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Wednesday 18 November 2009

Mercredi 18 novembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 18 November 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 18 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 nondenominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SAINE
GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 4, 2009, on the amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts / Projet de loi 212, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, 2009, I am now required to put the question.

On October 27, Mr. Bentley moved second reading of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts. 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. It's carried.

Second reading agreed to.

ANIMAL HEALTH ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SANTÉ ANIMALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 4, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 204, An Act to protect animal health and to amend and repeal other Acts / Projet de loi 204, Loi protégeant la santé animale et modifiant et abrogeant d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, 2009, I am now required to put the question.

On October 5, Mrs. Dombrowsky moved second reading of Bill 204, An Act to protect animal health and to amend and repeal other Acts. 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. The motion is carried.

Second reading agreed to.

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 187, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996, when the bill is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the vote on second reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet during its normal meeting times on Wednesday, November 25, 2009, for the purpose of public hearings on the bill, and on Monday, November 30, 2009, for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 noon on Friday, November 27, 2009. At 5 p.m. on Monday, November 30, 2009, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, December 1, 2009. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on General Government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That, on the day the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion 143. Debate? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This is kind of funny. Here we are with another time allocation motion. The government clearly has decided—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Exactly; it's so early in the morning.

Anyway, I find it interesting that governments are more and more inclined, nowadays, to use time allocation motions as a way of being able to move legislation through the House. I find that, frankly, quite regrettable. I think there has been a tradition in this House over the years, especially under the old rules, where members had more of an ability to have some independent power in this Legislature to hold governments up, and it forced the parties to work together in order to basically decide how the business of the House would go through so that the government could get its business through, but at the same time, the concerns of not only the opposition but of the public could be heard and dealt with and, at times, incorporated into amendments to legislation that the government was bringing through.

It's pretty clear what is going to be happening for the next three and a half weeks until we break for Christmas: The government has decided that it is going to time-allocate pretty well everything. We're going to have minimal debates at second reading. We're going to do what the new standing orders call for, which is six hours of debate, and when six hours of debate is done, the government is going to move on time allocation with absolutely everything. It beckons the question: What are the role of this House? What is the role of opposition members and what is the role of government members when it comes to due diligence in making sure that legislation that is brought forward by the government is scrutinized in some way to make sure it does what it's supposed to do?

Now, I know the government backbenchers have busy things to do. They've got to run home and deal with all the protests in regard to the HST, the harmonized sales tax, and they don't have time to worry their heads over legislation in the House. But I do have to say, after being here for 20-some-odd years, and I know my good friend Mr. Bradley, who has been here far longer than I—he is the dean of the House—would understand, that govern-

ments of all stripes have introduced legislation in this place that has been flawed, and governments of all stripes have had to go back and amend legislation as a result of bills not being drafted right in the first place.

I think back to the time of Mike Harris, if we remember the fight—at that time, Mr. Bradley and I were in opposition together—when the government decided it was going to make changes to the Municipal Act. Our NDP government had made some pretty sweeping changes to the Municipal Act to deal with some of the issues we thought were important, and the mantra of the Conservative government was to undo all that and basically limit people's ability to really have a say in what happened when it came to planning in their municipalities. So the government had an ideological bill that was introduced in, I think, 1996. The bill was about this thick, and at that time, I was the municipal affairs critic and charged with reading that bill and being part of the committee process.

I remember our going out on the road. I remember, in second reading—let's not even talk about the road. I remember being at second reading and saying to the government of the day—Al Leach was the minister, if I remember correctly—“Well, look at this particular section of your act. It doesn't even do what you ask it to do. I don't agree with where you're going, but at least you should write the legislation in some way that it makes some sense,” because they had picked the worst possible of both worlds by, first of all, changing the legislation from what it was before, and then they were trying to change it for something else that they wanted. But they didn't even get that right because the legislation was improperly drafted, and as a result, it did not do either. It didn't deal with what was in the past as far as the changes, and it certainly didn't deal with what the government wanted in the future.

0910

We went out on committee hearings across this province. Back then, it used to be that bills would go into committee in the intersession and the members of the public had an opportunity to come forward. Municipality after municipality, and clerk after clerk and environmental groups and others who were interested came before the committee and said, “Not only is this bill false as far as where it's going, but it's not drafted properly.”

I remember myself, and I forget who the Liberal members were on that committee with me, saying to the government, “Well, your bill isn't even properly drafted.” So we went to clause-by-clause, and then we tried to change the bill as far as doing amendments in the clause-by-clause portion. The government said, “No, you guys don't know what you're talking about.” The opposition members didn't want to take our advice, and the government members just did what good backbenchers do in the government. “If the parliamentary assistant or the minister says that's what it is, well, that's what it is. Why worry myself with the details? That would just clutter up things up in my mind too much,” say the backbenchers of the government. As a result of that, they passed the legislation at third reading, and we ended up

with a bill that then had to be brought back to the House seven times in order to try to fix the problems with that particular act.

My point to the government House leader is, this is very clever. Here you are with yet another time allocation motion. Oh, I'm sure that the House leader for the government side is very happy and very proud of herself and goes to cabinet and says, "Don't worry, Dalton and the rest of my colleagues, I'm not going to allow that pesky opposition to hold anything up, and I will make sure we get all of our legislation in before Christmas so that we can all go home and sleep very, very nicely on Christmas Eve."

I just say to the government: It's a fault; it's not the way that legislation should be done. We're going to have time allocation on pretty well everything you've got. You're not going to allow proper committee hearings on any of this legislation. The public is going to be excluded.

The last time I checked, we lived in a democracy. The people of Ontario have a right to have their say when it comes to what a government is doing. Some people may come to committee and actually agree with you. Some people may come to committee and disagree with you. But the point is, that's the beauty of it. That's what democracy is all about.

I use as an example one of the bills that is currently in committee, which I'm pretty sure was time-allocated. That is the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act—changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The government wanted, on the subcommittee, to basically have—no, I guess it was not time-allocated, because the committee was dealing with that particular issue. So I take that back. It wasn't time-allocated, but it makes my point nonetheless. The position I took on the subcommittee was, let's do the advertising to find out who's interested in being able to speak to that bill, and then, once they have written to the clerk of the committee and said, "I want to present and I want standing to make presentation on the bill," we'll determine how many people we've got and we'll determine from that how many days of committee hearings we should have.

Now, we've done that in the past where you've had five or 10 people across Ontario who wanted to speak to a bill. Therefore, we accommodate that with one day of hearings here in Toronto—pretty easy to do. But in this particular case, we had over 80 individuals and groups who indicated that they wanted to come and present on this bill. We said to the government on the subcommittee: "No, it's not good enough just to have one or two days of hearing. It's clear that the public wants to have its say on this bill. We've had a lot of people"—and not at the prodding of the opposition or the government; these were just people who were paying attention to what's going on in this Legislature—"over 80 individuals and groups, apply to come and present on that bill before the committee." And the government said, "No, and rather than use time allocation, we're going to use our majority on the committee in order to kill the public hearings," so

that there were limited public hearings and we got to hear from maybe a tenth—or a little bit more than a tenth—of those who actually said that they wanted to present to this committee.

So I say to the government House leader: Bully for you. You're getting your legislation through. It's wonderful. It's great. You can stand and crow at the cabinet table and tell Dalton just how efficient you are. But it's not very imaginative, and it's not very democratic. It's not very imaginative in the sense that the standing orders have been changed and you have the ability to time-allocate everything after six hours. So it's no great feat, no great strategy that the government House leader has; she is using the changed standing orders to time-allocate all the bills. And from the democratic side, I think it really is a disservice to the public of Ontario.

I would propose the following to the government House leader: If the government House leader has certain bills that she wants to have passed before Christmas, then tell us what those bills are—I know the government House leader is going to say, "Well, I'm telling you." Of course the opposition is going to have some difficulty with some of your bills. Ours happens to be around the issue of the omnibus bill and, obviously, around the HST bill. Those are the two we're going to have a problem with—I can't speak for the Conservatives. But you have a host of other pieces of legislation that you want to have passed. I would argue that you probably have somewhere in the neighbourhood of 10 or 15 bills on the order paper that you are pretty interested in getting passed before Christmas.

I would argue that we probably can agree to do that on some of those other bills. Because the demand for public hearings at committee has not been great on some of those bills, we could have agreed to have a day of committee during the session here at Queen's Park, allow people to present here in Toronto or via teleconference to have their say, and then do clause-by-clause and move forward for third reading before Christmas. I think it could have been done. With the co-operation of the government House leader and the opposition House leaders, myself and Mr. Runciman—I am acting as House leader at this particular time—the government could have very simply had a majority of its legislation passed without a heck of a lot of problems. But yes, you would have had to have public scrutiny on two bills.

Here's the point: If the government says, "Our signature piece this fall session is to harmonize the GST," is it a bad thing to allow that to go to committee in the inter-session and have it passed at the beginning of the spring session? It would be done in time for July 1; the government would get its bill. We understand that the parliamentary principle is very simple: Yes, a majority government has to get its bills passed in the end; we understand that. But, yes, the opposition has a role to scrutinize that legislation.

I say to the government House leader: Along the way, yes, we would demand that the HST bill travel during the intersession to a number of communities around Ontario.

Obviously we want more communities; you would want fewer communities. Nonetheless there has got to be a compromise somewhere, and we, as the opposition, would have been able to hold up to scrutiny both the HST bill and the omnibus bill, which is the other one we would want to go out to committee, and the public would have its say.

I say to the government: What are you afraid of? I've heard the Premier and the finance minister on numerous occasions in this House say how proud they are to introduce this HST legislation, how great it is and how the HST is going to be the best thing since sliced bread for the Ontario economy. If that's the case, send it out to committee. Allow the public to have its say. Defend yourself before the public. What's scary about that? Are you afraid to talk to the public about your legislation?

Yes, of course you're going to get some people coming to committee who will be opposed, but you're also going to get people who will come to committee and see it your way. Mr. Drummond from the TD Bank and others, I'm sure, would come before the committee and say some of the things they've said in order to bolster the government in its attempt to harmonize the GST and the PST.

What does the government decide? They are going to time-allocate. You know what's going to happen with the HST bill: We're going to start debate here on Thursday and end up with six hours of debate sometime probably next week, the government is going to bring a time allocation motion into the House, as we have today, and is going to push that bill by way of time allocation with hardly any hearings here, because the reality is that after next week, there are only two more weeks of sittings of the House. So the public is going to have, at best, one or maybe two days to have their say on harmonization of the GST and the PST, and that will be it.

0920

I'm just saying to the government across the way that if in fact you're—I need my glasses to read notes; I'm very sorry. I would say to my friend the government House leader that you're going to basically give the public very little time to move on the issue of being able to have their say on the HST. You think you're clever by moving this time allocation motion. It is not, I think, reflective of what this House is all about and the good we can do in this House when it comes to doing the public's business.

Yes, democracy is messy. Yes, democracy means that people have to have their say. And yes, democracy means that at times people will disagree with you. But that's the beauty of the system. And when we can't get democracy right in this Legislature, how then can we go to the public in Ontario and say to them, "Oh, democracy is important. We stand for it"? This House is becoming less and less democratic as the rules are changed. Government House leader after government House leader has become less and less democratic as they start to utilize those new rules under the standing orders. I don't think that at the end of the day it serves anybody well.

To the government on the issue of the HST: If you're proud about what you're doing and you think it's the right thing, bring your case to the people by way of committee—the public in places like Sudbury and Toronto and maybe Ottawa or Timmins, or wherever else we might be going; you name it. At the end, the public can have their say. Then, if you disagree with them, you can enter dialogue at committee in order to try to convince them that maybe you're doing the right thing. But basically truncating the process by way of time allocation I would say is not exactly a very good thing. In fact, what it's going to lead to, I think, is a system where, quite frankly, we don't give the kind of scrutiny to bills that we should be giving.

On the issue of the time allocation specifically of this bill, the TSSA amendment act, Bill 187, there are some people that obviously aren't in support of this bill. I recognize that. This bill is in response to what has happened—the tragedy of the propane fire that happened here in Toronto—and the government wants to be seen as responding to what was a really unfortunate circumstance which, possibly with improper training, with equipment that may not have been as well maintained as it should have been and safety procedures not as clear as they could have been, resulted in the deaths of individuals and the destruction of property and the terrorizing of people living near that propane plant. So the government has this bill.

Again, why does it need to be time-allocated? The government knew it had this bill this fall. The government introduced this bill for second reading. We could have allowed some public hearings to happen by way of allowing people to have their say. The government has decided, no, it's going to limit that by way of a time allocation motion. We don't know. There may be five people that want to speak to this bill; there may be 50 people that want to speak to this bill at second reading.

I just say to the government across the way that if you think that for some reason you're being clever by using time allocation, all you're really doing is limiting the ability of the public to do what's right when it comes to being involved in the process.

Really, I'm very disappointed that the government has moved in this way. I would hope that the government would return to what we used to do in this House at one time, and that was where the parties would sit down at the House leaders' meetings once a week, along with the whips, and there'd be a discussion about what the government absolutely needed for the end of the session. The opposition would then table, "All right, here's what it is that we would like to have as far as time in the House for debate and committee hearings." It forces us, as the opposition, to pick and choose so that we don't basically talk out every bill but allow certain bills to go forward fast because there's general agreement, and for other bills that we have more of a disagreement with, we're able to basically have the proper amount of time in order to discuss those bills. I just say to the government that you're not serving the public well, and I think you're not serving the Legislature well.

With that, I would like the government to reflect on that and I would call for the adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Bisson 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 0925 to 0955.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Bisson has moved adjournment of the debate. All those in favour, please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

Take your seats, please.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 20; the nays are 29.

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

Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying, the government House leader is thinking that she's done a very smart thing by moving time allocation on yet another bill. At the end of the day, what the government is doing is not all that clever. What it does is take away the ability of the public to have their say when it comes to what these bills are all about and to give the bills the type of scrutiny that they need in order to make sure that the legislation does what it's supposed to do at the end of the day. So I just say to the government across the way—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just a second. Could the members, if you're leaving, leave quietly, and if you're remaining, listen quietly? Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying to the government House leader, in the end we know that there would have been some sort of trade-off. That's the way this place is supposed to work. The government should have put forward what bills it wants—and absolutely needs—before Christmas. Obviously there would be some disagreement about that. The opposition would say that we want particular bills to be held over into the intersession. I know that for our party, it would have been the tax harmonization bill and the omnibus bill.

But as I said earlier, if the government is so proud of these two bills, if they think they're such great pieces of legislation and that there's such a public outcry to support these bills, then why not send them out to committee? If they're that afraid—I take it that is the reason why they're not doing it.

So I just say that it's a sad, sad day in this Legislature when government House leaders return constantly, after the six hours, as they're allowed to under the standing orders, to time-allocate absolutely everything.

