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**Journal
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Thursday 3 December 2009

Jeudi 3 décembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 December 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 décembre 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS TRADING), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT (ÉCHANGE DE DROITS D'ÉMISSION DE GAZ À EFFET DE SERRE)

Mr. Gerretsen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 185, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act with respect to greenhouse gas emissions trading and other economic and financial instruments and market-based approaches / *Projet de loi 185, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'échange de droits d'émission de gaz à effet de serre ainsi que d'autres instruments économiques et financiers et approches axées sur le marché.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Before beginning a few comments on this bill, let me just thank all of the members who have been involved on the various committees that have been working on this for their positive input, because this is a very important bill as we move forward in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

Bill 185 is a critical piece of legislation that, if passed, would allow us to create a fair and broad cap-and-trade system for Ontario that could link to other emerging North American systems. It would help us reach the ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets in our climate action plan that was produced some three or four years ago. That is 6% below the 1990 levels by 2014, and a 15% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. It would help establish Ontario as a competitive player in the lower-carbon world that is bound to come.

Ontario is demonstrating leadership by taking concrete action now to combat climate change: by phasing out coal, as we're doing by 2014; making landmark investments in green energy through the Green Energy and

Green Economy Act; transit—over \$10 billion of investment over the next number of years; and working with other forward-thinking jurisdictions to develop a cap-and-trade system.

Just yesterday, I tabled our government's climate change action plan 2008-09 annual report, which shows the significant progress Ontario is making in cutting our greenhouse gas emissions. I should thank some of the environmental groups that came out in favour of the plan that was filed yesterday.

As part of our memorandum of understanding signed in 2008, Ontario and Quebec are working on the design and implementation of a system in conjunction with the Western Climate Initiative. We need to implement this system that would ensure broad access to trading, establish a level playing field for industry and help protect us from the risks of potential border measures on Ontario exports, particularly into the United States.

Just this week, we put in place a greenhouse gas reporting regulation, a vital step toward the implementation of a cap-and-trade system. All companies that are emitting more than 25 megatons per year have to start reporting in 2010. The reporting requirements are compatible with the new US reporting rules. While the federal government has indicated that it would align with the US and is waiting for US legislation, we are actively engaging our US counterparts—states such as California—to inform the development of a consistent approach.

An effective cap-and-trade system must exist within a harmonized and broader North American context. We have been consulting broadly over the last year to ensure that we have a cap-and-trade system that can link with the other emerging systems. I would like to take a moment once again to thank everyone who responded for their contributions, including all honourable colleagues on both sides of the House, particularly those who have been involved with the committee work.

We consistently heard that auction revenues from cap and trade should be used to support greenhouse gas reductions in sectors covered under the system. We are looking at providing support to capped sectors through a greenhouse gas reduction account to be set up by using revenues generated through a cap-and-trade system from the auctioning of credits. This would build a stronger and greener economy through support for transformative technology. The resulting innovations would mean reduced greenhouse gas emissions and the creation of new jobs, and would help boost our global competitiveness.

If the bill is passed, it would also provide the flexibility to identify additional greenhouse gases. This would

mean that we would adapt to evolving signs and new cap-and-trade developments that may occur in the US and around the world over time. Given the current lack of progress on the federal front, it is more important than ever that we continue to move forward with purpose and concrete action to reduce our greenhouse gases in Ontario.

We are serious about fighting climate change while building a strong, greener economy for this province. We are serious about showing real leadership to deliver Ontario's progressive reduction targets. Our government is confident that a fair and equitable cap-and-trade system would help us achieve our goal of sustainable prosperity for generations to come. This is legislation I'm very proud of, and I think the government and all of us can be proud of it. I urge all members to offer their full support.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I stand to address this government made-for-TV—and not much more—answer to climate change. While the calendar has changed and the committee deliberations have concluded, not much has changed with Bill 185.

Before I get into the problems with this bill, I want to make it clear that I support, and our caucus supports, protecting our environment. As someone with an agricultural background, I know very well the relationship we have with our land and how much we depend on it for our survival. As someone with grandchildren, I want to ensure that we are protecting the environment for them and their grandchildren.

That is why I think it's a sad day today that we can only get 15 minutes per party to talk about this important issue. I think it's a shame that the government is so busy trying to rush things through this Legislature that they can't wait to make sure they have the bills right. In fact, because they introduced a time allocation motion earlier this week, we had a day of debate on whether we would be able to debate this bill, instead of spending that day debating this bill. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you will agree that talking about whether you are allowed to continue the debate is not the best way to spend your time.

I'm sure you are aware that as we are considering this proposal of cap and trade, Denmark will be hosting leaders from across the world to discuss the global approach. Indeed, Denmark's Prime Minister raised the stakes for next month's United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen by inviting 191 world leaders, including President Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper, to attend. Will Minister Gerretsen and the Premier be attending to put forward Ontario's plan to solve this international problem?

0910

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you, Minister.

The decision to invite the leaders from across the globe comes at a time when the summit's original goal of forging a broad global agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions appears to be in jeopardy, officials say.

"Your personal attendance is a pivotal contribution to a successful outcome," Danish Prime Minister Lars Rasmussen, who is hosting the December 7 to 18 summit, said in a letter to the heads of state.

Negotiations prior to the summit have been deadlocked over several issues, such as how much rich countries should pay poor ones to help them adapt their economies to pollute less. Negotiators have been working to draft an agreement to replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol which expires in 2012.

Whatever the outcome, we need to remember that while we need to do our part provincially, what really is needed is global answers to a global problem. And as I said, we only have a short time today to discuss this bill and what this province proposes to do about emissions in Ontario through cap and trade.

Here is how a cap-and-trade program works; in this case, we'll use the power plant example. First, the amount of allowable carbon emissions for power plants above a certain size threshold is decided based on emissions in previous years—that's the cap.

The government—nationally, provincially or regionally—issues allowances, each of which would cover one metric tonne of emissions of a particular pollutant, in this case carbon. Plants would measure and report their emissions annually, then surrender enough allowances to cover those emissions.

Cap and trade contrasts traditional command-and-control systems, involves specific rules and regulations on the amount of pollutants a plant could emit, and could be as specific as the amount per hour.

Companies would get those allowances based on a specific formula for the pollutant and comply with the regulations in a number of ways. They could reduce emissions by installing technology, cut the utilization of a unit or burn a cleaner fuel. Regardless, the companies have to have allowances to cover their emissions. If they are still needed, they can turn to the marketplace and buy allowances from someone else. That is the trade.

In basic terms, the underlying economic theory in cap and trade is to make it more expensive to emit pollutants. Here in Ontario, Hugh MacLeod, climate change secretariat, gave a brief synopsis to the committee on this province's approach—an approach that is furthered by Bill 185.

"In 2007, the government introduced Ontario's climate change action plan as the framework for action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The action plan established the following global greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets: 6% below 1990 levels by 2014—the 1990 baseline is in keeping with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; 15% below 1990 levels by 2020; and 80% below the 1990 levels by 2050. These GHG reduction targets signal Ontario's strong commitment to taking real, measurable action to reduce greenhouse emissions."

I will tell you that south of the border, where similar cap-and-trade plans and debate are occurring, there are issues that this government seems to be ignoring. Both US industry and consumers are rightly concerned, cost

being the main factor, about what it will do to the already struggling overall economy.

A US Treasury document indicates that not only could cap and trade cost \$300 billion annually, but domestic policies to address climate change and the related issues of energy security and affordability will involve significant cost and potential revenues, possibly up to several percentage points of the annual GDP—\$300 billion and several percentage points of the annual GDP. While the government may tell you otherwise, the cap and trade certainly comes at a significant cost.

As for the American consumer, “The US Treasury Department admits that a ‘cap-and-trade’ system for regulating greenhouse gas emissions could cost every household \$1,761 a year, the equivalent of hiking personal income taxes by about 15.%.” I just point out that’s also approximately the same average it will cost the average Ontario family for the HST.

In West Virginia, Governor Joe Manchin is worried about the hit his coal-rich state will take if the price of allowances gets too high. “A \$20 to \$30 cost of allowance could double the price of coal per ton, putting coal-fired plants at a competitive disadvantage,” he said.

A much lower amount for CO₂ emissions, such as \$5 or \$6 per ton, would mitigate the hit to consumers and the overall economy. “If the rest of the world doesn’t follow suit, their energy is going to be much cheaper, especially the coal-fired units that are in China and India and all these developing nations.” Higher energy costs locally, cheaper manufacturing costs to an already taxed sector in a downturn: Governor Manchin is concerned that “we’re going to lose more jobs,” and I think we should be concerned about that in Ontario. Further, in Manchin’s West Virginia there are concerns that increases in energy costs under cap and trade will impact expenditures throughout the state.

We should all be concerned in the way we approach this. Many are saying, “Just what will the economic impact be to Ontario?” We continue to ask, and we continue to receive no answers. During the committee meetings, Mr. Barrett attempted to introduce amendments to ensure that the plan is costed before moving forward, and again we were denied. This government never seems to want to talk about cost. That’s how we wind up with a \$24.7-billion deficit. My question again is: What are the costs; what is the impact of this on Ontario?

In the meantime, as Ontario, and indeed US, lawmakers work on the details of cap-and-trade carbon dioxide legislation, they need to know what Europeans already know: When trying to slow down global warming, beware of unintended consequences.

Consider the example of Kollo Holding’s factory in the Netherlands. A silicone carbide maker, they used the waste gases to generate energy and installed the latest pollution control equipment. But Europe’s emission program has driven electricity prices so high that the facility routinely shuts down for part of the day to save money on power. The plant has laid off 40 of its 130 employees and trimmed production. Two customers have turned to cheaper imports from China.

They aren’t the only ones suffering. French cement workers fear they are going to lose their jobs to Monaco. German homeowners pay 25% more for electricity than they did before the caps. In the meantime, because of lobbying by well-connected companies, the EU’s limits on emissions ended up being higher than the actual emissions. As a result, fewer companies than expected had to buy emissions credits and the price of carbon allowances, which had topped \$30 per tonne of carbon in 2006, crashed to about \$1 per tonne in 2007.

Germany boasts that it has cut emissions to 18.4% below 1990 levels, but nearly half that reduction was because of sagging industrial output. I hear similar boasting of emissions reductions in Ontario, and I fear there are few on the other side of the House who understand that most of that reduction reflects reductions in jobs and industry itself. It’s easy to cut your emissions when you are losing your manufacturing sector to a failing economy.

In a report entitled *The Expensive Failure of the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme*, the TaxPayers’ Alliance spells out a foreboding story of what could go wrong if we tread the wrong path. The report indicates that the European Union emissions trading scheme, introduced in January 2005 as the centrepiece of the European Union policy response to the threat of climate change, is the largest cap-and-trade scheme in the world, covering over 11,500 installations across all the member states and Norway. Again, as in North American cap-and-trade schemes, the theory behind the scheme is simple: A limit is placed on the amount of carbon dioxide that can be emitted in total, and firms are then allowed to trade the right to emit, which produces an effective price on emissions. It should mean that reductions take place where it is most affordable to do so.

However, as the Europeans have learned, things have been far more complex in practice. There have been disputes, some reaching the European court of justice, over the national application plans drawn up by the different countries, which have to set out the right level of emissions for the thousands of installations covered by the scheme.

The emissions price has been so volatile that energy companies and environmentalists have called for intervention to put in place a minimum price. There has been concern that energy companies have reaped billions in windfall profits. Most importantly, the scheme appears to have imposed a substantial bill on consumers and manufacturing industries. The emissions price has rapidly fallen by a third or more a number of times since the ETS was put in place in 2005.

0920

“In 2005, the price fell from €29 per tonne on 11 July to €18 per tonne on 22 July.” It eventually declined effectively to zero for much of phase 1, falling below €1 per tonne in February 2007 and then continuing to decline. “This complete collapse in the price has been attributed to many of the participating countries allocating an excessive number of allowances...” This price tracking is courtesy of Matthew Sinclair of the British TaxPayers’ Alliance.

“This substantial volatility in the emissions price has important consequences:

“It makes it harder for firms and families to effectively manage their affairs as it makes their costs less predictable” and expensive.

It also “weakens the incentive produced by the carbon price to make investments that reduce emissions ... ‘Wild fluctuations create a risk that deters some investors altogether and makes others demand a significant risk premium, putting up the price of capital.’”

But “fixing the price would call into question the entire point of the trading scheme.”

While volatility in the price has so far taken the form of collapses, they say there is no reason to think that similar volatility cannot take the form of a sharp increase in the price.

Meanwhile, another problem that has emerged is that, as seen in the European example, “energy companies make windfall profits” under the emission trading schemes while the little people suffer. The bottom line is, as the TaxPayers’ Alliance tells us: “It is increasingly clear that the ETS just isn’t working. The carbon price is so volatile that energy companies and environmentalists are calling for it to be fixed while ordinary families and manufacturing firms have to cope with the unpredictable addition to their energy bills. Windfall profits for energy companies are paid for by the poor and the elderly. We estimate that the total bill to consumers across Europe has been between €46 billion and €16 billion” since this scheme started, “with British families paying more than £117 in 2008. As the permits are increasingly auctioned, that will just mean that the scheme is another tax, and a regressive one, supporting excess public spending.”

