to re-read the statement, in which I said that all members on all sides of the House deserve credit for working towards getting this particular piece of legislation. So it's unfair and unfortunate that he chose to try to pin me with taking a boastful attitude toward presumptive legislation, when it was done particularly for the good of the volunteer firefighters of our province. It's unfortunate. It really is unfortunate.

Then he also starts in—and I find it rather curiously intriguing that during the lobby day of the PAO this member decides to ask a question of the government in terms of an arm's-length, independent agency that investigates the circumstances involving police and civilians that have resulted in a serious injury or a death, and that it has its authority performed under the Police Services Act. Under those circumstances, what I curiously understand is that the SIU has been undergoing change and metamorphosing, because when it was with the previous government, nobody liked it. Where was his passion for the police officers at that time, I wonder.

What we have now is a person who is asking a question during police lobby day, appropriately filled with police officers who have concerns about a certain agency. So let me put his mind to rest in terms of the monopoly that he takes credit for, as being the only ones who really like police officers.

What we have done in policing and for police officers in Ontario is, we have invested \$37 million annually for

our new officers program. And by the way, the previous government's foray into hiring 1,000 new officers stopped in year five and we had to pick up the costs to continue it and include another 1,000 officers. Let's talk about whether or not there's a universal acceptance in this House, which I've been trying to portray both on the firefighting side and on the police side, that no one has a monopoly on how one treats the firefighters and police officers in the province of Ontario. It's really unfortunate to air these kinds of platitudes during a lobby day, in the middle of politics—that you would say that the SIU is in dire straits. Quite frankly, there are conversations that are ongoing that deserve attention and that will get attention.

As I said earlier, before the Leader of the Opposition presented us with a political whack in an attempt to get a motion passed in this House that basically says, "Politically, we scratch you, and you are not looking good," what we should be doing is celebrating the police officers in the province of Ontario without the political garbage, without the political noise, without the political nuances to try to score points again, and start talking about how we make the place better—not just this place, but firefighting and police officers in the province of Ontario.

So, to answer the question quickly and in a simplistic way, the SIU is part of the whole system that gets evaluated on an ongoing basis, as do the police officers

who come to us today and every year to look at issues they need to put before us, so that we, as a government, and we, as a House, can enter into debates about how we can improve policing in the province of Ontario.

Is SIU part of that process? Yes, it is. Will we continue to dialogue, continue to debate and continue to work with all stakeholders—not, conveniently, just the PAO today—to see if we can design the best system that we can?

As I've said time and time again in this House, it's a fluid place and we can have an opportunity to continue to improve, and as we do that, the invitation and the hand out has always gone to the opposition to say, "What else can we do to make this a better place?" They've offered amendments. They offered the little political trick today. It got turned down.

So what do we do? We continue to move forward and ask, are we evaluating those systems that keep us safe and secure? The short answer is yes, and we've made some changes and some modifications to show that.

Quite frankly, the answer that is deserved is one that I just gave.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1832.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
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Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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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	
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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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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
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP) Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB) Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Huron–Bruce Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O’Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L’hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l’Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L’hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l’Énergie et de l’Infrastructure
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, George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L’hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L’hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L’hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l’Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L’hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l’Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l’opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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

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

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Eric Hoskins, Pat Hoy
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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