I would like to see what other members have to say on this debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm sorry; I was distracted while talking with one of the pages. You're done? Further debate?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I don't know. I said I was distracted. I didn't hear what you said, so could you please repeat it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, normally when a member is finished his speech and he sits down, it goes to the next member. I was just finished.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's all I needed to know. Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I was going to say, as I usually do, that I'm pleased to be able to speak on a particular piece of legislation, because I regard that as one of the fundamental responsibilities I have as a member of the Legislature, but I find myself in the position of having to rephrase that opening comment because we're dealing with a time allocation motion today. I think that it's very unfortunate that we find ourselves yet again in the position of a time allocation motion.

I should also explain to people who are watching what this really means. It might appear sometimes to those who watch that decision-making is very slow in the democratic process. I believe there's a reason for that, and the reason is very simple: In a modern democracy, it's very important to move along in a measured way that allows for people to understand what you are contemplating in legislation. And it's in that kind of a context, then, that the imposition of a time limit on a piece of legislation flies in the face of that kind of judicious process.

1000

In this particular case, what we are being asked to do is look at shortening our opportunity by the fact that the order tells us that the Standing Committee on General Government would be authorized to meet during its normal meeting times on Wednesday, November 25 for the purpose of public hearings on the bill, and on Monday, November 30 for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. What that really means is that the opportunity for anyone in the general public to be able to come forward and express support or concerns or ideas for amendments will have—and I'm just doing this as a ballpark—no more than three hours. When you consider the importance of this particular bill, it certainly seems to me, and I'm sure to all other reasonable people, that this kind of consideration of a bill in that public forum is extremely limited. It really is no more than a nod to the process, I would argue, a nod that says, "Okay, we've had a public hearing," but certainly nothing that would generate opportunity for people to be able to either come and participate or even to be able to come and hear what issues have come forward within the public mind on this particular piece of legislation.

It's really an interesting contrast because there were a number of occasions in the previous government, of which I was a member, where we actually sent bills out after first reading and had the opportunity to develop a

consensus with people in general on particular bills. While this government has not ever, in its term of office, offered the public that opportunity, this seems to be going to the opposite extreme in terms of the opportunity for hearings. The fact that debate on the bill is now very much limited—let me just go back to the order as it appears here, and that is, that after the clause-by-clause consideration—and by the way, any amendments or any changes will have been deemed to have been made. Finally, at a point, the bill will be ordered for third reading, and at third reading, “one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties.” Basically, one hour means that each party has approximately 20 minutes to make any references to this particular bill.

I think it’s really important to look, as I will for a few moments, at the complexity of the bill and some of the issues that, quite frankly, I think deserve more than this lip service of one afternoon. I think that I’d look at particular issues around the recommendations that are contained within the bill. There are a few of them, if I can find the right page. One of them deals with the need for the Technical Standards and Safety Authority to have a chief risk and safety officer independent of the TSSA to report annually on how the TSSA is meeting its public safety mandate.

Again, I know that if we were to have fulsome public hearings, there would be much interest in this process. Frankly, it deserves public comment. The whole issue of risk assessment and establishing criteria for safety is obviously an extremely important process.

The other issues are: giving the minister the power to issue policy directives to the TSSA—again, something upon which there are, I know, many people who have concerns about the TSSA, its mandate, its relationship with the government, the notion of oversight. There are many, many issues that come to the public mind on this particular issue.

Another part of the bill would allow the Auditor General to access TSSA records. This is, I think, a departure that, again, deserves more fulsome conversation because it would be, as I understand it, the first time the Auditor General would be looking at an organization that is using private money as opposed to public money. What we’re saying that this bill contemplates is allowing the Auditor General to oversee, within the means of his mandate, the finances of the TSSA, which is, as I say, private money.

The other thing about the bill is that it also exposes some of the problems that the TSSA has within its own membership and within its own mandate. There are many, as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has maintained, who will have significant suggestions for reform of the TSSA, and they identify issues such as the broad mandate of the TSSA and its need to moderate its growth mentality. It has expanded its mandate, and obviously with that goes the fee structure, and the membership of course are the payers of this fee increase.

These are important questions for everyone to understand who is affected by the TSSA.

There is no one who is suggesting that an organization such as this shouldn’t exist. Everybody appreciates the fact that with these kinds of safety standards, there’s some comfort from the point of view of the consumer as well as the manufacturer or the vendor because of the fact that with that kind of stamp of approval, if you like, it creates a level playing field for the manufacturers and the vendors and it also creates confidence in the minds of the consumers.

It’s absolutely critical that an organization such as this should exist, but it’s also critical that those people in the membership who are impacted by this in a very direct way need to have the opportunity to raise their voices and offer suggestions to the government, and that’s essentially what is missing by having a time allocation motion.

One of the problems that, again, comes up with time allocation, is that there may be many who wish to try to be squeezed into that very narrow time frame. Even if you have four an hour and you have three hours, you’ve talked to 12 groups. I don’t think that is a fair process for people for whom this legislation is going to have such an important impact.

It’s because of those kinds of issues that I think the government is making a big mistake in not allowing further discussion and not allowing for further hearings. If you’ve taken all this time to have a piece of legislation and you have not done the proper consultation and allowed people to voice their concerns, then, in fact, you’re going to deal with an unsatisfactory piece of legislation and certainly dissatisfied participants in the process.

It’s on that basis that I am proposing that the motion by the government House leader with respect to Bill 187, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996, be amended as follows:

By deleting the third paragraph and replacing it with: “That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet as follows: on Wednesday, November 25, 2009, in Toronto, on Monday, December 14, 2009, in Ottawa, and on Tuesday, December 15, 2009, in London for the purpose of public hearings on the bill, and on January 13 and January 20, 2010, during its regular meeting times, for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill”;

In the fourth paragraph by deleting “Friday, November 27, 2009” and replacing it with “Monday, January 11, 2010”;

In the fifth paragraph by deleting “Tuesday, December 1, 2009” and replacing it with “February 16, 2010”; and

In the seventh paragraph by deleting “one hour” and replacing it with “six hours.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Munro has moved an amendment that the motion by the government House leader with respect to Bill 187, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996, be amended as follows:

By deleting the third paragraph and replacing it with: “That the Standing Committee on General Government

be authorized to meet as follows: on Wednesday, November 25, 2009, in Toronto, on Monday, December 14, 2009, in Ottawa, and on Tuesday, December 15, 2009, in London for the purpose of public hearings on the bill, and on January 13 and January 20, 2010, during its regular meeting times, for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill”;

In the fourth paragraph by deleting “Friday, November 27, 2009” and replacing it with “Monday, January 11, 2010”;

In the fifth paragraph by deleting “Tuesday, December 1, 2009” and replacing it with “February 16, 2010”; and

In the seventh paragraph by deleting “one hour” and replacing it with “six hours.”

It being 10:15 of the clock, pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It’s my pleasure to introduce Leah Ciurko of Orangeville. She’s here today with the University of Waterloo Women in House program, so I trust we will be on our best behaviour.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west members’ gallery I’d like to introduce Melissa Baluk from the University of Waterloo. She’s a third-year student majoring in speech communication, and she’s looking forward to some interesting rhetorical flourishes this morning.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I’d like to introduce two friends of mine in the opposition gallery, Mr. Les Armstrong and Mr. George Fortin, and welcome them to the Legislature today.

Mr. Paul Miller: In the west gallery, I’d like to introduce Milan Stanekovic and Zora Stanekovic—they’re visiting from Serbia—and also Danica Milojevic, who is from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It’s my pleasure to introduce my friends Mr. Zahedi and Mr. Bayat, in the west gallery.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I would like to introduce Gary and Liz Carlson, constituents of mine from the city of Orillia. They’re here today for lunch and a visit to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I’m really pleased to introduce Athena Ngai. She’s a University of Waterloo first-year student and she is with us here today with the Women in House program at the University of Waterloo.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I don’t think they’ve joined us yet, but today we’ll be joined by the Mully Children’s Family Choir from Kenya, who will be singing for us on the steps at noon.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I’d also like to introduce and welcome Laura Holland, also from the University of Waterloo, shadowing me today. Welcome.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I would like to introduce Alisha Preston, also from the University of Waterloo women-in-government program.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce Ashley Laurin, also from the University of Waterloo MA program for women in government. She’ll be following me and shadowing with me today.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I’m really proud to introduce a number of people from my riding. First, I want to introduce Erin McKee and Wendy McKee. Erin is a student and was quite interested in seeing how we conduct ourselves in the House. I told her to come up here and see first-hand.

As well, I want to introduce two other people. One is Ingrid Balinski. She’s a godmother extraordinaire and a friend of Corina Fansolato, who is the mother of page Alana Fansolato. I’d like to welcome her here to the House as well.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I’m pleased to welcome today, from the University of Waterloo women-in-government program, Anya Lomako.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is my pleasure to introduce Melissa Cernigoy, who’s also a student at University of Waterloo in the Women in House program. Welcome.

Mr. John O’Toole: I’d like to recognize the National Trades Contractors Coalition, who are in the gallery here and their president, Richard McKeagan. Welcome.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I’m pleased to be able to also introduce Anika, who is not only part of the University of Waterloo program but also a constituent of mine. And I’d like to echo the sentiments made by the member for Durham: We are very pleased to have the National Trade Contractors Coalition of Canada and their wonderful breakfast meeting here this morning.

Mr. Mike Colle: I’d like to introduce and welcome the students from John Ross Robertson school in my riding. As you know, Mr. Speaker, they even have some of your relatives attending that school. It’s one of the finest in Canada. I’d like to welcome them here.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I would like to introduce my friend Jeff Duncan, who resides in the town of Erin, who’s joined us in the visitors’ gallery. Welcome, Jeff.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like all members to join me in welcoming, in the west members’ gallery, Ron Johnson, former member from Brantford, from the 36th Parliament. Welcome back to Queen’s Park.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(c)—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(c), Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has filed notice of 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. The order for second reading of Bill 218 therefore may not be called today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On October 26, Premier, the Minister of Health said that the cost of the sole-source contract to government handed to McKinsey was \$750,000, but McKinsey is reported not to accept retainers of under \$1 million. We recalled how the McGuinty Liberals tried to funnel the salary of Ron Sapsford and other health executives through hospital budgets, until they got caught. So we called around to see if they pulled the same trick. The Sudbury hospital says they have something for us, but they're waiting for direction to release information.

Premier, why are you making the Sudbury hospital divert from care to pay for the McKinsey deal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't speak to the particulars of this. What I can say is what I know. First of all, there was a practice in place with respect to paying some of the folks who work within the Ministry of Health through hospitals. That was a practice that's been in place for a number of years, under different governments, and we have decided to put a stop to that practice.

Secondly, I can say that when it comes to consultants, we've made a change in Ontario. Again, that was a practice, and this changes a practice that's been in place for a long, long time as well. We're now requiring, when it comes to consultants, that they no longer have the sole-source contracts. There has to be a competitive bidding process in place before consultants can access those contracts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On and on it goes. You'd think that after eHealth, the McGuinty Liberals would have learned their lesson and try to stop treating the health care budget like it's their own little slush fund. But they're so out of touch with Ontario taxpayers that they boast more about paying more for health care, as if paying more and getting more were the same thing. With Canada's worst government, Ontarians pay more and get less. Ontario deserves better.

Premier, why are you making hospitals divert from health care to pay for your consultants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague I know is very much aware that there have been dramatic investments in Ontario hospitals in the course of the past six years; I believe, over 30%. In fact, they closed hospitals. We're building new hospitals, we're expanding existing hospitals, we're investing in more MRIs and CTs, we're hiring, we've built a new medical school, we're now graduating more doctors and we've hired thousands more nurses, and 800,000 more Ontarians now have access to family care than had before.

There's always more work to be done but I think, in fairness, we should acknowledge the progress that, together, we've made.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We've heard that lessons have been learned, but apparently not. Now, instead of forcing eHealth to pay for the consultants, they're making hospitals pay for their sweetheart deals. This is why the public needs to hear from Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson to find out what has been going on and how the Premier and his staff operate. But the Premier is blocking a public inquiry that we've been suggesting, and the McGuinty Liberals are doing everything they can to keep their secrets.

Premier, is it true that your members have been ordered to shut down the public accounts committee this afternoon into the eHealth scandal?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague and her party are nothing if not relentless on this score, but I'll tell you why they are mistaken. They believe that there are party politics involved, and I can understand where they're coming from on this. But they are wrong-headed.

The auditor specifically said, in his report, "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts ... but we saw no evidence of this during our work." Later on, when he was asked about this by a reporter, he added the following: "We told our staff, 'Keep your eyes open. If you see anything that doesn't pass the smell test'—and we saw lots with respect to favouritism, sole-sourcing, contract extensions, but we didn't see anything that would indicate there was any party politics." There has been a conclusive finding from the auditor. I think we should accept and respect every part of his report.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Premier of Ontario: Why are the Liberals exempting Timbits at the expense of doctors, who are going to be forced to pay 8% more on medical supplies, medical journals, hydro, legal fees and accounting fees?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is talking about our plan to create 600,000 more jobs in the course of the next 10 years. My honourable colleague and her party are staunch defenders of the status quo. They're clinging to a past economy which is not coming back. Ontarians in their heart of hearts understand that. They know that there's an old world and a new world. They understand we have to build a stronger economy and they understand that involves making some changes. They understand that our plan is going to create 600,000 more jobs. What they can't understand is why the opposition will get in the way of 600,000 more jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Let me invite the Premier into our real world in Ontario, present-day. When we asked the Ministry of Finance officials to explain how the HST will impact the cost of health care, they said they didn't know. You haven't even thought about it, so that's why you should consult everyday Ontarians who are concerned about this. The Coalition of Family Physicians

understands what the HST will do to them, and that's why the McGuinty Liberals are in such a rush to bring it in. They say—I'm going to quote them: "The government, after all, must somehow pay for its irresponsible eHealth spending, and is therefore unilaterally postponing our fee increase while increasing our practice costs." I need to know: Is the HST going to result in increased doctor fees?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take the opportunity once again to thank Prime Minister Harper and Minister Flaherty for their support in this regard. I want to acknowledge the support of both our food banks and our—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's nothing wrong with having a bit of fun in here from time to time.

I want to acknowledge as well the support of both our food banks and our business groups, economists like Hugh Mackenzie and Jack Mintz, newspapers like the Toronto Star and the National Post. I want to acknowledge a consensus growing ever wider that this is the most important thing we can do together to secure a bright future for our kids and make sure we have the capacity to support our schools, support our health care and have in place, at all times, measures to support our vulnerable. This is about building a brighter future—600,000 more jobs.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I certainly hope you didn't pay \$25,000 for those speaking points. With the McGuinty Liberals it's only a matter of time before the scandals that they have created are going to take their entire front bench, and the HST vote will cost them their entire back bench, because Canada's worst government should have the courage—they should learn to listen to more people than Jason Grier and Karli Farrow and the other Liberal friends they have hired. You need to face the public in communities right across the province. You need to talk to families and their doctors in Cornwall, in Kingston, in North Bay, in Kenora, in Windsor and in London North Centre. Right across the province they should have a say in the single largest sales tax increase in Ontario's history. Why are you refusing to consult with doctors and the public on how much the HST will cost the health care system?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague will want to acknowledge that the package of tax reforms will cost us over \$3 billion over the course of the first four years. That's a net cost to the treasury.