The report goes on to conclude that “policy in this area is clearly a long way from serving the interests of ordinary families, who are paying a high price for such a flawed attempt to cut emissions. Their money is even spent on legal fights in the European court of justice to tighten the scheme and increase their electricity bills further.”

While we consider this government’s completely inadequate and costly remedy for an international problem, it’s important that we consider the actions of the international community. We have mentioned the upcoming Copenhagen meeting, the US concerns and the European experience. What of the so-called BRIC group of countries—Brazil, Russia, India and China? Well, the BRIC is expected to overtake the rich countries in primary energy consumption by 2030. Given the fact that particularly the latter three are already some of the greatest utilizers of fossil fuels, with little in the way of emission reduction technology, our provincial attempts will unfortunately have little impact other than to force our industries to move out of Ontario to somewhere else with fewer environmental controls.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: What we have before us today is a tag-along bill, a weaker, paler version of initiatives that have been taken in other countries. I know that the

Minister of the Environment, when he introduced this bill, talked about Ontario leading the way. Well, for a jurisdiction that’s leading the way, it has been made very clear that we aren’t going to have anything solid in place until we see what everyone else is doing, and then we may or may not throw in our own two cents.

This is a bill that has no reduction targets. It doesn’t show what the percentage reduction in emissions from industrial emitters will be. It does not have a target for total megatons of reduction in greenhouse gases. It is a free-floating empty vessel, and frankly, we need an awful lot more than that.

When I talked about this the other day in the Legislature, the minister seemed to take some umbrage with the idea that he didn’t have targets. Well, frankly, yesterday in a little-noticed, little-heralded report on greenhouse gas emissions—this government’s climate change policy—if you turn in that document to the page that talks about cap and trade, there is no target for achievements in reduction from this particular policy initiative.

That report, by the way, was released in the morning. The Premier didn’t talk about it in his scrum. There was no question planted in the House by a backbencher to ask the minister what exactly had been achieved, what wonders had been brought forth on this earth by the Liberal government. There was no ministerial statement heralding the groundbreaking, epic-making steps that this government had taken. What we had, really, was a document that was released in as quiet a manner as possible. I guess the reality is they could have released it on Christmas Eve and buried it even more deeply.

This report is an orphan, and frankly it is no surprise that the report is an orphan. If you read it, the government is saying very plainly that the policies it has in place today will not allow it to achieve the targets that it has proclaimed it will be taking on to deal with climate change. An announcement that you’re not meeting your targets, that you don’t have the pieces in place to meet your targets, is of consequence.

The bill before us, the cap-and-trade bill, has very significant loopholes in it that are of consequence to this province, to this country and to the people of this world. One of the items in it is a provision for offsets, a way for polluters to buy permission slips so that they can continue polluting. Substantially, significantly, both the Pembina Institute and the David Suzuki Foundation, when speaking about this legislation, when writing about this legislation, said that there should not be offsets and if they did exist that they had to be an extraordinarily minor part of the operation. That is not in this legislation. Offsets are given free rein.

Frankly, if this government’s intention is to follow the Waxman-Markey bill in the United States, the American cap-and-trade legislation, then the reality of analysis there is that the emissions, the pollution, from fossil fuel burners in that country will continue unabated at current rates till 2020; that in fact that bill will have very little impact on actual emissions from that country, and permission slips will be handed out at a tremendous rate.

This bill does not block the issuance of free credits to companies, and the reality we've seen in other jurisdictions is that issuance of those free credits has led to some companies securing windfall profits at the expense of the environment and at the expense of the economy. That was not set aside in this legislation. This legislation did not embrace a regime in which all credits had to be auctioned, a substantial weakness and failing in this bill.

One of the points I raised in the course of the clause-by-clause was prohibiting Ontario Power Generation from selling the credits that it might realize by reducing its coal operations. I wanted that to be touched on because that, as a centrepiece of this government's actions, may well be—and it's not clear yet that it is—used to sell credits to other jurisdictions so that their coal plants can continue to go full out while we here in Ontario deal with a government that will say it has acted in the greatest of virtue and shut down or reduced its coal emissions, while at the same time making sure that other jurisdictions can proceed undaunted, having gotten permission slips from the principal here in Ontario.

What we have before us is a package into which the government may pour just about any regulation that it likes; a package that does not have a target for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, does not have requirements that it will actually reduce the consumption of fossil fuels; a package that does not deal with the necessity of funding the transformation of our economy by making sure that workers whose jobs may change or may go get the sorts of support for just transition into other employment. This is a package that does not provide for funding for those people whose livelihoods have been disrupted or, in some cases, changed radically by the impact of climate change itself. And that is of consequence.

I ask this government to come forward with a package that will actually make the difference that is needed in this country, in this province. We may well vote for this legislation, but I can't say we do it with any enthusiasm whatsoever.

0930

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to join in third reading debate on Bill 185, the proposed Environmental Protection Amendment Act (Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading). I'm proud to stand in support of this bill, which builds on the concrete action the McGuinty government is taking to reduce greenhouse gases and combat climate change.

During the many years I was the medical officer of health for York region, I became really alarmed about the health problems, particularly the increased incidence of childhood asthma and premature deaths, resulting from air pollution that had been so well documented in our province by the Ontario Medical Association.

Globally, we have seen the rise of certain infectious diseases, and our current scientists and health professionals believe it's directly linked to our changing environment. We must move quickly if we are going to reverse

the already noticeable and potentially catastrophic effects of global warming. Too many incidents of extreme weather, the ongoing destruction of ecosystems and the retreat of glaciers have served as clear warnings of the frightening consequences of maintaining the status quo. As a parent, I'm deeply concerned about the kind of world my children and their children will inherit.

I'm encouraged by the leadership Ontario has shown in tackling this problem. Over the last several years, our province has worked hard to become a leader in conservation and in renewable energy conservation. We are starting to reap the rewards of those initiatives through cleaner air and water and through the emergence of a green economy.

We have been tackling climate change on many fronts for a number of years. Our government's 2007 climate change action plan set out progressive and ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions: 6% below 1990 levels by 2014 and 15% below by 2020. Yet there is much more work to do to translate these goals into action. The clock is ticking. Every level and every sector of our society must be involved in addressing the root causes of climate change. We, as legislators, have a responsibility to preserve this planet and its abundance for future generations. As Minister Gerretsen has stated, Bill 185, which enables a cap-and-trade system to be developed, is the next important step in our efforts to address climate change and to help us reach our reduction targets.

We believe that Ontario's cap-and-trade system needs to be fair to industry and harmonized across a wide geographic area to create a level playing field. Ontario has been working diligently to do just that as part of the Western Climate Initiative, a partnership between our province, Quebec, Manitoba, BC and seven US states, who are all working towards a greener environment.

Cap and trade would drive new investments in those vital green technologies of tomorrow. It would create new products and processes along with new opportunities in the financial markets to support carbon trading, and it would help create new jobs for Ontarians in a number of different sectors. Cap and trade will be a reality in North America in the not-too-distant future. The momentum is growing here and in the US; it is already a reality in the European Union and has been since 2005. We can learn from the experience there to build our system here. A cap-and-trade system is in the works for Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Cap and trade works.

Since 1990, Ontario has also had its own cap-and-trade system in place for acid-rain-causing nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide. Although cap and trade is a mature idea, its practical application to greenhouse gases is a phenomenon that is only now coming of age. It's clear that the places that are striving to build a new sustainable green economy will be the places that succeed in attracting investment and creating prosperity. Transforming to a more sustainable framework for our world economy will benefit our environment, reduce pollution and foster the new technologies and green processes that will give rise to the green jobs of tomorrow.

Ontarians and Canadians are looking to governments to take action on climate change. They understand the seriousness of this challenge. They know we have a responsibility to take action and they support that action. People across our province are going green. They are demanding products and seeking information that will help them reduce their own carbon footprints.

Bill 185 is about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, it's about reducing pollution, it's about ensuring a stable, successful green economy and it's about doing our part. We all want to ensure that future generations have a high quality of life and a secure, prosperous way of life.

For all these reasons, I urge all my colleagues in this House to join me in supporting Bill 185.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a privilege to stand, following on the heels of our member from Toronto–Danforth, a former executive director of Greenpeace who surely has more credentials in the environmental field than anyone in this House, and to hear him speak about the inadequacies of this bill.

What we're in fact, though, speaking about in this House, for those listening and watching at home, is a closure motion, a time allocation motion—yet another time allocation and closure motion—to shut down debate on this bill. So that in itself is egregious. That in itself is something that would prompt New Democrats to stand on their hind legs and howl and say no, and we will.

But to talk about the bill itself, we have to keep it in context. This is a government that has been promising to shut down the coal-firing plants since they were elected in 2003, and every time we turn around, the date is pushed off into the future yet again. If this were a government that's serious about doing something about the environment—and I couldn't agree more with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham in terms of what we all want. The question is, how are we going to get there? This is a government that is not taking the baby step—and it's a baby step, but a dramatic baby step—of cutting down and in fact closing the coal-firing plants. If they don't do that, everything else is for naught, and they're not doing that.

Again, the member from Toronto–Danforth referred to the inadequacies of this bill. It calls itself a cap-and-trade bill, but it's not. I call it a shuffle-and-sham bill, a typical Liberal bill that calls itself one thing and in extreme Orwellian terms does something very, very different.

So does it cap? No, it doesn't really. He mentioned the reality of being able to buy your way out of the situation: being able to pay to pollute. Cap and trade does not mean pay to pollute. If you have offsets, you have a system where you can, and are able to, pay to pollute, and people will. Pembina and Suzuki and everyone else have commented about that aspect, and they've commented, of course, about the inadequacies of this.

My friend, again, from Toronto–Danforth commented on the quietly released environmental report by this government, a release to no fanfare; why? Because essential-

ly it said they're not on target to meet their targets. That's what it said. Needless to say, the public didn't hear about that. Needless to say, we didn't get a chance to debate that in this House, and won't, or to raise it too often because, again, we're dealing with time allocation and a way of shutting down this Legislature.

I think of another classic Orwellian move where the environment is concerned, and that's their MoveOntario 2020 plan. This is great. Talk to anybody in the city and they'll say it's great: Move 2020. Only elect them over and over again, at least three times, and then maybe we'll see the fruition of that plan. Certainly, for all of the fanfare of that plan, the song and dance and the spin, the money isn't there. "Where's the money?" say the TTC, who are always scrambling and are always running in deficit, it seems, these days.

Where is this government on public transit? Well, the simple reality is that they're nowhere. The simple reality is that they're nowhere on public transit. They say they are, but they're not, in the same way that this bill says it does something, and doesn't. There are no reduction targets. Simply put, that's again a serious problem. If you don't have reduction targets, then what is the point? Again, shuffle and sham. Shuffle and sham, not cap and trade.

0940

Listening to my friend from Toronto–Danforth, I'm moved on behalf of the constituents in my riding and across this province to really bemoan the lack of action. But, hey, spin away: have photo ops, cut ribbons, announce plans that won't have fruition for another 15 years, and hope that people buy it, when in fact people don't. People really do see beyond this, and if they don't see beyond it right now, they certainly see beyond it when—if they're in the environmental movement—the cheque never does arrive, the cap never does get imposed, the offsets keep getting bought and nothing changes.

Again, I point to their own environmental report. Nothing is changing. Nanticoke still fires away. Children still are getting asthma at record rates. Gradually and, unfortunately, more and more quickly, our whole planet is moving in a dangerous direction, and certainly this province is, and yet this government is satisfied with something that sounds good, that has no substance. That truly is sad. The question might be for somebody watching this: Between Liberals and Tories, what would you prefer—a government that says they'll do little and then does little, or a government that says they'll do a lot and then does little?

The Conservatives traditionally and federally, as we see with great horror, say they'll do little and, quite frankly, deliver little on the environment. The Liberals say they're going to do a lot and then deliver little on the environment. What would you prefer as an environmentalist? I say that both are unacceptable. It's unacceptable to do little and say you will do little; it's equally unacceptable to say you're going to do a great deal and then do little, make a lot of noise and then deliver very, very, very little. That's what the shuffle-and-sham bill called

cap and trade actually does. It'll be interesting to see if, after two full terms of administration here, the original promise to close the coal-fired plants is even one inch closer to fruition. That will be interesting to see. That's hard data. That's a real action, and that is not happening and, again, shows no signs of happening.

It will be interesting to see if any significant amount of money—and one wonders where it would come from, with a \$25-billion deficit—goes towards transit. Our transit system is the least well capitalized per capita system of just about anywhere in the developed world. That's not really the responsibility of the city of Toronto, quite frankly: that's the responsibility of the provincial and federal governments. We need a national transit plan; we don't have one. We need a provincial plan; we don't have one—but we do have announcements. We have announcements but, hey, not a lot of money. Meanwhile, we are running diesel trains through my neighbourhood at the rate, they say, of about 400 a day. That's actually in the works. That's actually going ahead.

If this government wonders why people in ridings really don't buy them as green, those are the reasons. And this bill does nothing to change that. What people see who look is that nothing is changing. If they listen, they hear that something might, and that's the best we get.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: It is strange to hear the words we've heard from the third party this morning. I'd like to start off by just looking at what Canada signed as the Kyoto agreement some years ago. We're going to be following those requirements in Ontario to meet the Kyoto objectives. That's what Minister Gerretsen spoke about this morning.