I know that she's also going to want to acknowledge at some point in time that they are devoid of ideas when it comes to strengthening this economy and creating more jobs. They tell us that they don't like our package of tax reforms, a package that will, effective January 1 of this year, result in cuts to personal income taxes for 93% of Ontarians. They're against our plan to reduce taxes for our large businesses—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I was just running through a lengthy list of what the opposition stands against. It's easy to stand against these kinds of things, although it's sometimes difficult to understand.

They're against the personal income tax cuts. They're against the cuts for big business and small business. They're against the HST. But they have no plan of their own to create a single job, let alone our plan to create 600,000 more jobs for Ontarians.

We have a plan. They have partisanship. I think Ontarians—

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

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The McGuinty government is able to tell Ontarians exactly how much each HST exemption will cost the treasury: \$20 million for diapers; \$65 million for newspapers; \$260 million for coffee and fast food. But what about the big-ticket items that aren't exempt? Can the Premier tell us today how much the new 8% tax on gas and hydro will cost Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It will result in an increase. We've been very clear about that from the outset. That's why we've worked hard to offset those increases with a number of things that we're doing.

For one thing, again, I would ask my honourable colleague to acknowledge the personal income tax cut that takes effect January 1 of this coming year, and I hope to have her support in connection with the bill in that regard. Beyond that, we're also taking 90,000 people in Ontario out from paying any income taxes at all. We also have a new tax credit in place of \$260 per individual in our low-income families. Those are the kinds of things that are going to help to offset some of the additional costs.

Having said that, I know that my honourable colleague is actually intent, in her heart of hearts, on finding a way for us to move forward and have the capacity to support our hospitals, our schools and our most vulnerable. She wants to build a stronger economy. It's just that she doesn't have a plan of her own.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's interesting: The Premier said a heck of a lot, but he didn't tell us what that cost will be for gas and hydro, and that was the question.

It's not surprising that the Premier can't come up with a straight answer on that really basic question. We submitted a freedom-of-information request to find out exactly how much the new tax on gas and hydro is going to cost consumers. The Ministry of Finance says it has the numbers but it won't share them, claiming that the information may threaten the economic interests of Ontario.

Does the Premier really think that telling people how much the new tax on gas and hydro is going to cost them is actually a state secret?

TAXATION

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm glad, now that the bill has been introduced in this Legislature, that the debate has been formally joined and the lines have been drawn.

I think the issue has become very clear. We have a plan on this side of the House to create 600,000 more jobs over the course of the next 10 years; they stand against it. We have a plan to reduce personal income taxes; they stand against this. We're reducing corporate taxes for big and small businesses alike; they stand against this.

The people of Ontario know what we stand for and what the opposition stands against. What they really want to know now is, knowing what we stand for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier, you have 10 seconds left.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Thank you, Speaker. I'm good.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know what? It is actually ridiculous that the government is hiding the numbers. This has less to do with the economic interests of Ontario and more to do with the political interests of this Liberal government.

Ontario families deserve to know exactly how much the new tax on gas and hydro is going to cost them, but this government simply refuses to tell them, just like it refuses to listen to them.

Rather than running for cover, the Premier now has a chance to come clean. Why won't he tell Ontario families exactly how much the new tax on gas and hydro is actually going to cost them?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know the Minister of Finance wants to speak to this.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, here comes the heavy hitter.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Literally.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Why? Because your members are interjecting; that's why I'm stopping the clock.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would refer the leader of the third party to table 8, page 134 of the budget, which clearly delineates, year by year, the tax reform measures that the government has proposed. With respect to the conversion of the RST base to the new sales tax base, she will see that this year it's \$1.6 billion; next year, \$2.1 billion; and then \$2.35 billion. I would also refer the member to every fall statement that's published that details tax expenditures and best estimates that are outlined by the Ministry of Finance. It's there to see in the public record.

I thank her for the question. I'd also remind her to look at the tax cuts that are available for families, for communities and for businesses.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. The Premier is rejecting our proposal for the legislative committee to travel across the province to actually consult with Ontarians about the harmonized sales tax. He is effectively saying that he doesn't care what small business owners like Stratford's Doug and Kathy White have to say. Here's what they write: "With the tourism from the USA down over the last nine years, all we need is something else—the HST—to drive away more guests. B and Bs are just getting by in Stratford...."

Why is the Premier refusing to listen to people like Doug and Kathy White?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've had a very healthy and, with the passage of time, an ever-more-informed debate about our package of tax reforms, and that is now formally taking place inside the Legislature. But I think it's fair to say that around water coolers, and in fact many breakfast tables, this debate has been ensuing for seven months. As I say, that is a good and healthy thing.

There will be three separate votes in this Legislature where members will have an opportunity to express themselves; there will be fulsome opportunity to debate it. The bill will also go to committee. I also expect, given the nature of this legislation, that it will be the subject of some considerable conversation between now and the next election. That, too, is healthy in a vital democracy such as ours.

But I think, on behalf of Ontarians, there's an important question that we have to continue to put to the opposition: If they're against our plan to create 600,000 more jobs in the course of the next 10 years, where is their plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is absolutely outrageous that this Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is absolutely outrageous that this Premier can stand here and dismiss the concerns of people like Doug and Kathy White, saying that they just have to have a conversation at a water cooler instead of being able to talk to the committee about their concerns about the HST. It's an incredibly arrogant thing to say. The 60% of small businesses in this province say that they can't think of one good thing to say about the HST, but the Premier says, "Talk about it at the water cooler."

"As a mid-sized company employing 50-plus employees," small business owner Bev MacWilliams says, "I would like to voice my displeasure with your government's idea of implementing the HST tax." What are you telling them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's always remarkable when the leader of the NDP stands up and champions the interests of business, but I will tell you that there is a very broad consensus in the business community and among economists of all political stripes that the single most important thing we can do to strengthen our economy and

create jobs is to move ahead with our package of tax reforms. We are cutting taxes for our small businesses. We are cutting taxes for our larger corporations. We are cutting personal income taxes. We are going to create 600,000 more jobs during the course of the next 10 years. Our tax reforms will result in nearly \$50 billion more being invested in businesses in Ontario. We are going to see incomes grow by as much as 9% more than they otherwise would have.

This is part of our plan. We are proud of our plan. We know what the opposition stands against, but I think they owe it to all of us, but especially to Ontarians, to tell us at some point in time what they stand for. Where is their plan to create even a single job in the province of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Small business owners deserve to be heard, yet the Premier is arrogantly shutting them down. Gary Dinkel from Kitchener writes this: "I run a small business; it's going to hurt me adding another \$11.20 per registration."

Adam Malamis says this: "It's quite simple; the HST is not small-business-friendly and adds absolutely no value to the business community as a whole."

Cheryl Sellors writes this: "As a small business person who provides services to my clients, I strongly oppose the implementation of the HST."

My question is this: Why will this Premier not give small business owners a say by making sure Ontarians are able to review the HST through a committee process all across this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I appreciate the representation made by my honourable colleague, but I disagree with her fundamentally in terms of what we need to do together to strengthen this economy and create more jobs. There will be ample opportunity for debate in this House. There will be committee hearings. Members, I expect, will have created opportunities of their own accord in their ridings and around Ontario to make sure that they're hearing from Ontarians.

Beyond that, what it falls down to—and there's no escaping this painful reality. We have a plan. We're putting forward a package of tax reforms. We're cutting personal income taxes. We're cutting taxes for small business. We're cutting taxes for big business. We're going ahead with the HST. We're going to create 600,000 more jobs than we otherwise would have under the existing system. That's our plan. We're proud of that plan. On behalf of Ontarians, I ask the opposition: Where's your plan?

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to Minister Takhar. Minister, you're the integrity czar and minister responsible for the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. What do you think of the former Deputy Premier's riding president and top fundraiser, Jason Grier, collecting donations from companies for which he helped to win health and energy contracts? What do you think of that?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We have taken all the right steps to make sure that everybody has no conflict of interest. We have made sure that we have all the expense claims now approved, all the consultants' expenses now being claimed, and that they not be lobbying—

Interjections.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The Premier has announced an external government review of the accountability of all agencies, boards and commissions. We have just recently announced another four steps to increase accountability to protect taxpayers' dollars. We are moving ahead to make sure that accountability will be improved, and all the right steps have been taken.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, let's keep in mind that you're the only minister in Ontario's history to be censured by the Integrity Commissioner for failing to keep an arm's-length relationship with a member of your riding executive.

But integrity czar Takhar did not pull the former Deputy Premier aside when he made Jason Grier his top man in his riding fundraising efforts. You didn't say anything when Grier's lobbying efforts surprisingly followed his old boss Smitherman. You didn't do anything when Grier's clients donated some of the government money they received to Liberal ridings. Have you brought this issue, this conflict matter, to the attention of the Integrity Commissioner?

1100

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I think it's important for us to make sure we have all the right procedures and policies in place so that taxpayer dollars are protected. That's why we have moved ahead to make sure that all consultants' expenses from now on are approved at the right places, all expenses are approved at the right places, and there are no sole contracts being offered anywhere.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw the comment that that he just made.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We are not only doing that, but we are also making it easier for people to actually understand and employees to understand what policies and procedures they have to comply with. We have moved with those changes in the last few months to protect and make sure that taxpayer dollars are taken care of.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Yesterday, the Liberal majority blocked a motion that would have called Mrs. Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson, the top two officials at eHealth during the scandal, to testify before the public accounts committee. Accusations have been made against those people, and they should have a right to defend themselves, to clear

their names and to give their side of the story so that we can turn the page and move on.

This refusal to hear witnesses leaves me feeling suspicious, so my question is simple: Is the Premier afraid that the appearance of Mrs. Kramer or Dr. Hudson would reveal a close relationship to his office?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my colleague. It was much along the lines of one put earlier today by a member of the Conservative Party, and my answer is the same.

The auditor had a specific opinion on this, and I think we should respect that. He said on at least two specific occasions that he was aware of the allegations that party politics—and that's what my colleague is after here. She's insinuating that party politics were at play. He says of party politics, "There was no evidence of this during our work." He said that on a couple of occasions.

I think the auditor was nothing if not thorough. I think we have a responsibility to accept every part of his work, all of his findings and all of his recommendations. We on this side of the House have agreed to do that, and I think we should, among other things, respect his finding that there were no party politics at work in this.

M^{me} France G elinas: I am not after party politics. I want those people to have an opportunity to give their side of the story. Sitting in public accounts, people made accusations against those people, and they have no way to defend themselves, to clear their name and to let us know what really happened because you won't let them testify. This afternoon, we will be bringing a motion to ask for Mrs. Kramer and Dr. Hudson to come forward. Will you let the motion go through so they can clear their names? They deserve this.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've got to admit it's an interesting approach: What they really want to do is help the individuals involved, and that's their rationale for having them appear before the committee.

I'm not sure that they would see the opposition that way. But I think the point here is the one made by the auditor. He was very specific with respect to his findings. He said at least twice that party politics were not involved in this, that they were not at play in all this. I think we should respect that.

I think what Ontarians want us to do now is to move forward, do everything we can to ensure that we have in place at the earliest possible opportunity electronic health records for all of us. That will facilitate our health care, it will improve our health care, and it will help us better manage our costs when it comes to our health care.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, earlier this fall I specifically asked you about progress being made to deliver affordable housing in Ontario. On Monday, the Housing Network of Ontario released a report that summarized consultations your ministry led this summer

on developing a long-term affordable housing strategy for Ontario.

The report listed three main areas that need urgent attention:

(1) Ontarians need a comprehensive, fully funded, long-term affordable housing strategy with bold targets.

(2) Housing insecurity, homelessness and poverty are inseparably linked.

(3) People who have direct experience of housing insecurity and housing-related poverty should be at the centre of a housing strategy.

Minister, what progress is your ministry making to develop a strategy? When can we expect to see meaningful progress on this file?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me begin by congratulating the member from Willowdale, one of the most knowledgeable members on housing, a former chair of Toronto Community Housing, who speaks with great experience and depth and eloquence on the need for an affordable housing strategy.

Since June, when I visited Sault Ste. Marie, we began a consultative process around the province. Over 1,000 Ontarians came out to the government of Ontario housing consultation process. We're pleased with the input. We thank—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Jim Watson: We take the issue of affordable housing very seriously in this government. That's why, in 2007, the Premier made a commitment in our election platform that we would develop a long-term affordable housing strategy. We're working with housing advocates throughout the province, and we recognize that there is a need to support those individuals who are looking for safe, decent and affordable housing.

I'd be happy to answer with some specifics on what we've done to date after the honourable member's supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you, Minister. I know that your ministry has been delivering on the 2009 budget commitment to invest \$1.2 billion in housing, but the investment needs to be delivered over a two-year period that will end on March 31, 2011. I've seen the news and I know that your ministry is making progress on delivering on our commitment, but the time frame to deliver is not long.

November 22 is National Housing Day. What message will you be conveying to Ontario families who are looking to our government, to your ministry, to meet the affordable housing demands across the province? Minister, what are you going to tell them on November 22?

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm going to tell them that this government is acting on our commitments, unlike the Conservatives, who slashed housing and downloaded that service to municipalities, and the NDP, who talked a good tale about housing but failed to deliver on housing.

This government is providing \$622 million, matched by the federal government, for a total of \$1.2 billion. That money has already started to flow: here in Toronto, \$3.5 million to three projects under the social housing repair and retrofit program, part of an allocation of \$220 million going to the city of Toronto. In total, 50,000 units will be renovated and retrofitted over the course of the next two years and 4,500 new affordable housing units will be built for the people of Ontario.

We're proud of the work we're doing. It's a record amount of money in a two-year period, and we're delivering for the people who need affordable housing in this province.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Have you asked the provincial Auditor General to investigate whether taxpayers have received value for the \$81 million spent on the Windsor Energy Centre and why it was built in the first place?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are a number of issues associated with that centre that are now before the courts, the member knows well. I have had the opportunity to read both sides of the court submissions. They are detailed. They will precipitate a court discussion where witnesses will be called and where testimony will be given under oath, and I think that will give Ontarians the opportunity to see exactly what has transpired in this transaction. It's one that I have indicated I'm not at all pleased with. I believe that the court proceedings will bring light to this and that they will do so with informed testimony under oath from both sides. We will see where that court case winds up.

We are interested in defending the interests of Ontario taxpayers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: When the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle kicked off the summer of scandal, Premier McGuinty praised transparency and the Auditor General to absolutely anyone who'd listen. But when the summer drew to a close, the scandals did not, Minister, and from the very first questions I asked you in September about the energy centre, you ducked behind lawsuits and police investigations, which do not remotely relate to the questions I'm asking. Now you say that it isn't necessary to get the auditor involved. Are you telling me that bad planning, off-book proposals, \$40-million budget overruns, a sole-source contract at \$15,000 a day and an \$81-million power plant that doesn't produce a single watt do not merit an auditor's investigation? Do you have to waste \$1 billion of taxpayer money before you call in the Auditor General?

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: I don't think there's a more transparent forum in the land than the courts of justice. There will be full testimony. Relationships will be disclosed with respect to the protagonist, relationships I'm

sure the member opposite will be interested in and that I'll be speaking a bit more about in future questions in the House.

I think that the court process will allow testimony to be given under oath that will allow the public to see very clearly—and the documents are already available outlining the cases of both sides: the case put by the contractor and the case put by OLG.

Our government's interest is in protecting the taxpayer. We believe that that transparent, public, open court process will do that as well as any other method. I stand behind our courts of justice.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the minister of children's services. Minister, you'll know that Payukotayno, the child protection service agency for James Bay and Hudson Bay, is set to close its door in mid-December. You know the reason why: They're facing a financial shortfall as a result of your government's inability to deal with the adequate funding they need to operate. This agency is going to be shut down in mid-December. Our question is, what is your plan to care for those children under their care, once that agency closes down?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance to talk about the role that the province plays in looking after our most vulnerable children. It's a responsibility that we take incredibly seriously. Because of that responsibility and the seriousness in which we hold it, it is incumbent upon us to find a way to ensure that children's aid societies operate within a framework that is sustainable.

Over the last number of years, we have increased funding year over year. We have seen a 40% increase in funding, which is far outpacing the usage of the services being provided. But that is why we are putting in place a sustainability commission, why we are working closely to examine the funding formula, and why we are working immediately with every single CAS across the province in our regional offices to find a pathway to manage cash flow, to develop partnerships and to ensure that we put Ontario's kids first—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Putting Ontario's kids first? Eighty people have attempted suicide—the youth of James Bay—in the last year alone, 11 of whom were successful, and you stand in this House and give us this type of answer to what is a crisis in those communities?

We need to know what you're going to do in order to ensure that we have the services in place to care for these kids. We cannot continue going this way. We can't keep on going to funeral after funeral on the James Bay because of your inability to deal with this.

The question is simply this: What are you going to do in order to ensure the safety of these children?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Earlier this week my colleague Minister Duguid and I had the opportunity to sit at

the table with the Chiefs of Ontario to work with those leaders, to work in partnership, to find a pathway forward, to tackle issues that, frankly, sir, you did not tackle when you had the opportunity to do so. We understand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East should be in his seat.

Minister?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: We committed to work in partnership with the Chiefs of Ontario to have an opportunity—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I would ask the members to come to order. The question was asked to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. If the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the honourable member from Timmins–James Bay would like to have a discussion, either have it as a question-and-answer or I would encourage you to please have a discussion in one of the side chambers following question period.

Minister.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: This is a serious issue and it deserves an approach that gives it its importance, not one where we put information forward with a lack of desire to work through and find solutions.

My commitment to the chiefs, the commitment of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, was to continue to work forward, to work with them at a level of ministerial responsibility, to work through the regional offices, to find a solution to this issue—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. People in my riding are concerned about the new harmonized sales tax and are following the debate very closely. There's a lot of incorrect information floating around out there, and certain groups—who choose to play politics and put partisan political interests before solving the economic challenges facing Ontario—are deliberately misrepresenting the facts. In the town of Cobourg last month, the Leader of the Opposition stated that cellphone costs are going up as a result of the HST. Consumers know that they already pay GST and PST on cellphone fees. There will be no additional taxes. It seems that those who are opposed are playing fast and loose with the facts.

To the minister: Tell us if cellphone fees are going to be subject to a new tax.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition doesn't understand that five plus eight equals 13. He believes that that's somehow greater than 13. When I had the opportunity to talk to the member, I assured him that today cellphone fees are charged PST and GST and that when we bring in the harmonized sales tax administered by the federal government, the rate will be 13%.

But I had an opportunity to listen to a Mr. Kedderman, who represents Telus, on the John Tory radio show, and when John Tory interviewed him, he said, "Actually, our prices will be able to come down, because right now the PST is a hidden tax." Because of the fact that we are harmonizing the sales tax, listening and being in partnership with the federal government, we are substantially lowering the cost of business for telecommunications companies. That is why the Information Technology Association of Canada endorses our tax reforms. They say that they're going to hire more people and put more people back to work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Minister, my next question is about children's activities, such as music lessons and reading, which are important to families in my riding. The member for Cambridge issued a press release which stated that music lessons and books will be subject to HST. When the HST was announced, an exemption for books was announced with it, and the fact of the matter is, music lessons are not subject to GST and therefore won't be subject to HST.

Those who are opposed have chosen to play politics with Ontario's economic future and are misrepresenting the facts. Minister, are the rules around the GST changing, or are some people simply choosing to play politics with our future?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to say to all the parents out there that there is no additional tax that's going to be applied to music lessons, nor will there be a new provincial portion of tax paid on books. That is clear; we have been clear about that. If something does not attract a GST today, it does not attract the HST after July 1. That's very simple. Now, perhaps for some others, it is may be complicated for them to work their way through that, but on this side of the House the rule is quite simple.

I do want to say to the members opposite that for every item that may attract the new provincial portion of the HST, each and every one of those companies' costs are going down. What companies who believe in Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to take this opportunity to give the final warning to the member from Hamilton East. If he persists, I will have no choice but to name the honourable member.

Minister.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to the people that for every one of those items, the actual cost of business for those companies is going down.

We have the leadership of a company like Telus who says what they're going to do with that money: They're going to reinvest in our province because they believe in the high quality of life we have here in Ontario—

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

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Premier: On February 28, 2006, a subdivision in Caledonia, Douglas Creek Estates,

was forcibly occupied. Since that time, this property and the remaining house on the site has served as a base for intimidation, harassment, trespassing, assault and attempted murder.

Three and a half years ago, you purchased the property from the home builders. For three and a half years, someone has been providing water and electricity to this occupied house. Premier, has your government been paying the bills for militants illegally occupying that house?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

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Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to start off by saying that, indeed, we are working very, very hard in that part of the province to work with Six Nations' leadership, to work with the local municipalities. We're making great progress in bringing people together in that community. Municipality after municipality now in that region—and the member knows this—are signing agreements with the Six Nations to work together.

When the member raises question like these, with the intent, I believe, to split parties apart and try to drive a wedge between parties, I think it is particularly unhelpful.

We're going to continue working with all parties in that area to build a better relationship so we can move forward together.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Premier, to answer my own question, you are footing the electricity bill. Since 2006, Dalton Creek Estates and the remaining house have been occupied and barricaded under the flag of the Mohawk warriors. This is an organization described by the OPP as “a lawless group, usually armed, with a reputation akin to the Hell's Angels.”

On April 20, 2006, the OPP were driven from the site in a pitched battle involving baseball bats, shovels, hockey sticks, two-by-fours and bags filled with rocks.

By continuing to pay the water and electricity bills, what are you doing about the perception out there that your McGuinty government is supporting and condoning the activities and actions of militant law-breakers? When will you stop sticking taxpayers with these utility bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It sounds to me like the member's getting very close to an ongoing lawsuit that's taking place, so I'm not going to comment directly on that aspect. But I will comment on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Start it up again.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Actually, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to this because it gives me an opportunity to compare the approaches being taken by members and leaders in that community, like our member from Brant, Dave Levac, who is tirelessly working, contrary to the member opposite, to bring people together in that community to reach out and try to create economic de-

velopment partnerships. That's the approach that this government takes—

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

TERMINATION AND SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. In March, more than 80 Windsor workers at two plants owned by Catalina Precision Products lost their jobs and were denied termination, severance and vacation payments. More than six months later, these workers are still legally owed more than \$2 million.

My question is this: What is this government doing to ensure these workers get all of the money that they're entitled to under Ontario law?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: This government wants to ensure that all employment standards rights are upheld and adhered to in this province. That's why this government has invested heavily in our employment standards claims office, in our officers, so that they can assist those workers in this community as well as in communities across Ontario to ensure that those workers' claims are being treated fairly and that they are receiving the money that is owed to them.

I remind the member that from between 1989 and 2003, over a span of 14 years, there were only 97 employment standards prosecutions initiated. Since 2004, there have been over 1,800 prosecutions initiated in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It seems to me that what this minister is really admitting is that he not been very successful in making sure these workers are getting their money. Some of the workers are owed tens of thousands of dollars.

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Most had at least a decade of service in the company.

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They have bills to pay. They have children to feed. Yet the McGuinty government is refusing to act on an issue that is clearly within its jurisdiction—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just take this opportunity to offer a final warning to the member from Renfrew, and if he persists I will be forced to name him. Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The NDP have a bill. It's called Bill 6. It passed second reading in this Legislature two years ago and deals directly with this kind of problem.

Why does the government block this bill that would guarantee workers, like those in Windsor, getting all of the back pay, vacation pay and severance pay that they are legally owed?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question, and the opportunity to say again that myself as Minister of Labour, and former Ministers of Labour of this government have called and written the federal government to change the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. We want to move those workers, that have given much of their lives to companies, from the back of the line to the front of the line. I ask the member to do the same: Ask the federal government to change that act, to amend that act.

On the same front, when it comes to our employment standards, we have added additional resources. We continue to close a record number of claims in this province and recoup those funds that are owed to workers across Ontario. That is what we will continue to do, that's what we will continue to focus on, and I would hope the member would get on board and call the federal—

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

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. As members are aware, our government has taken extraordinary steps to support residents in northern Ontario. After years of neglect, we've taken action to address the challenges facing northern Ontario, including increasing spending on northern highways from \$256 million to over \$648 million, increasing education funding by 41% and increasing spending on health care by over 45%, as well as building a new \$400-million hospital in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie.

When the high dollar and reduced global demand began to affect the forestry industry, our government put forward a \$1.1-billion aid package for the forestry sector—the largest investment in the history of Ontario. Constituents in my community continue to benefit from the province's support for the economy, but they want to know what the vision is for the future prosperity of Sault Ste. Marie and the entire region.

Minister, can you elaborate on our plan for success in northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member for the question. Indeed, bolstering the economy of northern Ontario, particularly during these challenging times, is a real priority for our government, which is why we are so pleased with the record investments in health care, education, transportation and infrastructure. But we also recognize that indeed this also requires a view toward the future, a vision for the economic blueprint for the north, which is why we were so pleased that the second growth plan was designated for northern Ontario. In fact, a lot of work went into this, but we've been doing a tremendous amount of work and put out a draft northern Ontario growth plan a couple of weeks ago. Consultations are going on right now. This will be our guide to developing a more innovative and knowledge-based economy and will certainly help to strengthen our northern Ontario com-

munities and First Nations. It is a blueprint for a strategy that will chart a new economic development direction for the north, and we're very excited about it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Oraziotti: Certainly in northern Ontario we're very encouraged by the northern Ontario growth plan and all of the benefits it will contain for northerners.

As we know, we're facing one of the worst global recessions since the Great Depression. In response, we've taken a number of steps to help stimulate the economy and create jobs. Over the next two years we are investing \$32.5 billion in infrastructure that will help to create thousands of new jobs to help support Ontario families and Ontario communities.

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In Sault Ste. Marie, the plan is already working. The unemployment rate in the community dropped from 11.1% to 8.3% in October as stimulus funding has begun to flow. Residents in my community are encouraged by the progress they have seen with respect to job creation but are still unsure about the future economic outlook.

Minister, how will the new plan help to ensure that northern Ontario families will have opportunities for meaningful employment over the next generation?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Our goals are very straightforward, and I certainly could not be more pleased with the support that we are receiving across the north for the growth plan and for the vision that it brings forward. Our goals are straightforward. We want to bolster population growth. We want to strengthen the north's economy. We want to pave a path of educational and career opportunities for young northerners, certainly including aboriginal youth. We want to generate more jobs. That's the goal; that's the vision.

There are a number of recommendations that are within the report which, again, we are feeling very positive about. Some examples: We will be upgrading the energy transmission network and increasing the capacity for renewable energy projects across northern Ontario, including for many aboriginal communities, which, again, is something that's very positive. We are going to put in place a new forest tenure system that will allow for innovation and growth in forestry and the emerging bio-economy industry.

I wish I had more time to explain the other recommendations—many actual items; good news. We're working hard to promote the north.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. In the 2008-09 estimates, \$277 million was allocated for business risk management, which is, of course, the safety net for our farmers. But according to the public accounts on page 2-14, some time after that funding was publicly announced with great fanfare, over \$82 million was quietly taken out of that fund. Why did you cut the money out of the support for our farmers?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's important to clarify for the honourable member that this government

has only increased support for the agriculture sector, for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, since coming to government in 2003. The honourable member would also know that with respect to the risk management programs that we have in place in this province, they are demand-driven. In any given year, we put an amount of money aside, and it's there if it is needed, but it is only delivered when applications are made to the fund. So I would say to the honourable member that we are absolutely committed to supporting farmers. We have signed a partnership agreement with the federal government, and those dollars flow to farmers consistent with that framework agreement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, I know you're a little out of touch with the farmers in Ontario. While you were telling farmers across the province that there was nothing you could do, that all the money had been spent, hog farmers, fruit and vegetable farmers and cattle farmers were struggling. They are losing their farms, and you don't seem to care. They didn't fit the program, so we used the money somewhere else. We didn't spend \$82 million that was set aside to help these farmers; it wasn't spent for that purpose.

Minister, will you commit to using that \$82 million to help the struggling farmers who are struggling today?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Farmers in the province of Ontario know that the McGuinty government has always been there for them. We've always listened to them when they brought us their issues.

In fact, today I had a meeting with farm leadership, who continue to make me aware of where the challenges are. Even tomorrow in Guelph, we again are meeting with farm leadership to understand how we can improve upon the business risk management programs that are in place that are not meeting the needs in our agriculture sector. Farmers are facing challenging times, and we do want to work with them. We want to also impress on our federal partner that we need to do a better job providing supports in difficult, challenging times. That is the purpose of our meeting today. It is the purpose of our meeting in Guelph tomorrow. We will continue to work hard—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Today, the executive board of Metrolinx is meeting behind closed doors with politicians at Queen's Park. Meanwhile, Metrolinx officials refused to address citizens' concerns about diesel trains, piledriving and a series of other complaints. Metrolinx has in fact waged a public relations campaign for diesel trains in which they deliberately play down the health concerns about diesel trains voiced by Toronto's medical officer of health and many, many others. Given widespread concern about diesel trains, why won't the government and Metrolinx officials meet with concerned citizens like the Ontario Clean Train Coalition?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Actually, I would say that my take is different from the member's on this issue. I think there's been a lot of consultation that has taken place to this point in time, more consultation than I can remember for some period of time—certainly more than on the social contract; I know that much. But that's irrelevant to this.