We're doing many things in Ontario. We're going to reach those Kyoto targets, even though the federal government has not looked at it. We have the third party in British Columbia, which voted against all the environmental leadership that the Liberal government in British Columbia was doing. They're doing the same thing here, instead of joining us on good legislation from the very beginning. We're going to be 6% below the 1990 Kyoto levels of emissions by 2014, 15% by 2020; and we're on target to do that. Closing of coal is going to happen, and that's all the people in Ontario are going to be paying for—closing of coal—but of course it's happening now. I think 35% of our objective is met. These are important initiatives that Ontario is taking.

I haven't spoken to the Green Energy Act, which I was involved with, with Minister Smitherman—the Green Energy Act, which was so well supported across this province and has led to our plan for the future: renewable energy generation, the feed-in tariffs, the grid access, the streamlined approvals in order to get the renewables up and running so that we can close our coal-fired plants.

Energy efficiency and conservation: I was proud to represent this province on behalf of Minister Smitherman in Halifax a year ago. We were showing that conserv-

ation, the way we're doing it and the plans we have, will eliminate the need to increase our generation over the next 20 years. Six thousand megawatts is the growth in our needs over the next 20 years and that's going to be met by conservation and renewables. We're doing that. That's what the Green Energy Act was about.

We're going to support a lot of communities that will be able to bring in renewables: the aboriginal communities and the remote communities.

So there are all those initiatives that have been taken by this government, and it hasn't been short-term; it has been planned. We set the objectives, we got our plan in place, we got the Green Energy Act in place and now we're over to cap and trade. Of course, you can criticize cap and trade, but we're doing that with our neighbours in the US, with Manitoba and with Quebec. We've signed a memorandum of understanding with Quebec which is going to cover at least half of Canada and more if you put our two populations together.

These are all initiatives that are very important. Ontario is showing the leadership. We're getting recognized that way and I think it's really important to congratulate Minister Gerretsen for bringing forward this cap-and-trade bill which is the next stage of Ontario leading North America in green energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? I believe we've used—did the NDP have any more time? No. There's just one more minute left for the government side.

Seeing no further debate, pursuant to the order of the House dated December 1, 2009, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Gerretsen has moved third reading of Bill 185, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act with respect to greenhouse gas emissions trading and other economic and financial instruments and market-based approaches.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day? The Honourable Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Michael Chan: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): This House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 0948 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to introduce my constituent Una Murray, and her sister, I believe, Marjory Parkin. They're here to celebrate with her granddaughter, Paisley, who is a page. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park the family of page Iman Kassam, from Mississauga South, who led today's procession. She's joined today by her father, Ayaz Kassam, her uncle, Shiraz Jaffer, her aunt, Judy Jaffer, her grandmother, Nazlin Fazal, her other grandmother, Gulshan Habib, and her mother, Tazmin Kassam. I don't think they've arrived just yet but they will be here soon. I'm talking more to delay, in hopes that they will be here, to acknowledge them. But to all, on Hansard, welcome to the House.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I welcome Blake Batson, who is a resident of Ottawa, to the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Niagara Falls and page Alana Fansolato, we'd like to welcome her godmother, Ingrid Balinski, and her godmother's friend Cathy Stevulak to the gallery today. Welcome.

Also, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome, up in the Speaker's gallery today, my brother Joe. Joe Peters, welcome. Maybe you should grow a moustache so we can trade jobs.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to introduce guests from my community who are with us today, Charlotte Craven and Ann Bilodeau. I know members will join me in welcoming them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: In the west members' gallery, Blake Batson, an Ottawa blogger and former council candidate in the City of Ottawa, and a recent deputant at the finance and economic affairs committee, is here. He's opposed to the HST.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Goodbye, Charlie Brown.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Goodbye—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introductions? The member for Brant on a point of order.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Dave Levac: I rise today—but before we do: Don't shave the moustache. I think it's apropos for you.

The member from Northumberland-Quinte West, the unofficial leader of the rump, is celebrating a birthday today. I want to say happy birthday to Lou Rinaldi.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Happy birthday.

There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. On Monday, Ontario's Auditor General will release his report on several agencies and programs, including health agencies, the Education Quality and Accountability Office and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Premier, how many investigations will the auditor say you blocked this time?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question but I can't agree, of course, with the underlying premise.

We commend the auditor for his work. In fact, we've asked him on a number of occasions to get directly involved in taking a look at some things which we think are worthy of closer examination. I think in pretty well every instance we have publicly—in fact I'm sure of this—welcomed his reports, accepted his advice and adopted his recommendations. He's continuing in his good work and we look forward to receiving that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: A pattern has developed where Premier McGuinty treats a report on his waste and scandal like it's a communications exercise.

You'll do anything to hold on to your secrets. When the auditor reported on the \$1 billion wasted at eHealth, you did a controlled leak of bits and pieces of information beforehand and then dumped boxes of Cancer Care information during the auditor's press conference. You're the first Premier to use a scandal to hide from another scandal. Premier, what do you have planned this time around?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that is the opposition's somewhat roundabout way of thanking us for providing so much information to them. They had originally criticized us for not providing an adequate amount of information. We've provided a tremendous amount of information. Now they are saying that they're being inconvenienced by the time at which we introduced the information.

The important point is that we have introduced a tremendous amount of transparency into the work that we do here. We've changed a number of rules to heighten accountability and transparency. There's always more to be done, and we look forward, once again, to receiving the auditor's report, reviewing his advice and, undoubtedly, fully welcoming his recommendations.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Actually, the point of the question was to show that Canada's worst government is also Canada's most secretive government.

Over the past few months we've uncovered how you wasted \$1 billion on eHealth contracts, many of which were not openly tendered. You buried the Deputy Minister of Health's salary in hospital budgets without telling anyone, and now you're pulling the same trick with Sudbury hospital and the McKinsey contract. You protect your secrets while quietly ushering Liberal friends like Deputy Premier George Smitherman and rainmaker Jeff Smith to the back exit. And while Ron Sapsford initially survived the purge at eHealth, he suddenly announced his early retirement. Premier, did he leave because of eHealth, or is there something else coming up in the forthcoming Auditor General's report?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague has adopted an approach which I think is unbecoming. She has picked up a big brush with tar and is less than careful in terms of how she uses that brush.

The auditor has made a number of things clear, including the fact that we have been much quicker at adopting his recommendations compared to previous governments.

If we make mistakes, I like to think that we have the wherewithal to admit to those and to take steps to fix those. The auditor is apparently coming out with more advice and recommendations on Monday. We look forward to receiving those, and in fact we would welcome any advice that he offers to us on an ongoing basis.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also for the Premier. We know that you're desperate to get out of here and lick your wounds. It's been a rough session for you, starting with the summer of scandal, a \$25-billion deficit, one broken job promise after another—

Interjections.

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

I recognize that this has been a long week for many members, but we still have serious business to conduct on behalf of the citizens of Ontario, and part of that is through the forum of question period.

The member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: The list again—and it has been a rough session for you, Premier—the summer of scandal, a record \$25-billion deficit, one broken job promise after another, ramming through a sales tax grab. What's next? Stay tuned.

There's Steve Mahoney and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; hospitals paying bureaucrats' salaries; the McKinsey contract; Cancer Care Ontario; untendered deals for the Maid of the Mist; Casino Niagara; and whatever else Bob Lopinski, Karli Farrow, Jason Grier and your former deputy are up to. And—oh yes—my personal favourite, the Windsor Energy Centre. You built a wall around yourself—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's good to know that my colleagues haven't lost their sense of humour. It's been an interesting week for all of us, but I think particularly interesting for the members of the Conservative Party.

We've had a productive session. I'm proud of the progress that we've made on behalf of Ontarians. I'm especially looking forward to putting into place our package of tax reforms. It includes personal income tax cuts, cost savings for our businesses and, of course, the harmonization of our provincial sales tax with the federal goods and services tax. The package of reforms, in its entirety, is designed to create nearly 600,000 more jobs exactly at a time when we need that kind of progress on behalf of the people of Ontario.

There's still time for the Conservative members to join us in our support for this package of tax reforms.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, there are several questions that you still haven't answered, like who got rich off the \$1 billion of taxpayers' money handed out to eHealth? You know the answer because you did the deals. Instead of telling us what you know, you spin the situation your way by telling Ontarians that you fixed things, that you adopted the auditor's recommendations. Well, while the recommendations help prevent the public from being ripped off in the future, knowing who got rich off eHealth contracts is the first step in recovering what was wasted this time around. Will you give up your dirty little secret and tell us whom you are protecting?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable member to be choosing his words more appropriately.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've always said, having spent a great deal of time in opposition, that the opposition has a valuable role to play, but I think there are even some limits around what we can do in opposition, as there are—appropriately—for us in government.

One of the things I look forward to is to receive a positive proposal from the Conservative Party, especially when it comes to securing a bright future for our families. They are rejecting our package of tax reforms. They're rejecting our personal income tax cuts, something they've called for in the past. They're rejecting our tax cuts for our businesses so that they can grow stronger and hire more Ontarians, something they've also called for in the past. They're rejecting our plan to harmonize the provincial sales tax with the federal goods and services tax, something they've also called for in the past.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We know what they stand against, but on behalf of Ontarians, it would be good to know at some point in time what they stand for.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Good luck on calling for the answer, Speaker.

A Premier should protect the public and not his friends. You used to believe public involvement was important when you said, "Public hearings"; those two words go together nicely if you believe in ... democracy...." You called for 17 public inquiries when you were in opposition, Premier. Now the 2009 Dalton McGuinty blocks a public inquiry into eHealth and does everything he can to avoid public hearings on the HST outside his Queen's Park bubble. What happened to the person who used to talk like he put the public ahead of Liberal insiders and his elite friends?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think Ontarians would like to hear a little bit more about what we've done together here during the course of this recent session.

In addition to working very hard on creating those 600,000 new jobs over the course of the next 10 years through our package of tax reforms, we just passed our cap-and-trade legislation. I'm very proud of the work done by my Minister of the Environment, John Gerret-

sen, in this regard—and Ontarians should know it was passed unanimously. That bill is all about we the people of Ontario, privileged global citizens, assuming our responsibility in the face of a global challenge: climate change.

We've also passed our student achievement legislation, which is all about ensuring that all our school boards everywhere, right across the province of Ontario, have student achievement, student growth and progress at the heart of their responsibilities.

We also won the Pan Am Games—and we're proud to have the support of the Conservatives on this particular package—creating all kinds of infrastructure and amateur sporting opportunities for our kids.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier's unfair tax scheme has touched a nerve in this province. From small business owners to First Nations leaders to the thousands of Ontarians who write to us every single day, people are rejecting this unfair tax. Later today, I'll be joined by Ontarians from across the province who have come to raise their voices about the HST. If the Premier is so sure of the merits of his harmonization scheme, will he join me today and meet with those Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm always grateful for the invitation.

What I want to say is that one of the things I will ask my honourable colleague to convey to the assembled on my behalf is—

Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm sure she'll want to bring greetings from me.

I would like her to remind Ontarians about their personal income tax cut that takes effect on January 1. I would like her to remind them that our package of tax reforms has the support of both poverty groups and business groups, economists on the left and economists on the right. In particular, they embrace the fact that this is going to create nearly 600,000 more jobs.

I would ask my honourable colleague to kindly convey that to the assembled on my behalf. I'd be grateful.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The point of the exercise is to actually listen to the people, not talk to them like this Premier continues to do, without doing any of the listening. The Premier stopped listening, in fact, quite some time ago to the people who elected him.

This week and next, the harmonized sales tax and numerous other bills are going to be passed with limited debate in this chamber. People who wanted to speak at hearings on the unfair tax have been shut out. In Ottawa, the same exact scene is about to play out. People are being told they have to pay more for home heating, hydro, gas in their car and even for their Christmas trees because the government thinks that corporate Canada needs another tax break.

What does the Premier expect the hundreds of thousands of people who reject this scheme to actually do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It is true that the price of some goods will go up; there's no doubt about that. But it's equally true that the overwhelming majority of purchases made by consumers remain unaffected by any tax changes. In fact, 83% of the stuff we buy will see no tax changes. For example, and this is important, there are no tax changes when you buy groceries, when you buy prescription drugs, when you buy your clothing, when you buy furniture, when you buy toys, your tickets to sporting events, your movie tickets, your restaurant meals, your cellphone charges, your home phone services, your cable TV service, your auto insurance, your home insurance, your residential rent, radios, stereos, CD equipment, refrigerators, freezers, computer software, music lessons, pharmacists' dispensing fees, auto rentals, car purchases, car parts and car repairs. There are no changes of any kind on any of those things.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier says his plan will actually help families, but not so long ago, he was rejecting the exact same scheme because it was going to hurt them. He says other provinces will follow suit, but Manitoba just rejected tax harmonization.

The Premier may meet people at Liberal fundraisers who like his particular tax scheme, but if he had the courage to travel the province and learn about a different Ontario made up of the people who will get whacked, it would serve him well. Has the Premier grown so arrogant that he thinks he can ignore these people forever?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm sure that my honourable colleague understands—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. We always welcome our guests to the Legislature. We welcome your observation; we just do not welcome your participation, and that includes applause. Thanks.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to make it known that if there's anybody here applauding me, I will not object to that.