I do want to say that they've had all kinds of open houses; they have engaged in dialogue with individuals. I saw some at a meeting they were attending the other day. There have been written communications. My gosh, there have been all kinds of consultation that's taken place. I would say you're not characterizing that consultation as accurately as you might, and I know that in fairness, as you evaluate all of the consultation that is taking place, you will change your mind entirely.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Metrolinx has now closed its meetings to the public and is refusing to listen to public concerns. Now on top of that, Infrastructure Ontario is negotiating a secret deal with SNC-Lavalin to operate hundreds of polluting diesel trains between downtown Toronto and Pearson airport each and every day. The government refuses to make public what is being negotiated—guaranteed profits, perhaps, or exclusive rights; we don't know. Why is the government allowing Infrastructure Ontario to negotiate a secret sole-source billion-dollar contract with SNC-Lavalin—another one?

Hon. James J. Bradley: You don't know where to start with a question like this. Remember when the Disney program had Fantasyland? This is Fantasyland that you're engaging in. There is consultation taking place. Let me give an example of it: There's a 16-person panel comprised of local community representatives, including experts in areas such as transportation, environment, engineering, health, urban planning, alternative energy, community leadership, GO ridership and business. It includes Eli Malinsky of the Ontario Clean Train Coalition, former Ontario Environment Commissioner Eva Ligeti, Bob Oliver of Pollution Probe and Dr. Linn Holness of St. Michael's Hospital. That's yet another example, when you ask about electrification, for instance, which was somewhere in your question—

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity to welcome in the west gallery Mr. Mike Schreiner. Mike is the new leader of the Green Party of Ontario. Michael, welcome to Queen's Park today.

Also, I would like to welcome a former tourism minister of Nova Scotia in the east gallery, Jack MacIsaac, and his wife, Evelyn. Welcome to Ontario, sir.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Whitby–Oshawa has given her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question

given by the Premier concerning payments from the Sudbury hospital to McKinsey for a sole-source contract and the shut down of the public accounts committee. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nepean–Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier as to how much the HST will cost family physicians and the health care system. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs concerning the Ontario government paying the utility costs of an illegally occupied property in Caledonia. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would like to introduce to the Legislature an exceptional young person from the riding of Mississauga–Streetsville about whom I will say more in a moment. Natasha Barnes is in the members' east gallery. She is accompanied by her grandfather Cecil Barnes, her grandmother Brenda Barnes and her sister Tamika Barnes.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to introduce Susan Rogers from my constituency office; Etana, who's shadowing me for the day; and also some women from the Dog Legislation Council of Canada.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SALVATION ARMY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm proud to rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus to pay tribute to the Salvation Army's annual Christmas campaign taking place in communities across Ontario and Canada.

The Salvation Army's kettle campaign raises much-needed funds to assist those less fortunate families in our communities during the holiday season.

In my riding, Salvation Army Majors Roland Shea and Nancy Hudon and their team of volunteers are hard at work, aiming to collect \$100,000 in the campaign this year. Contributions to the kettle campaign will assist hundreds of low-income working families who cannot afford food and toys at Christmas time.

Until Christmas Eve, Salvation Army kettles will be manned by bell ringers at numerous locations through Cambridge and North Dumfries and thousands across

Ontario. I encourage all of you to give to this most worthwhile campaign and to other worthy charities in your respective communities that are striving to make the holiday season the happy occasion for all.

I wish to convey my deep appreciation to Majors Shea and Hudon and their staff and volunteers, who work so hard at this time of year to ensure that Christmas is a joyous time for all families in Cambridge and North Dumfries.

Please help the Salvation Army in their good work in your community.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The community colleges have been in contract negotiations with their faculty for over five months. Without warning, on November 12 the negotiators for college management broke off talks and announced they were going to unilaterally impose their terms on the faculty.

OPSEU has attempted to implement the recommendations of the independently-chaired workload task force that examined workloads, academic freedom and quality of education. Rather than negotiate, the colleges have refused to accept their responsibility and are simply going to impose terms and conditions of employment—many of which will weaken the college system and hurt students. These actions will destroy staff morale in the colleges. They will do damage to the college system and to the students.

Allowing this to happen also calls into question the McGuinty government's respect for collective bargaining. This government claims it puts students first, but bypassing the negotiation process also bypasses the needs of our students. Imposed settlements always have negative long-term consequences.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities must tell the college negotiators to get back to the bargaining table to negotiate fair, equitable and long-term solutions to many of the problems facing our community colleges. It's time for the colleges to get back to the bargaining table.

NATASHA BARNES

Mr. Bob Delaney: I rise to recognize a remarkable person in the riding of Mississauga–Streetsville who has overcome great obstacles to make meaningful and lasting contributions to our western Mississauga community.

I was originally contacted by Natasha Barnes's sister Tamika to recognize her sister's accomplishment in receiving a Canada Millennium Scholarship Excellence Award. After reading Tamika's e-mail, I invited them to my office to hear a little bit more about their story.

After their mother passed away suddenly in 2004, Natasha began the process to become her younger sister's legal guardian, which she was by February 2005.

In addition to gaining custody of her teenaged sister, Natasha worked and volunteered, dedicating her life to

her sister and to those in need in our community. At the age of 30, Tasha decided to go back to school and enrolled at Sheridan College for social work. She volunteers for Bereaved Families of Ontario, started an HIV/AIDS awareness group, and helps out secondary schools in the area.

Recently, Natasha was recognized as a Canada Millennium Scholarship Excellence Award winner. These are given to Canadians who demonstrate leadership, community involvement, innovation and academic achievement.

Natasha celebrates her mother's legacy through her dedication to her sister, her volunteerism and her educational pursuits.

Congratulations, Natasha Barnes. Ontario is proud of you.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. John Yakabuski: The other day, at a True Patriot Love event, the Ministry of Government Services introduced a support-our-troops licence plate. The minister has gone on ad infinitum about his tremendous support for the members of our Canadian Armed Forces. I would like to give him an opportunity to attach action to those words.

CFB Petawawa is in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. The town of Petawawa has a population of over 16,000 residents, of which 5,300 are serving members of the military, 1,000 civilian support people, and 5,600 family members of those military families.

The opportunity exists for the minister to assist them. This is an issue that has been going on since I've been here, and most certainly before I was here, and that is a proper licensing bureau, a ServiceOntario establishment within the town of Petawawa to serve those troops. It's a golden opportunity for the Minister of Government Services to stand in his place and say, "Not only do I say I support Canada's troops, but I will see that they get the proper services within the town of Petawawa so that I can attach action to those words."

This is an opportunity for the minister. I ask him to move on that as quickly as possible so that those brave men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces are not denied the kinds of services they would have in any other area.

DIABETES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: As members know, November is Diabetes Month in Canada. Diabetes is estimated to affect 1.2 million people in this province by next year, and we must do everything we can to make sure we help those at risk and those afflicted to get the best care and guidance to manage this condition.

In light of this, I'm pleased to rise today to share some of the excellent work that is being done in my community of Ottawa Centre to educate and help those with

this pervasive disease. I would like to commend our government for the recent investment in expanding diabetes education teams and other measures in Ottawa as part of the Ontario diabetes strategy. This important program addresses this serious disease with serious consequences head-on.

Particularly, I would like to recognize the Centretown Community Health Centre for being community leaders in this fight. The CCHC has been offering diabetes programs for 11 years in six different languages, servicing several thousand clients each year where they want to be seen—in their community. The community diabetes education program of Ottawa, led by CCHC, has been so successful that this past May they were given the Community Partner Award by the Canadian Diabetes Association in recognition of their outstanding contribution.

The focus of the program is to support people to self-manage their diabetes and reduce complications associated with the disease while improving their quality of life. It is great news that they will have even more resources now to expand on their good work.

The Centretown Community Health Centre is also quick to point to their strong partnership with 14 other community health groups, our area hospitals, and more and more primary care providers.

HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS

Mr. Norm Miller: Recently, I attended an information session hosted by the Canadian Foundation for Women's Health. I listened intently to Dr. Jennifer Blake as she described the dire situation in Ontario with regard to the human papilloma virus and its vaccination program. I subsequently sponsored a press conference for Dr. Blake here at Queen's Park to get out the message about the benefits of the HPV vaccination program.

It is estimated that 75% of the population will be exposed to some form of HPV; 70% of cervical cancers are caused by HPV, and cervical cancer is the second most common type of cancer in women aged 20 to 44. Each year, 1,500 Canadians are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and for more than one third of those women, the disease is fatal.

1510

In the United States, the FDA has approved the vaccine for boys and men as well, recognizing the fact that they are also at risk. The number of HPV vaccines needed to prevent one death is only 639; this, compared to the 5,000 needed for influenza. Vaccination is 100% effective in preventing disease from the most common types of HPV infection and is considered extremely safe by the CDC.

In Canada, vaccination programs in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec have reported uptake of 80% and 87% respectively, while the uptake is lagging behind here in Ontario at 53%. We must do a better job here in Ontario.

ELLSIN ENVIRONMENTAL LTD.

Mr. David Oraziotti: I rise in the House today to congratulate Ellsin Environmental, a business in my riding with an innovative new technology to recycle tires, which is supported by a \$2-million investment by our government. Several months ago the Premier and I announced that the province would be funding the construction of a 10,000-square-foot waste tire pilot plant. Just last week in the riding I had the opportunity to break ground on this initiative.

Ellsin will offer new solutions to existing tire recycling, disposal and environmental challenges. Establishing this new and innovative business in our city will also help to create new jobs and further establish Sault Ste. Marie as a leader in green technology.

This investment was made through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. under its Enterprises North job creation program. Through this program, the NOHFC provides financial assistance to the private sector to help bring new jobs and economic prosperity to the north.

The new facility will be established to help break down scrap tires to their original elements of carbon black, oil, gas and steel. This initiative is part of our government's strategy to help support green energy projects in the Soo and area, projects such as the \$400-million Brookfield wind farm, the largest project in Ontario, and the \$360-million investment in Pod Solar to create a 60-megawatt solar project in our community, as well as \$7 million to green schools with energy retrofits.

In Sault Ste. Marie we are attracting and retaining our talented workforce by continuing to diversify our economy and becoming a leader in green job technology.

MAGGIE WHEELER

Mr. Jim Brownell: Maggie Wheeler is one of the true outstanding authors from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and her latest book, *On a Darkling Plain*, scheduled to be released on Friday, is another example of her talent.

Maggie makes her home in the St. Lawrence River community of Ingleside, in a house that once stood in the lost village of Dickinson's Landing. Since the release of her first novel, *A Violent End*, in 2001, followed by *The Brother of Sleep* in 2004 and *All Mortal Things* in 2006, Maggie has been increasingly in demand for classroom lectures, symposium presentations and media interviews. She shares insight into the writing process and has also become a prominent voice in the growing contemporary movement to preserve and celebrate the stories of this country and the St. Lawrence Seaway of eastern Ontario.

In 2002 she was awarded Outstanding Business Professional of the Year by the Women Entrepreneurs of Cornwall and Area. Dedicated to community service, she is past secretary of the South Stormont Chamber of Commerce, past director of the women's entrepreneurs, and currently sits on the board of directors for the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Legal Clinic. Maggie is also a life

member of the Lost Villages Historical Society. Currently, Maggie is working toward completing her Master's degree in English literature at Carleton University. With studies completed next year, there will be more time for her children and family, and she is looking forward to the luxury of sitting down every day to write.

On behalf of my colleagues in this House I would like to congratulate Maggie Wheeler on her literary successes. I wish her the very best in the future as she sits to write about the history of Ontario, and eastern Ontario in particular.

TAXATION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Our government wants to help our province stay on the right track for future economic growth. We have proposed HST and permanent tax cuts that will create new jobs and reduce prices on many consumer purchases. For example, 90,000 low-income Ontarians will no longer pay any provincial personal income tax.

This plan has many important benefits for low-income families and individuals. Many families in Scarborough–Rouge River will benefit from the permanent personal tax cuts and credits of this plan. We're providing additional support for Ontarians during the first two years of transition to the HST. Starting in July 2010, eligible Ontario families will receive \$1,000 and individuals will receive \$300 in the form of three payments. On top of that, we're also almost doubling current property and sales tax credits, and we have announced HST exemptions for items families need, such as children's clothing and diapers.

Our proposed plan contains a fair, balanced and progressive package of tax cuts for both people and businesses that, when combined with the HST, will put more money back into the pockets of all our hard-working Ontario families.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on long-term-care homes—medication management from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This report is different from other reports that the public accounts committee has submitted to this Legislature in the past. Traditionally, we submit about nine

or 10 different reports each year. In this report, the committee came to an unusual juncture, in that all committee members agreed, from the evidence that they collected at the committee and from the Auditor General's report of 2007 with regard to medication and long-term-care homes, that they had to make a recommendation which was outside of the norm. That recommendation was: The Standing Committee on Public Accounts is strongly concerned about the overmedication of long-term-care home residents and concludes that the present compensation mechanisms for physicians and pharmacists should be restructured.

It's not normal that the committee takes a position on a quasi-policy issue. Our function in the public accounts committee is to deal with the administration and implementation of different programs. We were looking primarily here at how prescribed medicine was being administered to those people. There are some 75,000 people in long-term-care homes across the province of Ontario. The Auditor General found that between 23% and 28% of these long-term-care residents—that would amount to something like 15,000 to 20,000 people in Ontario—were being prescribed 12 or more different medications on average, along with non-prescription drugs. This led the committee to make the very unusual step of putting forward this recommendation.

There are recommendations in the report which also deal with other matters in terms of the Auditor General's findings.

I want to say that this is a different kind of structured report. It is relatively brief, it's only 10 pages long, but it is extremely important.

We urge the Ministry of Health to look at alternate compensation schemes for medications for long-term-care residents. We believe the present one is leading to overmedication and ill health in our long-term-care residents. So we really recommend to the government that the ministry look at different ways of compensating the different people who are involved in caring for our elderly in our long-term-care institutions.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling moves the adjournment of the debate. 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.

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

The division bells rang from 1520 to 1550.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour of adjournment of the debate will please rise to be counted by the Clerk.

Those opposed will please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 53; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the debate adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SENIOR DRIVER'S CONDITIONAL LICENCE), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PERMIS DE CONDUIRE RESTREINT POUR PERSONNE ÂGÉE)

Mr. Ramal moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 221, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional conditional driver's licence for seniors / Projet de loi 221, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin de créer un permis de conduire restreint facultatif pour les personnes âgées.

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.

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

The division bells rang from 1552 to 1557.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Gélinas, France	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Craitor, Kim	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Munro, Julia
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 45; the nays are 12.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to add a new section which creates a seniors' driver's licence. The minister may issue a seniors'

driver's licence to drivers who have reached 65 years of age, who elect to hold this licence and who meet the requirements set out in this bill. A seniors' driver's licence is subject to the condition that the holder is not permitted to drive a vehicle on specified highways. The bill also provides that any particular test necessary to obtain the seniors' driver's licence will not require driving on the specified highways. There will be more details in the future.

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA SÉCURITÉ
PUBLIQUE LIÉE AUX CHIENS

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 222, An Act to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act and the Animals for Research Act / Projet de loi 222, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens et la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I thank the Dog Legislation Council of Canada. This bill repeals provisions in the Dog Owners' Liability Act that prohibit restricted pit bulls and provide for controls on pit bulls. The bill also repeals provisions in the Animals for Research Act relating to the disposition of pit bulls under that act.

DISABLED PERSONS'
SERVICE DOGS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR
LES CHIENS D'ASSISTANCE
DES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 223, An Act respecting the rights of disabled persons who use service dogs / Projet de loi 223, Loi traitant des droits des personnes handicapées qui ont recours à des chiens d'assistance.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This bill enacts the Disabled Persons' Service Dogs Act, 2009. The act includes a provision stating that no person shall deny accommodation, services or facilities to a person or discriminate against a person with respect to accommodation, services or facilities for the reason that he or she is a disabled person accompanied by a service dog. A person who

contravenes the provision is liable to a fine of up to \$5,000.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to read a petition into the record for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"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 support this bill 100% and I send it to the table with Connor.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Lively, Naughton and Whitefish, where I live, in beautiful Nickel Belt. It goes as follows:

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

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

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

"We ... 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 table with page Iman.

HISPANIC COMMUNITY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition in support of proclaiming April as Hispanic Heritage Month, and this is in support of the private member's resolution as introduced by myself and Mr. Colle on December 3. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Canadians of Hispanic origin have made outstanding contributions in the building of this great province; and

"Whereas the Hispanic population is among the fastest-growing communities in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Hispanic population in Ontario represents 23 countries across the world, such as Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estados Unidos, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela; and

"Whereas Hispanic Heritage Month would give Ontarians the opportunity to participate in various cultural and educational activities that would strengthen our diversity; and

"Whereas the proclamation of April as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario is an opportunity to recognize and learn about the contributions Canadians of Hispanic heritage have made to Canada and to the world in music, art, literature, film, economics, science and medicine;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming April of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario."

Since I am in favour, I'm delighted to sign this, and my colleagues as well.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I have a petition that means an awful lot to me. On Sunday I was able to go to the Rideau Restaurant in Burritt's Rapids to celebrate the 90th birthday of Lawrence Bielby, and when I was there I noticed on a table a petition signed by hundreds of my residents, who petition the Legislature as follows:

"Whereas residents of Ontario 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 ... haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships ... and legal and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the" \$3-billion "blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

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

I am so proud to affix my signature to this petition because it is what the constituents in my riding—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I'm going to remind the members again that they are to read the petition as it is written and are not to be editorializing petitions.

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HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to read this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, submitted by the Effort organization of Pakistani professionals in western Mississauga. I especially want to thank Abid Mahmood and Azeem Syed of Mississauga for having collected the signatures—and to everybody, to wish them all an Eid-ul-Adha Mubarak. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals in 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 the 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 Hadhy to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's plan to 'harmonize' the PST and the GST will result in Ontario taxpayers paying 8% more for a multitude of products and services;

"Whereas the 8% tax increase will increase the cost of services such as housing and real estate services, gasoline, hydro bills, home heating fuel, Internet and cable bills, haircuts, gym memberships, legal services, construction and renovations, car repairs, plumbing and electrical services, landscaping services, leisure activities, hotel rooms, veterinary services for the family pet and even funeral services; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers cannot afford this tax grab—particularly in the middle of a recession;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to abandon the sales tax increase announced in the 2009 budget.”

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I’m pleased to present a petition and am certainly happy that former Minister of Culture Caroline Di Cocco has signed this petition. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario’s cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

“Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic cultural heritage resources, Ontario’s inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

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

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

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

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by thousands of residents in Oxford county. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I’m pleased to introduce this petition to the Legislative Assembly. It’s affectionately known as the grandparents’ rights bill.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33 put forward by the MPP from Niagara Falls; and

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

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

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

I’m proud to sign my name to this petition.

TAXATION

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

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

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

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

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes,

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

I support this petition wholeheartedly.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition. I want to thank Earl Ruhnke, and also Ed and Eleanor Quesnelle again, who have been so good at gathering these petitions all around Renfrew county. I've got thousands and thousands of them.

"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 support this petition, affix my name to it and send it down with Saeyon.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history, but he still cuts health care services and nurses; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes once again on Canada Day 2010, with his new 13% combined GST, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% combined GST will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, arena ice and soccer field rentals, Internet fees, theatre admissions, funerals, courier fees, fast food sold for \$4"—that's just temporary—"bus fares, golf green fees, gym fees, snowplowing, bicycles, taxi fares, train fares, domestic air travel, accountant services and real estate commissions;

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

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I sign this petition as I agree with it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO LABOUR MOBILITY ACT, 2009

LOI ONTARIENNE DE 2009 SUR LA MOBILITÉ DE LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 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 Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as members may know, or as you know, I had the floor yesterday but ran out of time as we headed toward question period, so it's a pleasure for me to pick up the debate again on Bill 175, which involves labour mobility here in the province of Ontario. In fact, it's a pan-Canadian objective. The debate that we're having here today will be going on and has been going on in Legislatures across this country, as all of us attempt to align our provisions on labour mobility.

I had a chance yesterday in my remarks to speak a little bit about the principles behind this and set a bit of a context that way. Really, I want to put this in a little bit of an economic context, because I think all of us look at all pieces of legislation before us in this Legislature during this economic downturn with a real eye to how it is going to affect the Ontario economy and how it is going to improve things for those workers, those families here in the province of Ontario.

As I think I mentioned yesterday, part of the challenge for this government—really, for every government across Canada—is not only to make sure that we weather the current economic storm, but that we emerge stronger than ever.

I think there's a changing reality here in Ontario—and I've heard the Premier speak about it many times—that we are in a transition right now, a transformation away from sort of the low-wage economy of the past. We're no longer able to compete with the great giants of China, India, Brazil and other major countries based on low

wages. In fact, what we want to do is go further and develop the well-educated, well-trained society and population that are going to be able to compete with the best around the world.

As a government, of course, we've taken that very seriously. As the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I've been very proud of the investments that we've made in terms of our workforce, both in our colleges and universities, and through apprenticeships. We're building that skilled workforce which is going to take Ontario into the future.

But at the same time as investing in training and education, we have to make sure that we remove obstacles for individuals to find jobs, to find a career moving forward. I think members are aware that Canada is one of those peculiar countries on Earth, because as a federation, we don't have full labour market mobility. We talk about removing obstacles for workers, and some of those obstacles are actually the obstacles created by borders between provinces.

As I pointed out yesterday, when you look at regulated occupations here in the nation of Canada, in the Dominion of Canada—people like architects, engineers, veterinarians, audiologists, all these different professions—in fact, it is not always possible for someone who is trained and practises in one province to move to another province and put out their shingle, so to speak. Oftentimes, there are residency requirements, they have to undergo further training or there are reassessments that take place. There are these obstacles.

I made the point yesterday that an architect from Saskatchewan cannot simply move, in many cases, to every province across this country and begin practising his or her profession. I think all of us who have spent time travelling across this country know that buildings in Saskatchewan are as well-designed as buildings in Ontario. These types of obstacles are outdated. These types of obstacles hinder the competitiveness of this nation, and we've got to remove those obstacles.

So what Bill 175 would do—and there are complex parts of the bill. It obviously addresses a number of areas in terms of how we regulate various professions, but at its core it's actually very simple. It says that anyone in the nation of Canada who has fulfilled the training requirements and has been recognized as a practitioner in a regulated occupation anywhere in Canada can then move to another part of Canada and practise their trade or profession; that they don't need to go through further training or fulfill any of the requirements that I mentioned. Those obstacles are removed.

Do you know what? This is good news for Ontario. It's good news in two senses: First of all, it allows those individuals who are trained here in Ontario—those Ontarians who wish to move elsewhere in Canada—to have that freedom to go from place to place. But more importantly, Ontario is very much the economic engine of this country. Right now, of course, we're in a period of high unemployment, but when you look at the demographics going forward—as the population ages, in fact, experts tell us that we're going to have a skills shortage

moving forward. We want to be able to welcome those individuals from all across Canada so they can come to Ontario, practise and be part of the workforce and the economy moving forward.

I think it was very prudent of us to take a leadership role in terms of labour mobility when the Premier sat down at the recent Council of the Federation meeting and said that this has to be a priority. It's a long time coming: I think I mentioned yesterday that 1994 was when the Agreement on Internal Trade was signed. People then were very hopeful that within a few years we'd have this sort of labour mobility. Finally we're going to have it, with the agreement between the provinces and, of course, the enabling legislation that's coming forward today that we're debating in the House and hopefully will move forward.

I should point out that in signing this agreement, in passing this legislation, for the vast majority of regulated professions you will be able to move from one province to another. But at the same time, the legislation that's before us—which corresponds with the agreement—actually gives provinces and territories the right to recognize that there may be exceptions. There may be instances where someone trained or practises in another province or jurisdiction and we do not recognize them automatically, as it would be in the vast majority of cases moving forward. This cannot be done just on a whim; this is not something that a province could simply sit down and decide: that profession X or profession Y will not be recognized here in the province. There are criteria for that, and I thought that it's important to put on the record what those criteria are.

The chapter in the Agreement on Internal Trade allows each province or territory to approve exceptions and maintain additional certification requirements for workers in specific occupations based on the following criteria, and I want to put them on the record here: “public security and safety, public order, protection of human, animal or plant life or health, protection of the environment, consumer protection, protection of the health, safety and well-being of workers,” provision of adequate social and health services to all its geographic regions and “programs for disadvantaged groups.”

In preparing for the legislation that we're looking at here before us and in follow-up to the discussions the Premiers had on the agreement that Ontario has signed on to, we took a look at all the regulated professions here in Ontario and reached out to every regulatory body: those that take care of architects, those that take care of veterinarians etc. We ran these criteria by them and asked for any concerns that they might have. In negotiating them through, we were undertaking the same process that other provinces were. The idea behind that—and what underpins this bill—is that every province will come forward with a list of exceptions, cases where they're not prepared to fully recognize a profession from another jurisdiction.

1630

The idea behind that is that Ontario—and the other provinces, for that matter—will be able to exercise their

right to call the exception. But it's also a challenge, because if someone says, for example, that profession X or profession Y from Ontario is not going to be recognized in Saskatchewan, well, that's a challenge to our government and a challenge, in the example I've given, to the government of Saskatchewan to sit down and over time work together to make sure we remove any of the concerns about the training that may take place so that labour mobility can go forward as smoothly as possible. So although there is the provision for exceptions and although every jurisdiction, I'm certain, will take advantage of that and put forward that list, that's a list which is going to be fluid. That's a list which will be used for negotiations moving forward.

Ontario, in the process of these discussions with the various regulatory bodies, has approved six exceptions, and I think it's important in the course of this debate that I put them on the record here for the House so that they know where we are not prepared to allow this full mobility.

First is in the area of dental hygienists—not in general, but dental hygienists from Yukon and Nunavut who have not graduated from a nationally accredited program must, in order to come to Ontario, complete the national or equivalent exam. This is a case where Yukon and Nunavut have a different training regime than you'd find here, and of course we're asking for that to be recognized. As I say, it's an opportunity for us to continue our discussions with Yukon and Nunavut and see if we can reach an agreement that hopefully—and this is our goal—removes that exception.

Drinking water systems operators: Certified operators from Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Northwest Territories must take Ontario's two-week drinking water systems training program, again where we've seen a real difference in training that has gone on but an area where we want to have further discussion with those jurisdictions.

Lawyers: I think this one will be common across the nation, because I think everyone recognizes that there is a different legal system in Quebec. Ontario will therefore require lawyers from that province to take additional training and/or examination. I think, based on the differing civil and common legal systems, that one will probably stand forever, but hopefully we will get down to just that one exception.

Public accountants: Ontario will assess the qualifications of workers against Ontario's public accounting certification requirements. While applicants with a chartered accountant designation can be assessed by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, applicants with either a certified general accountant or certified management accountant designation cannot be assessed until the Ontario regulatory authorities for their professions are authorized to grant public accounting licences.

The next one is registered practical nurses. Due to different training and education standards among provinces, registered practical nurses—in other words,

licensed practical nurses—from Quebec must demonstrate that they have the necessary education and training in pediatrics and obstetrics. This is one that has been based on a lot of work done by the college of nurses in co-operation with Quebec, and, as I say, a point that we want to continue to pursue with Quebec, in this case, to make sure that eventually we can remove that exception.

Finally, social workers: Due to different training and education standards, social workers certified in Alberta and Saskatchewan must have their academic qualifications assessed by the relevant regulatory authority in Ontario.

Now, I've shared the list of the exceptions here with the House, and as I mentioned, if you went to other jurisdictions, you would find that they have a similar list. I want to point out that it's only six. We have about 300 regulated professions in this province, and we've narrowed it down to six where we can't have that perfect match.

I want to congratulate those authorities that are involved in dealing with regulated professions. They've come a long way to say, "Hey, there might be a little bit of a difference here and there might be a little bit of a difference there, but we recognize that there is a basic Canadian standard and we are prepared to open our borders, so to speak, to allow people from across the nation to move forward."

So the list that we're presenting today will be a basis for to us continue negotiation and discussion with other provinces. At the same time, they're going to be presenting their lists. I know there may be instances where they find Ontario professions—where they feel the standard is so great, where it meets the criteria that I shared with the Legislature a few minutes ago, that they'll want to make sure there are changes. In Ontario, we're not sure if we're always going to reach a consensus, but we're going to continue those discussions moving forward.

So the bill before us has, as I say, some technical provisions which are calling on all those regulatory authorities—in fact, enforcing these rules on these regulatory authorities. It's been based on a great deal of consultation with the various sectors. We've heard from them and we've held numerous meetings and discussions. The various ministers who are in charge of them—for example, the Attorney General in the area of accounting or the Minister of Health in the area of nursing that we've spoken about—have talked to the regulatory authorities. We've worked with them, and I think we have an excellent package moving forward, and a package which is very much about the economy.

I'll just end—I only have about 30 seconds—where I started: It's about the economy. It's about making sure that we have the most highly trained and highly skilled workforce, but that also means that they can go out and find those jobs, they can find those professions, across Canada. We're an important part of Canada. We're a province of Canada. We're part of a larger nation, and I think many people would, quite frankly, find it incredible that it's taken this long for us to do what is basically common sense: open our borders to all.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a chance to respond to the minister on his speech on Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario and other Canadian provinces and territories.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities talked a bit about skill shortages perhaps happening in the future. On this side of the House, we've been trying to get the government to move on something that could give skilled workers an opportunity and bring them into the workforce, and that is apprenticeship ratios, something they could move on very easily.