Mr. Paul Miller: He was booing you.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know. That's what I'm afraid of.

My honourable colleague, I'm sure, has heard me say in the past that I think the responsibility that we share here is to answer a question that is being asked by Ontarians on an ongoing basis, which is, what do we need to do to grow stronger? And the single most important thing that we need to do to give families this most important advantage—or perhaps even recognize a right that they have in life: a job. We've got to make sure that they've got a job. Everything else comes second to that, and our package of tax reforms is all about creating 600,000 more jobs.

My colleague knows that our world has changed, and we've got to make some changes as well. One of those changes is putting into place a modern, competitive

system of taxation, lower personal income taxes, lower business taxes, a harmonized sales tax—all designed for 600,000 more jobs.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier as well. Last August, the Premier was so convinced that Manitoba would join him and Prime Minister Harper in their unfair tax scheme that he declared: “I wouldn’t be surprised if we had another Premier decide to move ahead with this, based on the conversations I had...” But on Monday, the Manitoba government rejected the harmonized sales tax and resisted the overtures of the Harper Conservatives.

My question is this: Is the Premier surprised?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am confident that over time, all the provinces will move towards this. It’s not an easy thing to do. If it were easy, then the Bob Rae government would have done it or the Mike Harris government would have done it. That’s why we’ve had the advice of federal Liberals, federal Conservatives and former Premier Mike Harris, for example, to move ahead with this kind of package.

What’s enabled us to do this, particularly at this time, is the \$4.3 billion we received from the federal government in support of our move—money which will be passed on directly to Ontarians, and small businesses, as well, to help them make the necessary change to adopt the HST practice in their workplace.

It’s high time that we got on with this. We’re proud of this initiative. It’s not an easy initiative, we understand that, but it’s all about 600,000 more jobs for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier shouldn’t be surprised that Manitoba is saying no to the HST. The Selinger government realizes that it’s an unfair tax shift from big corporations to people and that a new tax on gas and home heating won’t lead to any new investments in important public services in that province. If the McGuinty Liberals were listening to Ontario families, they too would know that a new tax on home heating and gas in the middle of a jobs crisis is a really bad idea.

Is the McGuinty government out of touch, or is it simply that our neighbours to the west are better listeners?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That’s why we are accompanying the introduction of this package of tax reforms with a cut in personal income taxes, with some three transitional payments to help families through this period of transition.

I ask my honourable colleague to keep in mind, as well, that we are not the first to do this. They’ve done it in the Maritime provinces. They’ve done it in 130 other countries. I think it’s worthwhile noting that anybody who has ever done this has never undone it. They have never reversed it. Whether followed by a party in government on the left, a party in government on the right or a

party in government in the middle, nobody has ever reversed it. That’s why neither the NDP nor the Conservative Party will commit to undoing this. They know that fundamentally this is a good thing for people, it’s a good thing for our economy and it’s a good thing for our jobs.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I beg to differ with the Premier. In fact, Saskatchewan did not go ahead with the HST. When they took government, they didn’t implement it. So in fact, he’s wrong in saying that nobody reversed it. Saskatchewan reversed the trend towards the HST. But the Manitoba government also stood up for families and politely told the Harper government to get lost. That used to be his government’s position.

In March 2008, Mr. Flaherty came to town, telling the Acting Premier to cut corporate taxes. The Minister of Finance called him an embarrassment at the time. But now, they’re like two peas in a pod. They believe in the same corporate tax giveaway mythology and preach from the same Jack Mintz bible.

If the HST is, in fact, the single most important thing, why did Manitoba tell Mr. Flaherty to take a hike?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I was pleased to get the report of Jack Mintz. He is an economist who is generally acknowledged to be on the right side of the spectrum. But there is another economist who is generally acknowledged to be on the left side of the spectrum. His name is Hugh Mackenzie. And this is what he had to say: “Ontario’s 2009-10 budget establishes the right direction for the next few years. It provides substantial economic stimulus. It is consistent with the new orthodoxy that relies heavily on governments to help rebuild damaged economies. It imposes some coherence on an incoherent federal plan. It increases support for low-income families and individuals. It modernizes Ontario’s consumption tax.”

Again, my colleague can pretend that somehow, somewhere, there is a tight group of economists or thoughtful people who are opposed to this. The fact is, groups on the left and right are equally in favour of our progressive package of tax reforms. They understand 600,000 jobs.

AGENCY SPENDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question, again, is for the Premier. Your former Deputy Premier, George Smitherman, has his fingerprints all over three of the agencies the Auditor General is reporting on. While wasting \$837 million on eHealth contracts with little to no value, former deputy Smitherman also oversaw the assistive devices program, teletriage and long-term-care homes.

Just before the last auditor’s report, you shuffled out the member for Don Valley East, who had been left to carry George Smitherman’s dirty laundry. Premier, who will take the blame for the member for Toronto Centre this time?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There is a process in place, and I'd ask that my honourable colleague respect that. We asked the auditor to take a look at these kinds of matters. He came in, and he had thorough access to everything. He was thorough in keeping with his practice in taking a look at everything that went on, and he made a number of important conclusions which my colleagues in opposition refuse to accept. He was very clear in terms of what he thought was inappropriate. He said there was a lack of oversight. We have accepted that. We've made changes to ensure that there is in fact greater oversight in place.

The kinds of allegations and insinuations that are being made by my colleague are simply not in keeping with the report put out by the auditor.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We'll wait and see what the auditor's report has to say.

But the report will also be focusing on the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. The deficit of the workers' compensation fund has doubled each year since your Liberal friend Steve Mahoney became chair. This year, you and Mahoney have become so arrogant that you didn't even file the report for public accounts. Over 600 agencies, boards and tribunals have filed their annual reports for public accounts, but the WSIB didn't. Premier, what is it that you don't want the public of Ontario to know?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. The member talks about the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and the unfunded liability. As an institutional investor, the WSIB has been hit like all other large institutional investors. It has seen the impact of this global recession, but the WSIB is focused on providing the ability to provide benefits for injured workers.

I know that a colleague of the member opposite is looking to do away with the WSIB. We don't feel that way. I have spoken to employers, labour groups and injured workers. I'll be meeting with the injured workers tomorrow to talk about the benefits that they receive through the WSIB. One thing I can tell the member is, we can't go back to the regressive formula that that member's party brought to injured workers and that cut their benefits.

TAXATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, I hosted a press conference with the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, TABIA. At that event, representatives from TABIA, including retail and real estate, representing 27,000 small business owners in the city of Toronto, told us that more than 80% of all small business owners in Toronto oppose the HST. They oppose the HST because they know it will hurt their customers. They know it will make their goods and services more expensive. They know it will drive many of them out of business.

The question is really a simple one: Why is the McGuinty government introducing a tax that will hurt so many hard-working small business owners?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm delighted the member opposite shared that with me.

I don't agree with them. I have pointed out to a number of small business groups—by the way, many who are supportive of this—that we're in fact cutting the small business tax in Ontario by almost 18%. That's what the member doesn't talk about.

We have to rely on a variety of sources of advice and information with respect to these. We have met with many of them, including business improvement associations, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and a variety of others. This is the right tax package. It will cut taxes for small businesses. It will lower taxes for consumers over time.

As difficult as this is, this government is committed to creating 600,000 new jobs for Ontarians over the next 10 years.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Small business is Ontario's main employer. Today, more than 1.5 million Ontarians are employed at a small firm with fewer than 50 employees. The current unemployment rate in Ontario is 9.3%. In areas like Toronto, it is 9.7%. If these numbers aren't shocking enough, small business owners are telling the McGuinty government that the HST is going to hurt thousands of small businesses. At best, the McGuinty government responds with dubious job projections from a single economist. In a time when Ontario is undergoing record unemployment, the question is, again, why is this government introducing a tax that small businesses are saying will be a job killer, not a job creator?

1100

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There's a group called the Smart Tax Alliance. Let me just give you a few names of who belongs to that. It's the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Certified General Accountants of Ontario, the Information Technology Association of Canada, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Trucking Association, the Ontario Road Builders' Association, the Retail Council of Canada and the Toronto Board of Trade. The small businesses I know are all members of those organizations. I acknowledge that we need to continue to help people understand all of the aspects of this, including the 18% tax cut for small businesses which you are voting against. You ought to explain yourself on that and you ought to tell seniors why you're voting—

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

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Over the past few months I've had a number of constituents in my riding who have had some difficulty getting access to the medication they

need. One drug in particular is Avastin, a first-line chemotherapy drug used for the treatment of colorectal cancer. Funding began for this expensive drug, but it was limited to a number of cycles, which is difficult for people struggling with this cancer and their families. I understand that the decision has recently been made to expand access to Avastin. Could the minister explain how and why the decision was made?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I must say that we are extremely pleased that we have struck an agreement with the drug manufacturer that will enable our government to make Avastin more widely available to those who might need it here in Ontario. It's very good news.

We have the clinical experts who sit on the committees to evaluate drugs. They are charged with the very serious responsibility of making decisions on drug funding based on clinical evidence and cost-effectiveness. Back in May, the ministry initiated discussions with the manufacturer around the funding of Avastin. These discussions accelerated in light of requests the ministry received for patients to continue treatments past the cycle cap. I'm very pleased that the ministry has reached a new agreement with the manufacturer which lifts that cap and allows funding to continue if a patient is responding well to the treatment. We'll continue to make progress for Ontarians with cancer.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The expansion to access for Avastin is good news for Ontarians fighting cancer. However, there are many other types of cancer that Ontarians are struggling with every day. Cancer touches us all. It affects our parents, our children, our brothers and sisters and many other loved ones. We all need to rally together to fight cancer.

Can the minister please tell this House about any other steps the government is taking to support Ontarians in their fight against cancer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have made good progress for Ontarians suffering from cancer. We introduced Bill 102 to get better value for money and to give patients better access to the medications they need. Since 2006, we've added 28 different drugs to the formulary, and since taking office we've almost tripled funding for cancer drugs. In addition to this, so very important to people with cancer and their loved ones, we're bringing down wait times for cancer surgeries.

We are building more capacity. Just last Friday, the addition to the Ottawa Hospital's cancer centre opened, which, in combination with the Queensway Carleton development, will serve 1,300 more people each and every year. We're expanding cancer prevention and screening programs. We launched Canada's first province-wide colorectal cancer screening program. We're funding more than 130,000 colonoscopies over five years. The Ontario breast cancer screening program will reach a million participants this—

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

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. At finance committee hearings this morning on the HST, I requested that the government members table all of the documents and materials, including transcripts of your so-called public meetings, on the HST around the province since the budget. When will you make these records available to the committee?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Many of these meetings have been widely covered in the media. Just today, there have been reports of meetings that our various members and colleagues have had. We have tabled documents. We have set up Web pages. We have respected advertising laws that prevent the kind of abuse of government money that your party participated in for some nine years.

I'm delighted that we're having these hearings today. I look forward to the input we're going to hear this afternoon. The input this morning was very valuable. I'm also told that we will be tabling a whole range of other documents at committee today.

I look forward to the continuing debate on the HST and on the 600,000 net new jobs that we will create as a result of this.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The utter arrogance of that government is astounding. Today your member from Ottawa Centre basically insinuated that only scholars hired by your Liberal Party should be heard during these public hearings, not ordinary taxpayers who have flown on their own dime from the city of Ottawa today because you chose not to allow public hearings in a city of one million people.

You are arrogant, you are out of touch and you are acting like you're not responsible to the public.

Clause-by-clause is on Monday. The deadline for tabling material from your so-called public consultations, which took place before the bill was introduced in this chamber, is Monday. Will you stop the secrecy and will you make sure they are tabled, or are these meetings just a part of a PR sham?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Since we introduced the legislation last March, we have conducted literally hundreds of meetings.

I'm very pleased, for instance, that we were able to reach agreement with the housing industry about changes to the bill; that we were able to reach agreement with the food services industry about changes to the bill; that we've been able to meet with groups from across the province on a range of implementation issues that will benefit our business community and consumers. I'm delighted that we've had that opportunity. They've been widely reported; this has been ongoing.

I'll just repeat—I couldn't hear over a few others—that, again, we've made a number of changes to the substance of the bill, resultant from a vast range of public consultations and meetings with industry associations over the last nine months. This is the right plan for a brighter future—

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

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. On Wednesday, December 1, you attended a reception of First Nations leaders at the Sheraton hotel. At this reception, you had a discussion with the grand chief of the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council, Stan Louttit. He told me that he discussed with you the funding crisis at Payukotayno and you told him the following—he put it in a follow-up e-mail to me:

“She indicated to me that her regional staff were having positive discussions with Ernest Beck and his board”—that’s referring to Payukotayno. “I spoke with Ernest Beck”—this is Chief Stan Louttit—“and what the minister is saying is the furthest from the truth—there is no progress, they are still in crisis mode, layoffs have been issued....”

Minister, there are two issues here: Why did you tell the grand chief one thing when the facts were different? And what have your actions done to harm the trust First Nations should have in the provincial government?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I’m very proud to have been able to reach out, in many instances, and speak to individuals like Stan Louttit and Grand Chief Beardy at such a reception. We had a lengthy discussion with respect to our government’s commitment to make sure that the interests of children in the north and children being served by agencies such as Payukotayno are looked after. Ongoing discussions continue.

At that meeting, Stan actually tried to contact the ED by telephone, because he indicated to me that perhaps his information was a bit different than mine. I invited him to reach out and give me directly that information, if that was the case.

I can tell you that discussions continue with our staff in Moosonee. We looked very closely at a number of issues, in particular the issue of outside-purchased resources and how we will find a pathway forward to ensure that the children are protected.

My commitment remains the same: Our aboriginal children will continue to be protected.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, I’m sorry: I had the discussion with Ernest Beck this morning. Your staff has had no discussion with his board or him in regard to the funding crisis. The only thing that your person is doing is looking at the day-to-day administration of that organization. You are not dealing with the funding crisis, and as a result, kids are at risk. We have an epidemic of suicide on the James Bay. This organization is there to care for those kids and to try to do some of the prevention work that needs to be done, and you’re not having those discussions with them.

1110

So I say it again to you: Why did you tell the grand chief one thing when, quite frankly, the other was true?

And what does this do to the relationship between the provincial government and First Nations in this province?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As I’ve said, we continue to work and examine the issues closely. Examining the costs of outside-purchase resources and boarding rates might seem like something that is not relevant to the current situation, but it is precisely relevant. We are digging down and reaching a determination as to what is taking place in communities across the north and why they are seeing these challenges, and that is specifically with respect to children’s aid societies. Obviously, there’s a much broader consultation and discussion that needs to take place, and that’s exactly the commitment that I have made to aboriginal communities.

Our commission for sustainability will be reaching out. We’re seeking the advice of experts and individuals right across the province to, for the first time in a very, very long time, look at this critical issue. I work shoulder to shoulder with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

We will deal with this issue and we will deal with it in a way that other governments have chosen not to. We will ensure that children are protected.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Today marks an important day in my communities of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and in many other communities, not only in Ontario but around the world. Today is the International Day of Persons With Disabilities. Communities everywhere are celebrating with events and promoting the need to empower people with disabilities.

Research tells me that approximately 1.85 million people in Ontario have disabilities, representing more than 15% of Ontario’s population.

My question is this: What can the minister tell us and tell those almost two million people about what this government is doing to improve accessibility and promote opportunity for people with disabilities?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to the member for her question.

I invite all members to join me today in recognizing the contributions that people with disabilities make to our communities.

On March 31, we closed the doors to Ontario’s institutions for people with developmental disabilities. We closed the door on segregation and opened the doors to a new era of inclusion. Today, people with disabilities are living with more independence than ever.

We know that people with disabilities face obstacles. That’s why we introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, which will help us to break down barriers. Our first standard around accessible customer service will be enforced this January.

There is still more to do, but by working together, Ontario can become a place where people with disabilities reach their full potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I too believe that by working together, we can foster a society that is both inclusive and empowering for those with disabilities.

Minister, you mentioned the closing of the last three institutions here in Ontario. I can't help but remember the anxiety that arose from this, since one of the three impacted directly on my riding and that of my colleague Pat Hoy. I know that there were concerns among the families of the people who lived in those institutions, concerns about removing loved ones from an environment where they had lived their entire lives. Minister, can you tell us about those concerns and how those people have adjusted today?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to thank the member, who is such a dedicated advocate on behalf of her constituents in southwestern Ontario.

Let me tell a story of a young man who transitioned out of the Southwestern Regional Centre. This young man now lives independently, with some assistance from Community Living. He's living a new life filled with new opportunities. He enjoys working in his community and has not one, but two jobs. His boss at work has made it clear that this may be the first time that he hired a person with disabilities, but it won't be the last time.

These people have a better quality of life because they are now active members in their community and are more connected with family and friends.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. When you passed the Endangered Species Act, you promised the forest industry that you would use the Crown Forest Sustainability Act as the regulatory tool when establishing habitat protection zones. You went back on your word and took direction from those who opposed logging, period. You have now filed regulations for the wood turtle that will endanger the industry itself.

At a time when forestry is on its knees from other forces, such as access to credit, a high Canadian dollar and a slow United States housing market, why would you add a made-in-Ontario burden on them with no meaningful consultations with those so deeply affected? Why would you do that?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to respond to the member's question. The Endangered Species Act has been around for over 30 years. When we renewed the act, we had an opportunity to look for more flexibility within the act in order to do accommodation. I have said right from the beginning that the Endangered Species Act would be incorporated into the spirit of forest management plans, and that is exactly what we are doing. It is no different than what's been done in the past.

All forest management programs have already involved themselves in the Endangered Species Act. They make accommodations for turtles, snakes and caribou. All we're saying is, as the science changes, as our information changes, how do we improve? It's based

on science. We work with the forest industry, and we've been doing that all along.

I had the pleasure of attending some sessions up in the Pembroke-Renfrew area where, again, I walked in the forest—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's a nice way of spinning it, but that's not accurate. You've gone to a permitting system that simply will not work.

Minister, no one opposes habitat protection. In fact, the Crown Forest Sustainability Act had that as part of its bedrock, but your decisions need to be based on real science, not the recommendations of your political scientists.

You've dismissed all of the requests and all of the recommendations of those who represent the thousands of families in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke who depend on forestry as a way of putting food on the table. You've released no science to support your decisions, working simply on the basis of making forestry's enemies your friends.

Minister, will you not stop until there is no way left for rural families to make a living?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I am more than pleased to be able to provide some accurate information to the member. In fact, there's an organization called COSSARO. COSSARO is an independent body, separate from the government, made up of scientists who make the decisions on what species will be put on the endangered species list right from the area of concern through to determining if they've been extirpated. That particular group then makes the decision independent of government.

In addition to that, we have another group called SARPAC, made up of the industry and interested stakeholders. They advise the minister in terms of how we implement the Endangered Species Act. We have two years in which to do it, to sit down, talk with and involve people in what we do, and that is exactly what has been going on.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Finance. This afternoon, First Nations from across the province are going to be at Queen's Park to protest this government's possible elimination of the point-of-sale exemption. They will deliver thousands of petition signatures from Attawapiskat to Walpole to Tyendinega to Fort Frances. Can the minister explain how a single 8% tax on school supplies, gas and clothing actually helps struggling First Nations?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm judging by the leader of the third party's question that she's supporting our position that, indeed, the federal government should take Ontario's position on this very seriously and implement the exemption that's available to First Nations at point of sale.

Our Minister of Finance has been in touch with his colleague federally, Mr. Flaherty. Our Minister of Revenue's been in touch with his colleague. I've been in touch with my own, and the Premier, as of yesterday, sent a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, calling on the federal government to adopt Ontario's position and to adopt the position of First Nations. We stand shoulder to shoulder with First Nations on this issue, and we welcome the NDP's support as we do that.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, nobody buys this nonsense, particularly not the chiefs of the First Nations of this province. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs should be ashamed of himself. First Nations are tired of hearing this government blame Ottawa. The McGuinty government signed two memoranda of understanding with the federal government without even consulting with First Nations, even though the Minister of Finance acknowledged that the point-of-sale exemption was, in fact, a part of aboriginal and treaty rights. He made sure that Timbits were exempted, but First Nations were ignored.

How can the McGuinty government talk about a new relationship with First Nations when it struck a backroom deal with Stephen Harper Conservatives without even a single consultation?

Hon. Brad Duguid: If First Nation leaders and chiefs decide to visit Queen's Park today, this government welcomes them here, because I'll tell you something: They're coming to a place that is a lot friendlier to their cause than it was—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: —than it was six years ago. That's for sure. The relationship with First Nations is at an historical high in this province. We will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with First Nations when it comes to going to the federal government. In fact, I can quote from a letter from the Premier that was sent yesterday to Prime Minister Harper. It reads: "Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse recently conveyed to me his serious concerns about the matter. I fully support the request he is making on behalf of all Ontario First Nation leaders to continue the existing Ontario sales tax approach under the federal administration of the HST." Let's be clear. This government stands shoulder to shoulder with First Nations on this issue—

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

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, there have been stories of late discussing how many immigrants are overqualified and are earning less than their Canadian counterparts in the job market. This is in relation to an analysis done by Stats Canada that looks at employment

numbers for newcomers. The numbers show us that qualified newcomers are working for low wages, many in part-time and temporary work. Research shows that newcomers who arrived in Canada in the last five years are facing challenges to finding appropriate employment. Minister, we are keenly aware that Ontario newcomers are facing the same challenges and are part of a bigger picture that the analysis reveals.

Will the minister commit to providing Ontario newcomers with the necessary support, resources and training to ensure that they find employment that is suited—

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

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Scarborough–Rouge River. Our government knows that getting newcomers into the workforce is the single most important step. This is why we are supporting programs such as Pathways to Employment in Biotechnology. It's one of the 16 projects that will help yet another 5,000 newcomers get training and get a job. Support for these programs is part of our plan to strengthen our economy by investing in the skills and knowledge of Ontarians. Ontario needs to be competitive in the global marketplace. Such investments are part of this goal. They bring opportunities for success into the lives of Ontarians. We know when newcomers grow, Ontario will grow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: The study found that newcomers are not only earning less but are working longer hours. It is obvious that this recession has been particularly hard on many newcomers.

There has been significant coverage in the last couple of days talking about the introduction of a pan-Canadian framework on recognition of foreign qualifications. There was an article in the Globe and Mail that said this: "It has ... become clear that, without provincial co-operation, the immigration system cannot adequately serve either immigrants themselves or the economy."

Clearly this government has a very important role to play here. Our economy depends on ensuring that foreign-trained professionals succeed, and foreign-trained professionals are relying on the government to get this right so that they can succeed. Minister, can you tell us what role you played in this pan-Canadian framework and what this will mean to Ontarians?

Hon. Michael Chan: Newcomers come from afar. They travel thousands of miles. They cross the oceans. They come to Ontario, but Ontario is a new land to the newcomers. This is why the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications is another important step to support these individuals. Through the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, we established the Office of the Fairness Commissioner. Through significant investment in bridge training we are supporting newcomers to get the training they need to get jobs in their fields of study. The framework complements our ongoing effort to help newcomers succeed, because their success is crucial to the

future economic prosperity of our province. When newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: We were informed that the Premier would be here for the entire question period today. I guess I'll have to pose my question to the Deputy Premier.

It's no secret, Deputy, that there will be a cabinet shuffle in the near future. You only have to read the Star to find that out. Some cabinet ministers have gone because of scandals, and others because they are running for municipal office. So your secret is out. Your government's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is strongly rumoured to be running as a mayoral candidate in 2010. With all these not-so-secrets, Deputy, when will the Premier ask the minister to resign so he can focus on one job?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The enormous accomplishments the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has made are really, really astounding. Your government and your party downloaded costs to municipalities and municipal taxpayers, and that minister and this government uploaded those costs.

Interjections.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: They invented downloading.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Education and the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, you can have your discussion outside.

I will ask the minister to continue, but I would remind all members that when they are asking questions, they need to pertain to business within this chamber, and particularly to the portfolios of their ministries.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Just this year, our government has begun to upload the cost of social assistance. That government cancelled provincial housing and downloaded housing costs to municipalities all over Ontario. Do you want to know where the minister is today? Let me tell you where the minister is. He's doing his job on behalf of Ontarians. He's in Ottawa at a federal-provincial-territorial meeting on housing and homelessness. That member and this government have done more in their term for municipalities and for Ottawa than your government ever did. That—

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It is the government's duty that I am speaking to here. Deputy, it is your government's responsibility to ensure that all municipalities receive full attention across the province from their municipal affairs and housing minister. When will the Premier demand this minister's resignation so that you can get on with the job and have the cabinet shuffle, so that the personal ambitions of this minister aren't being served?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Conservative Party of Ontario left vulnerable Ontarians out in the cold. They cancelled 17,000 affordable housing units and no new affordable housing units were built in their eight years in office. Our agenda with municipalities and housing has been clear: It is to undo the legacy of that member and her party, undo the things they did to Ontario's most vulnerable. That was just one example.

1130

These are difficult times. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is out working hard for all Ontarians. I'm proud he's my colleague and I'm proud of the work he has done for the poor and vulnerable and for municipalities.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): After question period.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Tomorrow is the 18th annual injured workers' demonstration in front of the Ministry of Labour—the 18th. Something is wrong there.

With Christmas coming, I'm asking, on behalf of the WSIB pensioners in Hamilton, and across Ontario, who receive their pension cheques on the last day of every month: Will the minister agree to fast-track the December WSIB cheques so that these pensioners can buy gifts for their kids and grandchildren in time for the holidays?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can say is that this government has taken more action to put more dollars into the hands of injured workers than those two previous governments combined.

Often, when I speak to injured workers, they'll talk to me about the F-word, and the F-word is the Friedland formula, brought in by the NDP government and made more regressive again by the Conservative government. We've changed that. We've changed that channel.

In 2007, three times we increased injured worker benefits, by 2.5% each time. I will be speaking to the injured workers tomorrow. I look forward to that. We are partners. The WSIB is moving to address the regressive manner of how they were treated by the NDP and Conservative governments—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: If you're partners with them, what are they in front of your offices again for?

The McGuinty government has policies for people on fixed ODSP incomes—that their December cheques are always released before Christmas and not at the end of the month, as usual. ODSP recipients will receive their cheques on December 22.