In the electrical trade, for example, Ontario has a requirement that you have three journeymen for one apprentice, which makes it very difficult for companies to grow and bring on more apprentices and give them an opportunity, whereas in other provinces—just about all of them—it's one to one. So we'll be competing with those provinces that allow a one-to-one apprenticeship ratio, making it easier for people to become qualified in many trades. That's something that he really needs to address.

Just yesterday, I was talking to a young doctor, a medical student, who's in Ireland learning, obviously, to become a doctor. When she comes back to Ontario—and there are a lot of people who don't have a doctor in the province of Ontario. When that medical student hopefully comes back to Ontario, unfortunately, as far as I understand, even though they are from Ontario, they are in the same lineup to become qualified as somebody from any country in the world. That seems to me to be a real flaw, that we should be doing all we can to get that medical student back here and get them working in Ontario. So I hope the minister will address how the government might create a special line for Ontario—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to tell the minister that New Democrats oppose this bill, and we oppose it strongly. The minister presents it as if somehow this is a very easy matter that we should be solving, that people should be able to move about within the country because, ultimately, there are no standard differences between us and we should just be able to have people walk in and out without any problem.

There is not a demonstrable need for this bill at all. Most of our problems have been resolved interprovincially. It's been done through a mix of interprovincial coordination, with programs such as the red seal, which works very well. These are things that we have been doing as a province that have been working. As far as I know, there are no problems, and where there have been, they have been solved, by and large.

We have groups of people working on this: the forum of labour market ministers, the labour mobility coordinating group. We have the mutual recognition agreements between provinces. These things have been there for a long time and they are working.

1640

The minister presents it as somehow an easy thing to fix, that it's simply common sense. He argues that, yes, there are some things the provinces could do to deal with problems with some other trade that might be coming from some other province. But I read on page 8 the following: "The Ontario regulatory authority shall ensure that its imposition of certification requirements on the individual under subsections (3), (4) and (5) and its imposition of terms, conditions or limitations on the individual's authorizing certificate under subsection (7) do not prevent the expeditious certification of the individual." It's about making sure that we do nothing to prevent somebody who comes from another province with a different standard from being able to practise here. That's what the purpose of the bill, as defined in this bill, is all about.

This is the only jurisdiction in Canada that is imposing tremendous fines on those who break the conditions of this law. It's the only province in Canada that imposes enforcement rules of five million bucks on some agency, governmental or otherwise, that is breaking the rules. No other province in Canada is doing this. It's incredible, in terms of what this government is doing to standards and how it's going to affect the standards of Ontario in particular.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to speak for a couple of minutes on this bill.

One of the things that I want to comment on: We signed an agreement on international trade back in 1994. No wonder some folks sometimes think the government moves slowly. This is just one of those examples.

In regard to this agreement, I'd just like to bring to the attention of the House and to the minister an example that I want to speak about. Not too long ago, a matter of a couple of years ago, one of the municipalities I represent called our office. They had a doctor who was from one of the eastern provinces. As you know, for a while we suffered a chronic shortage of mostly primary health care providers, like family docs. They had somebody from one of the eastern provinces who was interested in moving to Ontario, to one of my communities, but one of the big stumbling blocks was the rigmarole that this doctor had to go through in order to get status here in Ontario to practise. I mean, this doctor was good enough for one of the eastern provinces. Yes, we need to have those restrictions to protect from some other jurisdictions where maybe the health care professionals are not as knowledgeable as required by the standards we have here, but this was from one of our other provinces. I remember my staff working diligently with the ministry, trying to see how we could expedite this, but we didn't have the mechanism in order to do that.

I just use that as an example. This is a perfect way to elaborate on why this is so important and why it will play a big role in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to rise and speak on behalf of Bill 175, the labour mobility act. The PC Party, in theory, is the party of free trade. We will support any action that truly eliminates barriers to trade. We also believe that reducing barriers to trade will allow our businesses to grow in the province. This one step is not nearly enough.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: A competitive tax structure also needs to be put in place, as the Minister of Transportation well knows.

We are very concerned that this bill will reduce the level of training in many different professions and, in the short term, will make Ontario uncompetitive. Under this act, Ontario will be forced to recognize credentials from other Canadian jurisdictions. In regard to the construction trades, it may mean that people who want to become apprentices will move to other jurisdictions that have lower apprenticeship/journeyman ratios, just in order to train. We also think that over time, this act will put pressure on our licensing bodies to reduce—not improve, but reduce—training requirements to the lowest common denominator.

Now is the time for this government to reduce the apprenticeship ratios in order to help attract potential apprentices. Ontario should act before an exodus of students leaves our province and goes to other provinces.

Our community colleges and trades will suffer if people who want to go into the trades feel they have a better chance at training if they go out of this province. If the Ontario government wants to stop an exodus from happening in our apprenticeship and training system, they should act now to lower the ratios.

We have a number of other disagreements with this bill. I won't go into them at this time. We'll wait for further debate and we'll have them raised at that time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the comments that were shared by my colleagues. With the greatest respect to them—and I respect their opinions, and I respect this debate—there's a certain arrogance about what they're saying, from both parties across the way, in the sense of the standards that exist across Canada. I find it beyond puzzling that we are standing here today as part of a country that was formed in 1867, and an individual Canadian does not have the right to learn their profession in a given province and move to another province because somehow the standards are going to be different.

I'm not exactly sure what my colleagues in the opposition are frightened of. Quite frankly, a dentist who is trained in Saskatchewan, as far as I'm concerned, is a Canadian-trained dentist and has a right to practise anywhere—

Interjection.

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

Hon. John Milloy: The idea that somehow the standards are different elsewhere is, quite frankly, an outdated approach and it's one that is no longer prevalent, especially in this era of globalization, when Canada has to pull together as a single economy and compete with the likes of Brazil, China and India.

Mention has been made by a number of members about foreign-trained professionals coming to this country. We should be welcoming foreign-trained professionals into this country—I think everyone agrees—but how are we welcoming them when they come to a certain province, undertake the training and jump through all the hoops, and then if they want to move from Ontario to Quebec or Ontario to Saskatchewan or what have you, they have to go through more hoops?

It's time that we emerge into the 21st century, remove these barriers and make sure that Canada can function as a single economy.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 175 today. I couldn't believe the minister describing the members on the opposite side of the House as arrogant. We've done everything we can to try to cooperate on bills that are of mutual interest.

What amazes me is that this bill was tabled on May 5 and we're only dealing with it at this point here in November. So you have to ask yourself what kind of priority it was. Or maybe the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities just doesn't have the clout in cabinet that some of those other members might—but now with George Smitherman gone, perhaps his star is going to rise. I know he was quite influential back in the days of the Chrétien government in Ottawa; you know, Chrétien and Gomery and all that kind of stuff. He was quite active with that government. He probably saw fit to decide to change his place of employment and move to the Ontario Legislature, and that's what we're seeing today with, of course, the former Minister of Health, who wants to be the mayor of Toronto.

I know I'm getting the evil eye from the Speaker here, because he's wondering what this has to do with labour mobility. But that's exactly what I'm talking about, Speaker: the freedom to be mobile within the province of Ontario, which the members of the Liberal Party have practised quite a bit lately—and we're seeing another example of it here in the city of Toronto. I do hope that the former Minister of Health and Minister of Energy and the current member for Toronto Centre is not going to forget that he still has constituents he has to represent. You don't just drop those people, start running for mayor of Toronto and forget about the people who elected you here. We certainly hope that he doesn't forget about his responsibility to those people as well, because that is important.

1650

On the bill, I want to thank our labour critic, Mr. Randy Hillier, but particularly our former labour critic, my good friend Bob Bailey from Sarnia–Lambton, who

did such a wonderful job in putting forth the position of the PC Party during earlier debate on this bill. Lucky for me, I have a copy of that speech. I had a chance to peruse it, and I just wanted to thank Bob again for the tremendous job he did and for all his work in making sure he understands the legislation when he's commenting on it in the House.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: John, his constituents are here and they'd like to hear what he said.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am aware that two of Bob's constituents are here; I thank the member for Trinity-Spadina for pointing that out. I was able to meet the constituents earlier, and I know that you introduced them to the House, didn't you, Bob? That's a great thing to do. Obviously, you have wonderful support in your riding when they'll travel all the way to Toronto to see you in action here in the House.

Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario and other Canadian provinces and territories: In principle, if you only listen to the minister—he's very good at getting his points across—you'd think, "My goodness gracious, this is the best thing, the best bill that maybe was ever introduced."

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no. I said you'd think that. But we on other side of the House don't just listen to what the minister has to say; we actually listen to what the people out there have to say, and there are some issues with this bill. I will give them credit that we substantially agree with the principle of trying to allow people to have more mobility. This is one country—it's Canada—and we don't think we should have unwieldy barriers preventing people from having the choice to move from one province to another to seek employment.

In fact, over the last few years since 2003, when this government was elected, thank goodness that people have been able to look for jobs in other provinces than the one they currently reside in. If that wasn't the case, we would have had a real problem in Ontario, because we wouldn't have been able to accommodate all those people who were leaving, under the strangulating taxation policies of the Liberal government, to go to Saskatchewan and Alberta to get work.

But you'll notice that after being hammered incessantly about their policies by the Progressive Conservative Party and our new leader, Tim Hudak, they have changed their policy somewhat. They're now talking about reducing taxes to corporations, so that businesses can actually function.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, no, no, no; we're not against reducing taxes. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin says we're against reducing taxes—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: —and the Speaker knows better than that. Our party has always been the party of lower taxation, so that we can create a vibrant, powerful economy that raises the standard of living for all those who live here and allows us to pay for and provide those

essential services that are so important to each and every citizen of the province of Ontario.

Speaking of taxation and the citizens of the province of Ontario—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): As long as you relate it to the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. I'll be listening very carefully.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Of course, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I have learned in the six years I've been here is the rules, and I certainly—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I know that I'm compelled to speak to the matter at hand.

Anyway, getting back to the matter of taxation—and I'm going to get to how it relates to Bill 175 with respect to apprentices and all this kind of stuff—we have a real problem with the government's new bill to impose the biggest tax grab—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, you're not going to go there. You're not speaking about any new bills. You're speaking about the bill that's on the floor today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's correct. Now, as a result of the government's failure to call for public consultation on the HST, we have no—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, no. I'll perhaps warn one or two more times, and then I'm going to move on to other speakers who are willing to speak on this bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You leave me no option, Speaker, but to either speak to the bill or move adjournment of the debate, and I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Yakabuski 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 1656 to 1726.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand and be counted by the clerks.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the clerks.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 10; the nays are 40.

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

Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm rather surprised at the outcome of that vote, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly tell you that. In fairness, Speaker—

Hon. Jim Watson: John, don't take it personally.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not taking it personally, but I am a little bit concerned about the stringent nature of your call today on the bill. As you know, there are

times that I am as direct as possible, and there are times that it takes me a little longer to get to the point because I have to paint the picture. I think it is important sometimes that you frame the circumstances and the situation so that you can make it easier for the people who are listening out there in TV land to understand some of the challenges we have, not only with this bill but with the general nature of the agenda of the government of the day.

I'm sure, quite frankly, when our party was in government, that from time to time, members of the opposition would have had issues with the agenda of the day of that government. I was not a member of that government, as you would know, Mr. Speaker; I was only elected here in 2003—a lovely October evening. I remember it well.

Anyhow, on the bill, as I said earlier, our labour critic of the day who spoke to this bill some time ago, Mr. Bailey, my good friend from Sarnia–Lambton—and I know our critic today, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Randy Hillier, has also indicated where we have agreement in principle on many of the issues in the bill, but there are still some issues that have yet to be resolved.

I know that the minister spoke about 300 different trades or whatever and only six that he said they couldn't seem to bring under the umbrella. We want to talk about one of those trades, the certified general accountants that have some problems with this legislation. So it's certainly not unanimous, but there are problems.

We've got other issues with regard to labour mobility. What about the apprenticeship ratios in this province, which we think are way out of whack with respect to the employment needs and service needs of the people? When you demand that you can only have one apprentice for a journeyman in certain fields, it's very hard to train the skilled workers of tomorrow if you have that kind of stringent legislation. And we know that that is nothing but a concession to the unions, because many of those young apprentices would like to train in non-union shops so that they can get their ticket under what some would feel are better circumstances; even under better training.

Again, getting back to the matter at hand, I don't want to delay it, because I have limited time here. But I want to remind the House that we have a great deal of problems, and I know the government House leader, who's here now too, has problems with some of the tools that we're using to ensure that our voices are heard.

We have a responsibility as Her Majesty's loyal opposition to be heard. Government is not about dictatorship, where you win the most seats and then you just do whatever the heck you want to do and forget about what the people are saying back to you.

The people have some real concerns out there, and you're not allowing those concerns to be heard—those concerns need to be heard on your HST legislation—because you refuse to go to public hearings across this province in every town that demands them. The people have a right to put forth their views and their opposition to what you're doing, and maybe even understand better

what the legislation is all about, because yes, there will be some who support it. But because you refuse to shed the light of day on it and face the people—that's what governing and democracy is all about, facing the people—I have no option but to move for adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Yakabuski has moved adjournment of the House. 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 1732 to 1802.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All of those in favour, please stand and be counted by the clerks.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the clerks.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 9; the nays are 39.

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

I beg the indulgence of the House so that I can wish my bride of 48 years a happy anniversary.

Even though we're 360 kilometres apart, I want to tell her I love her.

Applause.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, if she has put up with you for 48 years, I feel like I love her too.

Laughter.

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

Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made, and we now have a late show, or two or three.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Whitby–Oshawa has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier. The member for Whitby–Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: This morning during question period, I asked the Premier about the fact that the Minister of Health had previously identified the cost of the sole-source contract handed to McKinsey by the government as \$750,000. Well, we've heard that McKinsey is reported not to accept retainers of under \$1 million.

This government has already been implicated on numerous occasions of bending the rules of spending as they see fit and as suits their purposes. The public was appalled to learn about the eHealth scandal, and slowly

but surely the public is finding that this reckless misappropriation of taxpayer money is not isolated to eHealth Ontario.

The people of Ontario were astounded to find that Ron Sapsford, the soon-to-be-former deputy minister, was paid a salary which was funded through Hamilton Health Sciences, a hospital. And it doesn't stop there. The assistant deputy minister to the Premier, Hugh MacLeod, and the ADM to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade were also both paid through the University Health Network. The public want to know why.

In doing some research, I found that salaries paid to senior health bureaucrats are done in this manner because they have "enhanced pensions" for senior executives. That still brings me to the question of why a management and consulting firm would need to be paid through a hospital budget. I think that's something of great interest to the people of the province of Ontario. Do businesses need cushy retirement plans too, or was the Sudbury hospital a convenient venue to use to disburse money for an untendered contract?