Will the minister be the Grinch who stole Christmas and didn't lift a finger to help injured workers and pensioners this holiday season, or will he do whatever

has to be done to ensure that the WSIB pensioners will receive their December cheques in time for Christmas? And don't deflect and talk about other things; answer the question yes or no.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, the member speaks about injured workers, and I can say that this government's record in regard to injured workers has been one where we are partnering with injured workers and where we have brought forward increases that they had not seen since 1995, when the NDP government, in a very harsh and regressive manner, cut benefits to injured workers—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East just asked the question. As he knows, according to the standing orders, if he's dissatisfied with the answer, he can file a notice with the table.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I look forward to continuing to work with injured workers. We know that injured workers have gone through not only a financial impact to their lives but also an emotional one. As partners, we have to be there with supports—with financial support as well as—

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

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, I have heard of reports of farmers in areas of the province having difficulty with elk on their properties. I know that elk were recently re-introduced to Ontario, but in some areas their populations have grown so large that some farmers have experienced crop damage. I understand that there is a provision in the good government bill to help farmers protect their property from elk damage.

Elk is an iconic Canadian species. Its successful reintroduction to Ontario is a cause for celebration.

Can the minister please state for the record how the Ministry of Natural Resources will react to this provision found in the good government bill while still ensuring a healthy elk population? Will the minister please describe what she will do to enhance and protect elk populations in Ontario and how the minister will ensure that Ontarians have a say in elk management?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to thank the member for the question. The member is correct. Back in the 1800s, when the elk were a native species, they disappeared. So, in 1990, 13 member partners with MNR actually reintroduced the elk, and they've been very successful in some areas.

By amending the good government bill through the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, we would be able to work with the farmers in terms of removal of elk when there's crop damage involved. On November 23, what

we did is actually put an elk management plan on the Environmental Bill of Rights. You have until January 7 to be able to respond to that draft plan.

We will work with the farming community to ensure that their crops are protected, but at the same time we'll make sure that the reintroduction of the elk, this extraordinarily magnificent animal, will in fact ensure survival in Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Deferred vote on the motion for third 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): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 212. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duncan, Dwight	Naqvi, Yasir
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Pupatello, Sandra
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Brotten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Carroll, Aileen	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Shurman, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Sterling, Norman W.
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Wilson, Jim
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 24.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to welcome to the House Jacqueline Benn-John, the executive director of the Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Services of Halton and president of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, and Sly Castaldi, the executive director of Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis and former domestic violence advisory council member.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to welcome to the east gallery my constituents Michelle Krohn and her daughter, Yvonne Racowiz—constituents of yours—and also Dan Procop from CARP. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to introduce Mr. Dil Mohammed, who is in charge of Pakistani Television in Toronto. To his immediate left is Elizabeth Fonseca Sánchez, who is the manager of Havana airport. She is here today to listen to us as we debate the issue of Hispanic Heritage Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So that's how you get quick passage through the Havana airport.

The member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: They will be introduced formally later on, but I'd like to welcome and introduce to the House the members from the various fire departments who are here, not only to attend the working of the House this afternoon but also to listen to the debate on one fundamental bill dealing with their protection as well as protecting our seniors: the retrofit of fire sprinklers in seniors' homes. I'd like to welcome them to the House this afternoon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: We have repeatedly asked the McGuinty government to go out and listen to Ontarians about the impact of the HST, the hated sales tax. We have told them about people like Rick from Thamesford, who said:

"My business is small and part-time and is similar to the hundreds of karate schools, music, dance, and gymnastic schools. We provide instructional service and only have to charge 5% GST. The HST will add 8% to our costs. We have little or no retail sales, so there is no savings to us. It is all tax cost. In this economic climate, how can I increase my fees by 8%? My business is

already down 40%. McGuinty is going to wipe us out for a tax grab."

People like Kevin wrote to the Minister of Finance—and he hasn't even received a response. He said:

"I have had many customers with a serious concern over the new HST, of which the main one is what is going to happen to the cost of their heating fuel.

"I hope this has been an oversight, but just wanted to remind you we do live in Canada where there is winter, and heating your home is not an option. I looked at several customers' fuel volume from the 2008-09 heating season and calculated an average increase of \$200 to heat their homes. You have stated necessities will remain tax-exempt. In my opinion, heat and hydro aren't a luxury item."

I hope that all the Liberal members will take the time to actually talk to the people of Ontario to hear from them that they do not want and cannot afford Dalton's hated sales tax.

JOHN LENNON

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to remind this House of the anniversary of a tragic event that occurred 29 years ago on December 8, 1980. On that day, our country lost a friend. John Lennon was shot and killed while returning from work outside his apartment in New York City.

John Lennon had a special connection with Toronto and our country because we welcomed him when most of the world would not. In 1969, he performed in a live concert at Varsity Stadium. During that concert, he, apparently for the first time, had people in the audience light matches and lighters when he came on stage. This has become a rock and roll tradition, and it was first experienced right here in Toronto's Varsity Stadium. It was at the concert in Toronto that he first performed his song Give Peace a Chance, live.

Prime Minister Trudeau met with him as well, and they spoke together on world peace for over 50 minutes back in 1969.

As a member of the Beatles, he visited Toronto in 1964, 1965 and 1966.

Following his concert in 1966, a summer student gave him an OPP crest, and that OPP crest was then given to Paul McCartney. Paul McCartney would wear that crest when the Beatles shot the photograph for their 1967 album Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. That crest continues to be recognized throughout the world as a result of that incident.

Lennon has been gone since 1980, but his music, memory and legacy as an ambassador for peace lives on and continues to grow and expand.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: Once again, I bring the voices of Ontarians to this Legislature on the proposed harmonized sales tax.

Richard writes:

“My wife and I are retired and on a pension, for which we are very thankful, but your government is challenging our ability to even maintain our current standard of living and retain our home.

“We are deeply discouraged and angry about your proposed tax grab HST.... Companies are hurting due to the current economic situation and your overall mismanagement of the province’s finances. Corporate taxes should have been reduced a long time ago.... We don’t trust your government to be honest with us about the true costs that we will incur.”

Audrey from Gravenhurst writes:

“No one can afford to pay double taxes on just about everything they purchase. Heating fuel, hydro, fire insurance and vitamins should all be exempt.

“Seniors on a fixed income, OAS supplement and Gains cannot afford to pay this exorbitant tax rip-off.

“Don’t be so greedy; be satisfied with the PST you now get.”

Sue writes:

“Please keep at the HST.

“The timing on this is just so bad.

“We are retired. Our small business is down dramatically. We make practically no interest from the banks.

“Politicians are not thinking straight.

“This situation is absolutely ridiculous and it’s time Mr. McGuinty comes to his senses and thinks about the 70% of the population that is against this measure.”

It is no wonder that the McGuinty government refuses to take Bill 218 to the people. They are simply afraid to hear what the people have to say.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand to talk about a similar issue: the events of the past week. We all know that this has been a very difficult week. Some members have been expelled. The opposition was forced to make a motion for hearings to start at one minute after midnight. The Speaker—thank you, Mr. Speaker—made a ruling which said that that was illegal. The House leaders then got together and thankfully came to a compromise which allowed for hearings to take place.

At today’s meeting, though—I am again profoundly upset and disappointed at what is happening—the first thing that happened was the Liberal members had their staffers handing out government of Ontario finance books, trying to convince those people who were in opposition to the HST to not speak that way. I don’t think that was appropriate inside the committee. They were admonished by the Chair of the committee, who told the members that the booklets had to be handed out outside the committee room, because at that point she had no jurisdiction.

But that was not the end. One member bitterly complained that a deputant had donated to the Conservative Party, as if somehow this had lessened the deputant’s

credibility. It was only after that that we discovered the same deputant had also donated to that same member who complained, to his campaign, and we learned as well that the member had been the CFO of that deputant in a municipal campaign. These are the shenanigans that are going on—

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

OVER 55

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in the House to bring great news from the city of London. Not only is our city at the forefront of health and technology, we are also pioneering in social services. Over 55 is a one-of-a-kind organization that caters employment services to people over 55 years old. It’s organizations like that in which I take pride.

Their unique approach to employment is not a common method in Ontario. There is a stereotype that people over the age of 55 are not in great demand in the job market, but this organization breaks the stereotype and has helped many people find work, not only by connecting them with potential employers, but by also connecting skilled workers and professionals to new clients and customers.

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Minister Bentley and I had the pleasure of attending the launch of the job creation partnership they have made with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. They will now offer services to people who need retraining in fields like database development and special events management. We met with many happy community members, and I would like to thank the volunteers at Over 55 who made this a success.

I want to take the opportunity to continue thanking those people who devoted their time to help their fellow men and women who cannot find jobs, especially when they are the age of 55 or older.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Mr. Frank Klees: I, too, want to address this government’s handling of the HST public consultation process. I had the opportunity to sit in on the committee this morning and expressed again at committee the fact that members of the government continue to refer to public meetings that took place. Those meetings were not consultations. Those meetings were lectures by the Minister of Revenue and other members—basically a propaganda campaign—to convince people of the wisdom of this tax, which, by the way, we take great exception with.

I want to thank Mr. Paul Bailey, a retired York region police officer, who is now president of the Police Pensioners Association of Ontario. He presented this morning, and said directly to the committee:

“Many of us have spent considerable time in the House during question period, have listened to the gov-

ernment tell us how good this HST will be for us individuals and as a province. We have been told by Jack Mintz it's a great gift for the province.

"Committee members, with respect, we don't believe a word of it. This new tax will take more money out of our pockets than we can afford. You know that, and so do the seniors of this province."

Sadly, there are few hours left for public consultation. We sincerely hope that the government is listening and will be able to make some changes to their intentions regarding the HST.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I had the distinct pleasure of spending a large portion of the summer and the following months visiting retirement homes and senior homes in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga.

I had the opportunity to discuss with my senior constituents, among other things, the HST and how these tax reforms will benefit them in particular.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Joan Norris and Catherine Freeborn of Chateau Gardens seniors' home in Elmira, which is in Woolwich township. I'd also like to thank Debby Riepert of Trinity Village for helping to make all of these visits happen.

I'd also like to thank Sharon Walsh of Community Care Concepts and Meals on Wheels—as we delivered meals out of St. Jacobs and the home office in Elmira—for facilitating my participation in delivering Meals on Wheels to our seniors in their homes.

I'd like to thank Ron Schlegel and his staff at the Village of Winston Park. It's a continuing care facility that continues to be engaging and co-operative in these open discussions. I wish Ron all the best in his speedy recovery.

These continue to be enjoyable sessions with my seniors—a free exchange of information.

Just like all government members, I continue to consult, meet and discuss with seniors the impact of tax harmonization. In particular, I'd like to mention Mildred, who I've come to know as Millie, and thank her personally for taking me on a tour of her newly renovated bathroom.

DURHAM CONSOLIDATED COURTHOUSE

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Our government is committed to renewing our infrastructure while ensuring we keep our environment clean for future generations.

One example of how we're accomplishing this is the Durham consolidated courthouse. This afternoon, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure will be present at a completion-of-construction event; we're expecting the facility to be fully operational by March 2010. This state-of-the-art integrated facility brings together justice services that were formerly being delivered from seven

different locations. It will house 33 courtrooms, three judicial hearing rooms and related legal and court services.

What's also important about this facility is that it's designed to conform with high energy management and conservation standards. For example, compared to similar buildings, the design of this building has reduced energy consumption by 42%. The Durham courthouse was also built to achieve LEED silver certification.

What's more, about 1,500 various staff and visitors will conduct business daily in the building. This means increased demand for restaurant meals and other services in downtown Oshawa, contributing to the local economy.

The Durham courthouse is a great example of how our government is working hard to improve our environment, create vibrant urban neighbourhoods, stimulate investment in jobs and boost development in communities just like Oshawa.

VALERIE HUNT

Mr. Dave Levac: She was not a former member of this place or a politician of any kind. She was not a famous athlete. She was not a celebrity from the entertainment world. Not many people will have heard about her.

Peacefully, surrounded by her brothers, her mother, her best friend and the rest of her loving family, she passed away.

Valerie Hunt was just 42 years old. She was my friend. She always started her day with, above all, juice first. Unfiltered and straight from the hip, she told you what was up. No strings attached, affection and love oozed from her.

Speaker, she collected pens. You were on her "Okay Guy" list.

She was born and wasn't supposed to live for two hours. The family was then told, "Maybe two years, with a little bit of care, in an institution." Instead, tender loving care was provided for her at home. Valerie beat all the odds. Her daily heart attacks couldn't stop her. Her heart simply, inexplicably grew. Down's syndrome couldn't stop her either.

She leaves many family and dear friends just a little sadder and just a little empty. The good news is that she's now with her beloved angels and her dad.

I will miss my friend Val. The next Tim Hortons coffee I have, I'll splash a little bit to Val—and it has to be Tim Hortons.

To the staff, to the teachers, to the friends at Crossing All Bridges, to all the workers and volunteers at Community Living Brant, and to the special staff of our hospital who cared for Val: Know that you cared for an angel.

Val, my friend, use your free pass to heaven. You're home. Two thumbs up.

Applause.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION
ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
JOURNÉE DE COMMÉMORATION
ET D'ACTION CONTRE LA VIOLENCE
FAITE AUX FEMMES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. Brad Duguid: This is a unanimous consent request. I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and for each member to have the opportunity to wear a white ribbon and a button in support.

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Twenty years ago this Sunday marks a dark day in Canadian history. On December 6, 1989, a gunman walked into l'École Polytechnique de Montréal and killed 14 female engineering students.

C'est un jour dont je me souviens clairement. J'étais étudiante de premier cycle en sciences, au sein d'une promotion composée en majeure partie d'hommes, en plus d'être une activiste politique et une féministe.

It was a day I remember clearly. I was an undergraduate science student in a predominantly male graduating class, a political activist, a feminist. I remember my shock, my confusion and my growing sense of vulnerability, and over the next few days, my friends and I clearly saw December 6 for what it was: A heinous act of misogyny.

This act of hatred was not an attack against students or engineers; it was an attack against women, and it became a defining moment for Canadian women. These students were not just victims of an indiscriminate criminal act; they were women who were friends, daughters and sisters, whose families were shattered by the bullets that struck them. They were daughters of parents who encouraged them to take the road less travelled: a career in engineering.

As I stand in acknowledgment of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6, I ask that my colleagues in the House join me today to remember not only the 14 women who were killed that day, but all women who have died as a result of gender-based violence.

I also rise to acknowledge the internationally sanctioned 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, November 25 to December 10. They remind us that violence against women is an unacceptable violation of human rights and a principal barrier to gender equality.

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Cet événement nous rappelle que la violence faite aux femmes constitue une violation inacceptable des droits humains des femmes, et un obstacle de principe à l'égalité entre les sexes.

As a lawyer, an advocate, a friend, in my previous role as parliamentary assistant to Premier McGuinty, and now as minister responsible for women's issues, I have met

too many women who have suffered from abuse. I am always moved by their determination to change their lives and to keep their children safe and free from violence.

The tragedy of December 6 reminds us that we must not let our vigilance wane. We must continue to educate girls and boys, men and women. We all have a responsibility to end violence against women.

Today, I invite all members to wear a rose button to remember the women who died, and recommit to taking action on violence against women and girls, and also to wear a white ribbon to signify men's opposition to violence against women.

I want us to take a moment to remember the 14 engineering students who were killed December 6, 1989, and all women who have died through violence by reading of the names of the 14 women whose lives were violently and tragically cut too short: Geneviève Bergeron, age 21; Hélène Colgan, age 23; Nathalie Croteau, age 23; Barbara Daigneault, age 22; Anne-Marie Edward, age 21; Maud Haviernick, age 29; Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz, age 31; Maryse Laganière, age 25; Maryse Leclair, age 23; Anne-Marie Lemay, age 27; Sonia Pelletier, age 23; Michèle Richard, age 21; Annie St-Arneault, age 23; and Annie Turcotte, age 21.

Today, I call upon all Ontarians to work together to end violence against women. It is a day we must not forget, but it is one that we must move forward from.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize this National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, which falls each year on December 6.

Established in 1991 by the Parliament of Canada, this day was selected because it is the tragic day on which the massacre at École Polytechnique occurred at the University of Montreal. I know we have memories that day when a gunman murdered 14 young women simply because they were women. On that day, 14 young, bright and intelligent women were separated from their male colleagues and they were murdered by this young man just because, as I said, they were women.

This day of remembrance is important for everyone. It is a day to reflect on the tragic loss of the lives of these young women, women who possessed so much promise and who were just on the cusp of beginning their adult lives. It is also a day to remember their families who have had to go on without them. We need to support them and we need to honour the memory of their daughters and their sisters by working diligently each and every day to end violence against women.

Additionally, it is also a day where we need to reflect on the broader issue of violence against women, which impacts women of all ages. On Sunday I will be attending an event in my community which is being hosted by the Canadian Federation of University Women to mark this 20th anniversary.

Yes, we must work to ensure that all women have the right to live in safety and dignity, free from threat, intimidation and violence. And yet, unfortunately, each

and every day, we continue to hear about violence against women.

So together, collectively, it is important that we take steps as a government and as individuals, steps like assisting Mrs. Patricia Marshall of St. Catharines and her two daughters. On numerous occasions, we have asked the Attorney General to assist these women. Yet, despite compelling evidence including video footage, the crown withdrew its criminal harassment charges against their neighbour. The lack of action has dismayed several women's shelters, including Gillian's Place, one of Ontario's first shelters for abused women and children. According to Susanne DiLalla, chair of Gillian's Place, Not only has the decision caused these women great distress, but "it sends a message to all women that this behaviour is acceptable and the justice system will not prevail to protect them."

We need to do better. So today, as we consider the impacts of violence against women, we also need to consider the effects on them as individuals and on our society. We know that violence against women negatively impacts their health and their well-being. It results in lost time at work and the need for transition homes and crisis centres. As well, it has a very negative impact upon the children whose lives have been touched by violence against their mothers. We need only look at the gunman who killed the young women on December 6. He himself had witnessed violence against his mother at the hands of his father, and he had suffered physical abuse as well.

In conclusion, we need to remember that the root causes of violence against women are societal. We are only going to find solutions if we work together and try to change the values and behaviours in order that there is real equality between men and women. Research shows that positive attitudes adopted at an early age can tackle the violence before it happens. We need to make sure that we do everything we can at that early age to shape the attitudes of our children.

So today I join all members of this House and I join with people across this great province to rededicate and recommit ourselves to doing all we can to take measures in order that we can have a world and a province without violence against women. It is the one way in which we can honour the memory of the 14 young women who died so tragically and also all those others who have suffered abuse.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Good afternoon. It is my honour to rise today and to recognize the Montreal massacre. On December 6, 1989, a lone gunman entered the second floor of l'École Polytechnique de Montréal with an intent to systemically kill women. Marc Lépine entered the engineering classroom on the second floor of l'École Polytechnique. He first separated the men from the women and then ordered the men to leave. Facing these women, il les a accusés d'être un gang de féministes. Il leur a crié par la tête: «Je hais les féministes», before shooting the women with a semi-

automatic rifle. In just 20 minutes, Marc Lépine had killed 14 women and injured an additional 10 women and four men, before turning the gun on himself.

Twenty years later we still mourn the loss of these 14 promising young women in their prime: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Maria Klucznik, Maryse Leclair, Annie St-Arneault, Michèle Richard, Maryse Laganière, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier and Annie Turcotte.

For their loved ones, the pain of the Montreal massacre will never be erased.

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The Montreal massacre acted as catalyst of recognition and promised change in eradicating violence against women. On this 20th anniversary, there still remains much to be done. Today, women continue to face physical, emotional and psychological abuse at the hands of their spouses, their partners and their loved ones. Families have lost daughters, mothers, sisters, aunts, nieces and neighbours. Why? Because we, as a society, have not done a good enough job of changing the culture of male violence and misogyny that continues to plague women. Women still pay with their lives for a lack of action.

Many times my colleagues and I have risen in this House to advocate for greater action to eliminate violence against women. I'm really proud of my colleague Cheri DiNovo, who has asked that an all-women non-partisan committee be put together in this House to look at violence against women. But the Liberal majority are not interested in a non-partisan look at women's safety. By their lack of action, they're putting women's safety at risk.

Many times, women's groups, service providers, coroners' juries, and study after study have instructed the government that more needs to be done. A large part of the solution lies in the provision of affordable housing, child care, resettlement funds, meaningful employment, and income support, which enable women to support themselves and their children, enabling them to leave violent homes. They don't need more websites and more pilot projects; they need action.

Recently the NDP introduced several amendments to Bill 168, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters. They were struck down by the Liberals.

Though we supported the bill in its efforts, we believe that with our amendments the bill would have been further able to protect women in the workforce. The Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Nurses' Association, OPSEU and many others found the provisions set out in the act to be limiting and ineffective. This is a matter for all parties to care about, yet the government does not seem to take concrete action while they have the power to do so. When will this finally change?

Additionally, pay equity remains as problematic an issue for women as it always has been. Women get paid

75 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts. For a retired woman, it's 60 cents on the dollar. And 7.3% of retired women live in poverty; that's double the rate of men.

Women with little or no access to safe housing, food and clothing are increasingly reluctant to leave the security of a relationship, even though that relationship is abusive to the health of themselves and their children. How can we continue to protect these women from escalating violence if we are unwilling to provide the resources they need?

In memory of the 14 women slain on December 6, and all the women who have been murdered before and since, let's pledge, all of us, to do more and to do better in their names.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence, recognizing the tragic events of December 6, 1989, and in commemoration of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

The House observed a moment's silence.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

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

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, veterinarian bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

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

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

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

I will sign that petition, and I agree with it.

TAXATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition from the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians that has been

collected from places like Oneida, Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Six Nations and many other First Nations across the province. It's signed by 2,256 such individuals, and it reads as follows:

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

"That the government of Ontario not impose the harmonized sales tax on the people of Ontario; and

"That the government of Ontario maintain Ontario First Nations people's point-of-sale tax exemption pursuant to any harmonized sales tax legislation that may be enacted."

I will sign that petition.

HISPANIC COMMUNITY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: The petition I have here today is in support of proclaiming April as Hispanic Heritage Month, and 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, films, 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; and

"We would support the member's private member's bill of December 3 to proclaim Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition 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.”

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury, and it goes as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition signed by 1,367 individuals to amend the Ontario Health Insurance Act.

“We, the undersigned, feel strongly that oral chemotherapy, pill forms of cancer treatment, must be covered under the Ontario Health Insurance Act.

“This petition is to tell the Ontario government that oral chemotherapy must be covered for cancer patients when the treatment is Health Canada approved and approved for use and being prescribed in Ontario.

“We propose and support an amendment to include oral chemotherapy under section 8(2) of the Ontario Health Insurance Act, RRO 1990, regulation 552.”

As I agree with this petition, I’ll affix my signature to it and send it to the table with page Olivia.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a stop-the-DST petition, signed by thousands of people, that I’d like to present. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax (HST) represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

“This new tax, which we are calling the DST (Dalton sales tax), will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including: electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; newspapers; magazines; Internet and cable; home renovations; heating; air conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales; rents will also go up; minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym fees will also be taxed;

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

“That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I support this, have signed it and will give it to Connor.

HISPANIC COMMUNITY

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“Whereas the Hispanic population in Ontario represents over 23 countries across the world,” such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, 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, films, economics, science and medicine;

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

I support this petition, and I affix my name to it.

PENSION PLANS

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

“Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them” from the hospitals of Ontario pension plan and the OPSEU trust “to OMERS,

meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of continuous service; and

“Whereas when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

“Whereas the government’s own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that government move swiftly to address this issue; and

“Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

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

“That the Minister of Finance support Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson’s resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions to OMERS” from the hospitals of Ontario pension plan or the OPSEU trust.

I agree with the petition. I will sign it.

HISPANIC COMMUNITY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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, United States, 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, films, 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,” which is about to be addressed in debate in this House by Dr. Tony Ruprecht.

I agree with this petition and add my signature as a sign of acceptance.

TAXATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I have more petitions that have been signed by the people of Kitchener–Waterloo.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax (HST) represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

“This new tax ... will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including: electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; ... magazines; Internet and cable; home renovations; heating; air-conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales; rents will also go up; minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym fees will also be taxed;

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

“That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I am pleased to join the people of Kitchener–Waterloo and sign this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to read this petition, addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and submitted by the Islamic Society of North America. I’d also like to acknowledge Arif Shaikh for his help in collecting the signatures. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have another petition against the harmonized sales tax.

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

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snow-plowing, air-conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

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

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes and that the McGuinty Liberal government not bring into effect the harmonized sales tax/value-added tax/blended sales tax, any combination of the provincial retail sales tax with the GST for Ontario consumers.”

**PRIVATE MEMBERS’
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

HISPANIC COMMUNITY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should proclaim the month of April in each year Hispanic Heritage Month throughout Ontario, so that all Ontarians can better understand, celebrate and share the rich history and outstanding artistic, cultural, economic and scientific achievements and contributions made by Ontarians of Hispanic heritage.

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

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I will share my time with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, who certainly had a hand in this, the member from London–Fanshawe, and the member from York West.

Aside from our guests in the gallery, Mrs. Sanchez Fonseca, I’m also very happy to introduce to you a number of persons from the Hispanic community in Toronto and, indeed, from outside Toronto and across Ontario as well.

We have here Councillor Cesar Palacio, representing the city of Toronto; Oscar Vigil, representing *Revista Debate* and *Diario El Popular*; Silvia Mendez, on behalf of *Ahora Canada Ltd.*; Jorge Bonilla on behalf of the Toronto District School Board; Maria Luisa Grimaldi, president of the Hispanic Development Council; Jorge Bianci, representing the Toronto Hispanic Students Union; Madga de la Torre from the *Embajada Argentina*; and Freddy Velez from *Corriere Canadese*.

Remarks in Spanish.

My first point on this wonderful resolution is how I first got in touch with the Hispanic communities in Toronto. When I was first elected in 1978, I was almost immediately approached by Latin American organizers to attend their functions and celebrations. I was impressed by the depth of their commitment to maintain and show the historic culture from all Latin American countries.

In our petition, we already indicated 23 of the countries that are directly involved and who will help us celebrate Hispanic Heritage Day, not only in Toronto, but across all of Ontario.