As we know, hospitals have not been subject to FOI legislation, which would make the likelihood of the opposition and the people of Ontario uncovering one more scandal that much less likely.

What I can say is that Sudbury Regional Hospital is not in a position to be funding sole-source government contracts, nor, for that matter, are any of our Ontario hospitals that are struggling to make ends meet and provide service with the resources that they have, and they should be using them to provide the direct care to patients that I'm sure they all want to be doing.

In this case, what's most likely the case is that this government is just continuing along its destructive path of unaccountable, non-transparent operations. We've heard a lot about how they're transparent and open, but every opportunity that this government has to show that they are open and transparent, they turn their backs on.

As it stands today, our caucus is waiting for the Sudbury hospital staff to receive approval to release documents relating to contracts paid to McKinsey. I can only assume, because they told us before that they had some information but they needed approval to release it, that it has been stopped in its tracks. "Why?" one might ask. Because Premier McGuinty and the Liberals will not have anyone see those contracts if they have anything to say about it.

The facts remain that this government, after promising not to raise taxes in the 2003 campaign, implemented what we all know today as the Ontario health tax. This government then funded that money not directly into health care but into general revenue, where it was spent on many non-health-related projects. This is just one more thing that Ontarians have to thank McGuinty economic mismanagement for. The people of Ontario yet again are spending more money for health care services and getting less, while Liberal friends are collecting the difference.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The parliamentary assistant to the Premier.

Mr. David Ramsay: I just have to start off and say that the member from Whitby–Oshawa is absolutely wrong, on all counts, in what she has presented today.

She's wrong to say that Sudbury Regional Hospital paid for the McKinsey report. That is absolutely wrong. The \$750,000 was paid for by the Ministry of Health, and Minister Matthews has been completely transparent about this contract. The ministry paid for this to develop the implementation of a new drug system, and with this, we are not looking at reducing drug benefits for Ontarians, but increasing those benefits for seniors and those on social assistance. We have increased access to drugs so we get better value for the money for our taxpayers.

1810

McKinsey helped with the research and analysis that led to a discussion paper presented to our industry partners in July of this year, and it is available on the Ministry of Health website. We are working with our partners to increase the number of drugs, drive down the prices and provide greater accountability and transparency.

Bill 102 leverages our drug program to get better value for money and gives better access to the medications that Ontarians need. Changes have led to almost \$700 million in savings that have been reinvested in the health care system. We have added 682 new drugs to the formulary since Bill 102 came into effect. That includes 177 brand name drugs and 505 generic products, 35 of those being cancer drugs that are now listed. Low-income seniors are exempted from the \$100 yearly deductible and pay only the \$2 co-pay per prescription.

We have increased funding for cancer drugs from \$72 million when we first took office in 2003-04 to a forecast, at the end of this fiscal year, \$195 million. Herceptin, Avastin and Vectibix are all now listed, with more than \$100 million over three years to provide coverage for Lucentis.

We have sped up the review process to make breakthrough drugs available for Ontarians. We're doing our job for the health of the people of this province.

TAXATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nepean–Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier.

The member for Nepean–Carleton, you have up to five minutes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to discuss my dissatisfaction with the Premier's answer today, and it was a very important question that I had asked.

On Monday evening, after the HST legislation was introduced in this chamber, I and two of my colleagues attended a briefing by the Ministry of Finance. We asked, through one of our researchers, at the end of the very long and drawn-out briefing, which lasted for about two and a half hours, what impact the HST would have on

physicians' offices and, by extension, what that cost would mean to the health care system.

It troubled us to learn that the Ministry of Finance did not have an estimate of what this HST will cost our medical system. In fact, family physicians across Ontario have come out against the HST. They are angered at the introduction of the sales tax because they feel that while the government wasted precious health care dollars at eHealth, their fees are going to go up in the face of it, because of the HST. So we know that they are incensed.

We've been asking, of course, for public consultation. I asked the Premier of Ontario and he refused to answer. In fact, he was so callous outside of this Legislature as to suggest that anyone opposed to the HST should write a letter to the editor or should call a talk show. That is disgusting. He is not allowing Ontario's patients, nor is he allowing Ontario's doctors, to not only come to this chamber but also to go to their communities, whether that is Kingston, Cornwall, Windsor, London or Scarborough, whether it's North Bay, Thunder Bay, Sarnia or Sudbury. He's going to halt public input into this legislation.

Meanwhile, doctors across Ontario are concerned. They are concerned because their medical supplies are going to increase by 8%. Their medical journals are going to increase by 8%. Their hydro is going to go up by 8%. Their Internet access fees are going to go up by 8%. Their legal and accounting fees are going to go up by 8%. And that is going to be passed on to the taxpayer of this province. It's going to make the medical system in this province more expensive, and it's not right.

In addition to that, the McGuinty Liberals will be adding 8% more to kids' sports registration, 8% more to vitamins, and 8% more to gym membership fees. We're making health care in this province unaffordable not only because of the mismanagement at eHealth but also because of this ill-timed, ill-conceived harmonized sales tax.

We're going to continue to fight this tooth and nail. We're using every procedural tactic that's available to us to prolong the debate so Ontarians, their families, their doctors, their neighbours and their friends can take part in probably one of the most important debates since this Legislature was brought forward after the last election. We'll often hear on the other side that this is the single most important thing they can do for the economy, yet it is the single most important thing that they want to hide from Ontarians.

As I close, I'm urging all Ontarians to join the fight against the HST. They should write their MPP and send an e-mail to their friends. They should go to daltonsalestax.com. They should also call the Premier of Ontario. His phone number is 613-736-9573. I think Ontarians need to send a message to this Premier, and I repeat: 613-736-9573. Mr. McGuinty will be happy to hear from you.

Hon. John Gerretsen: What was that number again?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Apparently, his front bench doesn't get the number, so I'll repeat it one more time for Mr. Gerretsen: 613-736-9573. Mr. McGuinty will be

happy to hear your opposition to the harmonized sales tax.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The parliamentary assistant to the Premier.

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm very pleased to be able to stand up and represent the Premier today in response to this. I have to say to the member and everybody on the other side that Ontario has been a very, very lucky jurisdiction in where we sit geographically. We're blessed with natural resources. We're blessed with sitting beside the largest trading partner in the world. We basically very easily took advantage of all that and developed a wonderful economy in this province that we're all very, very proud of.

But, you know, the world has changed, and to adapt to that change, Premier McGuinty has said, "I'd better do something bold and innovative that will rejuvenate this economy again as it rebounds." You know something? It might not be the most popular thing, but that's what leadership is about. Leadership is to ask: What is the best for the citizens of this province?

The best thing we can do is to harmonize the two sales taxes that are out there that basically cascade with each other, that cost our manufacturers and other producers—put them in a very inefficient system, cascading those taxes, making our products very expensive on the world's trading stage. That is the right thing to do: to fundamentally retool our whole taxation system.

To offset that, we have brought in \$15 billion of tax cuts. Basically, what we're doing is realigning how we tax our population to provide the services that government needs to do for its citizenry. So what we're doing is basically increasing the consumption tax and lowering the income tax. I would think my Conservative colleagues would be very happy that we are giving citizens more freedom to spend the money that they're going to keep from their paycheques. When they consume something, they are going to pay a tax on it, but they are going to be retaining more of their tax money and can make decisions about whether they purchase something or maybe invest into something or just save their money where they wouldn't be taxed. So they're going to get more freedom in how to do that.

I'd like to read a couple of quotes here about this. They're actually quite learned quotes. One says, "Now, I know that some business leaders support the harmonized sales tax, and to be clear, I believe that there's little sense in allowing two separate governments to apply two separate sets of taxes and policies and collect two separate groups of sales tax." That's one quote; that was from April of this year.

From the same person, another quote: "You know, well, we understand that ... you can relieve some of the taxes on businesses, right? In the manufacturing sector," for instance, "the problem with the PST is it cascades, so every step along the way there's tax on tax on tax, which raises the cost of goods and particularly punishes exporters. So we understand how" a harmonized sales tax "can help the economy." That was Tim Hudak. That was Tim Hudak from March of this very year.

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I have quotes here from this year from Frank Klees during the leadership debate and Bob Runciman, who was the interim leader.

So it would seem to me that the senior members of this particular opposition party were all in agreement for this to happen until, of course, it was our government that decided they were right; it was the right thing to do, and we had the gumption to go ahead and do it. It may not be the most popular thing to do, but it's the right thing to do, and it will eventually turn around the Ontario economy.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

The member for Haldimand-Norfolk, you have up to five minutes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do thank the Legislature for this opportunity to elicit a response from the McGuinty government as to whether they were paying the Haldimand hydro billings for this house in Caledonia that was overrun three and a half years ago and remains occupied by militant activists. With the Premier and the aboriginal affairs minister refusing to answer whether the government was actually paying the utilities at this occupied house, I found I had to fill in the blanks and indicate that they are footing the electricity bill, from the information that I have. But I would like that confirmed. I did see the minister following the lead of his leader with respect to a duck-the-question strategy, and the minister, too, attempted to sidetrack the question by suggesting—or he started to suggest—he couldn't answer, as he felt I was “getting very close to an ongoing lawsuit.” Well, that went over like a lead balloon in the Legislature, and the Speaker, at the time, had to stop the clock on two separate occasions as pandemonium broke out in the Legislature.

After the minister made another stab at ultimately failing to address the question—it's all in Hansard—I therefore filed this request for a late show.

As we know, on February 28, 2006, the subdivision in Caledonia—it's known as Douglas Creek Estates or Dalton Creek Estates—was forcefully occupied, and since that time it has served as a base, a jumping-off point, for three and a half years of lawlessness, intimidation, harassment, trespassing and, as I mentioned this morning, attempted murder.

Three and a half years ago the McGuinty government purchased the property, and during those three and a half years, someone—I would like to find out—has been providing water and electricity to this occupied house.

I do reflect on the latter phrase in the Speaker's prayer, something we're lacking in Caledonia: “Inspire us to decisions which establish and maintain a land of

prosperity and righteousness, where freedom prevails and where justice rules.”

People living and doing business in that area do not feel that is the case. They have been subjected to arson, extortion, barricades, land seizures, occupations, militant protests and related harassment and intimidation and, as I mentioned, mob violence and threats to public safety. This has to end. This must not be encouraged by a government providing free electricity, free water, and perhaps free cable or natural gas or garbage pickup.

The result of this occupation is that the community safety and social and economic life in the area have declined. There is a climate of fear—I am there very, very regularly—chaos and uncertainty generated by this intimidation and these documented acts of lawlessness.

I mentioned that the site is under the flag of the Mohawk Warriors. We know from an OPP officer that that is an organization that is described as a “lawless group, usually armed, with a reputation akin to the Hells Angels.” We know that on April 20, 2006, the OPP were driven from this site during a pitched battle that involved hockey sticks, axes, sledgehammers, baseball bats, two-by-fours and bags with rocks.

My concern, Mr. Speaker: By continuing to pay the water and electricity bills—I certainly asked this morning—what is this government doing? What is the Premier doing? Perhaps the minister will answer this question specifically now, during this late show: Minister, what are you doing—that's the first question I've asked you directly, because people have felt the answers are not there—about the perception out there that your government is supporting and condoning activities of militant lawbreakers? More specifically, when will you stop sticking taxpayers with these utility bills coming from that house located on Douglas Creek Estates, a house occupied by militants?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by congratulating you and your wife on your anniversary. I know there's no place you'd rather be, but hopefully you'll be able to make it out there tonight and see her; if not, soon.

The member knows, and I responded to the question today in question period, that the Ontario Realty Corp. is responsible for managing and maintaining the lands that we're talking about, including the payment of utility bills, on behalf of the owner, which is the government of Ontario, until a go-forward strategy is determined. As owners of the Douglas Creek Estates, we continue to incur costs to maintain the site until the future use of the property is determined in a manner that's agreeable to all parties. But I've got to say that it has been a long time since I've seen something as disgraceful in this place as a member of the party opposite—and it shouldn't surprise me, but it does—comparing aboriginals to Hells Angels. That is totally, totally irresponsible. It's something that I think is beneath the member and beneath his party.

When it comes to First Nations issues, when you look at the track record of six years and beyond, we were at

the lowest level when it came to a relationship with our aboriginal people here in this province, the lowest level of any province in the entire country. We were seen at the very, very bottom. Today, six years later, we are the leaders in this country when it comes to the provinces and the territories, and we're seen right across this nation as a province that's taking leadership on these very, very important issues. That stands in stark contrast to the approach taken by those guys over there. And it's working because we're working in partnership. We're going to partner with First Nations communities, with Six Nations in his area, with local municipalities in those areas and with the business community to promote the opportunities that are available for aboriginal people in this province. Again, that stands in contrast to the shameful approach taken in the past.

That being said, I have a few questions for the member opposite. His community is going through a tough time right now, both economically and socially. There are tensions in that community that are still in place from the events of a number of years ago. We recognize that, but does he not think that locally elected leaders, such as himself, have a responsibility to work with everybody involved to try to bring people together, to try to heal those wounds? Does he not think he has a responsibility to do that? I know that his neighbour Dave Levac, the MPP for Brant, does. I know he's working tirelessly, bringing parties together, bringing businesses into the community, trying to create partnerships with Six Nations, economic development opportunities, working with local municipalities—Brant, the county of Haldimand—working with the city of Brantford, doing all he can to try to create those partnerships, and he's doing a darn good job of it. And what has this member done? Nothing.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've never heard him at any time, in the year that I've been Minister of Aboriginal Affairs,

make one single, solitary effort or utter a word that contributes to bringing people together. I think that's absolutely irresponsible. I ask him to look at the communities in his area; look at the local municipal leaders. They're pulling together. They're creating partnerships with Six Nations. They're moving ahead. I haven't heard one note, I haven't heard one word of encouragement from him at all as they work together to try to heal those wounds, to try to move forward together. Instead, I get questions in the House that I can't help but say are questions that are devised to try to exploit those divisions rather than to try to bring people together. That's not leadership. That's being irresponsible.

Thirdly, I ask him this question: When has he gone to the federal government? All we're talking about here is a 200-year-old federal land claim. When has he stood up to the federal government? He has a federal partner in his riding, Diane Finley, who's a Conservative member of Parliament. What has he done to encourage them to get these talks going?

We're calling for mediators. We're doing everything within our power to try to encourage the federal government to take these negotiations more seriously and make progress. We're trying to work with the local leaders, the local partners in the area and Six Nations to make that happen. He has done nothing to get progress there.

It's not too late. We're willing to accept your help in doing this. We need your support; so does your community. You've been missing in action up until now, but there's still time. We still need all local leaders to pull together and join together with us in creating partnerships.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 of the clock Thursday morning, November 19.

The House adjourned at 1831.

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Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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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
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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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