The second item I’d like to discuss—and I will richly quote from a book called *Toronto’s Many Faces*, whose author is Tony Ruprecht. I will quote the author here. On page 368, you can read:

“Significant Spanish settlements did not occur in Canada until the 20th century. By 1914, approximately 2,000 Spaniards had arrived in Canada, followed by a small group that settled here between the two world wars.

“The largest group of settlers included Latin Americans who arrived between 1968 and 1975, boosting the population of Hispanics in Canada to more than 300,000 persons. Although the arrival of Hispanics can be traced to post-war years, in the last three decades, three main waves of immigrants from different historical roots have settled in Canada. They are the Andean wave from 1971 to 1975, then the coup wave from 1973 to 1979 and then the Central American wave since 1981.

“The causes of these waves are both economic and political. The amnesty legislation of 1973 resulted in an inflow of nearly 70,000 individuals, who came from Ecuador and Colombia. At the same time, the military coup in Chile displaced thousands of Chilean professionals and labourers, leading them to seek political asylum.

“The Central American wave of the 1980s was caused by the socio-political shocks in Nicaragua, the escalation of the civil war in El Salvador, and the repressive policies of Guatemala.”

That brings us to Toronto, because most of these persons who were professionals came and helped us to continue to develop our great nation called Canada. And to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birthday of Simón Bolívar, who liberated six Latin American countries, a bronze bust was sculpted by artist Armando Sorondo, and the monument was presented by the Consul General of Venezuela as a gesture of friendship to Torontonians and placed on the lawns of Trinity Bellwoods Park, in the heart of the city’s Hispanic district.

As you can see, fairly well right from the beginning, we have important contributions made to Toronto when these people arrived from abroad to start a new life here in Canada.

Then I looked through my files, and what I found was very interesting. I found a letter of October 22, 1986, that I wrote as minister with special responsibilities for multiculturalism about the earthquake in San Salvador. I write here that “the earthquake is gone and soon will be forgotten, but the trauma and hunger and uncertainty remains for those most closely affected. For the Salvadorans, it is the beginning of a long road to recovery.”

I was very delighted at that time to make a contribution of \$100,000 on behalf of the government of Ontario to the San Salvadoran community here and the Red Cross to ensure that some monetary help and other types of help that Canadians could offer went to San Salvador, because more than 900 persons had perished and the homeless numbered around 100,000. This was fairly significant. We, as Canadians, especially as Ontarians in Toronto, can be very proud of our contribution to those who suffer across the world. In this case, it was San Salvador, and this, of course, was important to the Hispanic community, because they realized that they had a friend in the government of Ontario.

Indeed, today, I would want our guests who are here to help us to celebrate the acceptance, hopefully, of this private member’s resolution, the Hispanic Heritage Month. When they come here to listen to us speak, I want them to go home and to say, “Yes, it doesn’t matter what party; it doesn’t matter who was speaking, because they were always speaking in support of this.” That’s the feeling that I want them to take away when, hopefully, all members will pass this resolution.

It is very important, not only for Hispanics but also for each country individually that makes up Latin America and Central America. We’re here together. We are, together, shaping a country that is very important around the world because of our sense of multiculturalism, which really means that we have a decision that we have made, and that is that we feel we’re all in the boat together.

For the first time, in fact, in human history, we have a part of our constitution which is very clear. It says, under the sort of heading of multiculturalism, that you can come to this country and you can maintain your language, you can maintain your culture, you can maintain your traditions, and all we expect you to do when you come here is help us to continue with our drive to be accepting and to be open.

The biggest present that we can give, not only to newcomers but to peoples of the whole world, is that when they think of Canada, they must think that these people who are in Canada are fair people. Not only are they fair, but people are treated before the law on an equal basis, irrespective of where people come from, what religion they have and whatever is in our code. So it is important, and I would hope that most people, or all of us, will support Hispanic Heritage Month.

1400

In fact, I want to tell you that we are somewhat late in recognizing the contributions of Hispanics to Canada, because Lyndon Johnson already—imagine this—in 1968 proclaimed a Hispanic Heritage Week in the United States. That was in 1968. We followed up to some degree to establish—and I have the copy here, because under Premier David Peterson I was minister of multiculturalism—a Hispanic Heritage Day. But one day for so many countries, 23 countries that trace their origins to the Hispanic contributions and their roots, certainly cannot be enough. The reason I say this is because each country is of course helping to maintain their traditions and culture, but in addition, each country has a special day. That’s why we cannot simply say, “We proclaim a day that is Hispanic Heritage Day.” We have a job to do, and that is that we should recognize 23 countries and their independent struggles.

As you know, the struggle for independence was not easy. We know that when a country wants to be independent, it is not an easy task to undertake. But when we look at the independent struggles that countries undertake in South America, we also know that in some sense and in some cases they were steeped in blood. Independence, independence resolutions and independence fights from another country are simply not easy tasks, and that’s why it is important to recognize that independence comes at a great cost. Every country, from Argentina to the south to Mexico to the north, went through a great tribulation and every country had to struggle to free itself.

In Canada, of course, we’re very lucky. We didn’t have to go through an independent struggle of a bloody war. We did it somewhat differently, so we say thank you very much that we were able to do this. But in South America the guns were blazing and people died in great numbers. So when we recognize these independent movements today under this heading of Hispanic Heritage Month, we must recognize the contributions that Hispanic Canadians have made to our country and to the development of our province.

It is fairly easy to understand that when we look at the Hispanic community represented in the gallery here today and also represented in other areas in terms of clubs, organizations, libraries and monuments, we see that the Hispanic community organizations have indeed made a great contribution. We see them contributing not only in sports but in music; in the world of arts; as I said to you earlier, in the libraries; in politics; in commerce; and in trade.

My last point is simply this: When we talk about trade, we have to remember that when Hispanics come to Canada, they don’t lose their relationship with the country they came from, and consequently—

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I’m pleased and honoured to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak to the private member’s notice of motion 123, which has been presented by the member for Davenport. Of course, the

motion reads, "That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should proclaim the month of April in each year Hispanic Heritage Month throughout Ontario, so that all Ontarians can better understand, celebrate and share the rich history and outstanding artistic, cultural, economic and scientific achievements and contributions made by Ontarians of Hispanic heritage."

I too would like to welcome our guests who are with us today to listen to this debate. We are very pleased to have you here and honoured to have your presence as this important issue is discussed. I know that I want to pass along the best wishes all of our caucus members, but our citizenship critic and our leader, Tim Hudak, who would have wanted to be here today personally but unfortunately has to be out touring the province.

I want to commend the member for Davenport for bringing forward this motion today. I know the member has served in this place since 1981, if I'm not mistaken, which means that before the end of this Parliament, he will have served for 30 years, a significant achievement that very few of us will achieve. That means he has been elected and re-elected eight times, if I'm not mistaken. I know he has served on a great many committees in this Legislature and, for a time in the late 1980s, served on the Executive Council of the province of Ontario—he alluded to that in his remarks.

I am also aware that he is the author of a book called *Toronto's Many Faces*, which is in its fourth edition, which is really something to be proud of, Tony. Given the fact that we're all so busy with our many responsibilities, I'm not sure how you would find the time to do that additional work on top of your important responsibilities, but I commend you for it.

I had the opportunity as well to be with the member for Davenport on Monday of this week, when we were honouring the Romanian community and raised their flag on the front lawn of the Legislature. I know that the member for Davenport spends a lot of his time organizing those kinds of events and hosting those groups of people to recognize their many contributions to Canada and our heritage.

I don't think there's a member in this House who introduces more petitions in the Legislature, especially on Thursdays. I know he has done a good job of organizing the Liberal members this afternoon to pass around a number of petitions to spread the word about this motion, and I expect and anticipate it will receive strong support from all sides of the House.

I also know that the member for Davenport is known for his outreach to the consular corps. He has many friends that he has made over the years, and I know he has made a lot of effort through the years to strengthen our relations with Cuba. For that, he deserves credit as well.

This is yet another resolution that is intended to acknowledge and recognize a specific community in the province, and they should be recognized. We have done so for many other communities with whom we are privileged to share this great province. We celebrate

Black History Month, South Asian Heritage Month and National Aboriginal Day, just to name a few.

The United States has long recognized Hispanic Heritage Month; I know the member for Davenport alluded to this in his comments. This observation began in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson, which would have been the last year of his term of office as President of the United States. I'm also aware that President Reagan expanded it in 1988 to cover a 30-day period, starting on September 15 and ending on October 15. Of course, this is to recognize the substantial Hispanic community in the United States.

In March this year, the city of Toronto passed a motion requesting that the province proclaim Hispanic Heritage Month. I'm sure the member is aware of that and perhaps, to some degree, that gave him the idea to bring it forward. I'm told that, according to the city's summary of the issue, the concept of a Hispanic Heritage Month is supported in principle by the Hispanic Development Council, the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples, the Canadian Hispanic Congress, the Toronto Catholic District School Board and a large number of Hispanic community leaders and community organizations.

I'm also aware that Hispanics make up about 1% of Canada's population in terms of citizens—about 300,000 people. Estimates rise to between 600,000 and a million, however, when we include Hispanic Canadians who have not yet attained citizenship but are living here.

According to Statistics Canada, the largest Latin American Canadian communities are in the census metropolitan areas of Toronto, with almost 100,000 Hispanic Canadians living in the city; Montreal, with almost as many—75,400, it is estimated; Vancouver, 22,000—almost 23,000 rounded off; and Ottawa, with something like 10,000 Hispanic Canadians living in our nation's capital.

I listened quite intently to the member's speech. In fact, I was sitting in the New Democrat benches for a few minutes, which annoyed some of my colleagues. But I'm back to my place now, not to upset the Speaker. I wanted to get down close so I could hear and listen carefully to what he was saying. He emphasized and expressed how he became interested in this issue when he was first elected to council—would it have been?—in 1978 and started to develop the relationships that led to his interest in this community. He alluded to the fact that there are 23 countries that together comprise what we call Latin America. The member detailed the history of the waves of immigration to Canada that took place from Latin America through the years, which has led to our strong Hispanic community. He paid tribute to Bolivar, the great liberator of Latin America, and talked about the suffering of San Salvador after the earthquake, commending the Ontario residents who dug deep to support financially the people who had been victims of that tragic natural disaster.

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He talked in quite significant detail about the concept of multiculturalism, and of course, considering his

service as the minister of multiculturalism in the 1980s, he knows that issue well. He talked about the importance of the fact that when we invite people from around the world to come to Canada to live here, to help us build this country, we tell them that they can bring their language, tradition and culture, but all we ask in return is that they help us continue to build our strong nation, which is based on equality and tolerance for all.

So I think this is a resolution that will, as I said, receive the support of members from all sides of the House. I would be very surprised if anyone opposed it, and I think it's something that all of us would want to get behind. I know the member is sincere in terms of his interest in bringing this forward and I commend him for it. I urge all members of this House to support the resolution when it comes to a vote this afternoon.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's an honour and a pleasure to rise in support of this private member's bill today brought by the member from Davenport. As people well know, the Spanish population of Ontario is quite broad, quite diverse. When you look at the actual numbers, the majority of those who immigrated to Canada come to Ontario, to Toronto. Half of the Hispanics in Canada live in Ontario, and the bulk come from Spain, followed by Mexico, followed by El Salvador.

As I had a great opportunity in the last month, I should note again that my daughter-in-law has newly immigrated here to Toronto from Cuba, a very proud Cuban, a very happy Canadian. I have to say I had an excellent time at the Havana airport, as did she. My congratulations to those who run that piece of infrastructure.

We should look at the immigrants who have come from Spanish-speaking countries to settle in Ontario. Many have come as refugees from war, from upheaval in their countries. In this city, we are honoured to have Pastor Elias Morales, who has a church in the northern part of Toronto. Elias Morales was an executive assistant and aide-de-camp to Bishop Oscar Romero, who was a voice for sanity, a voice for humanity in El Salvador, cruelly murdered. There's a large Salvadoran community here in Toronto—I had an opportunity last Christmas to attend their party—and it's a people who have gone through extraordinary adversity, who have come to this city, to this province, rebuilt their lives and, in doing that, have made this a far better city and a far better province than it was before.

I was politically active in the early 1970s, when there was another wave of immigrants who came to Toronto, to Ontario, and those were from Chile—people who were well educated, who were committed to community, who had fled for their lives from the situation in that country, who had done their best to address the profound issues that face the people of Chile, their efforts cruelly cut down by a coup d'état, golpe de estado, a people in this country who have become very influential in this community, a people who organize well, who love life, who made Toronto, Canada, a different place.

The reality in Ontario, in Toronto, is that the Spanish-speaking population is growing and there are a number of organizations that represent the Hispanic community here. They promote Spanish and the Spanish culture—roughly, the mother tongue of 160,000 Ontarians is Spanish—and they contribute to our art, to our music, to our science and to our business.

We note that the Americas have also contributed an extraordinary drive for an independent foreign policy, taking on great odds. I'll cite the case of Cuba, which, since the 1950s, has pursued its own foreign policy, independent of its giant neighbour to the north and in fact enduring a blockade that has gone on for decades and that has cramped the economy of that country, a blockade that cannot be justified, that reflects the internal political demands and pressures of the United States but does not reflect a sane and rational foreign policy with regard to that country. Canada, thankfully, has not been part of this blockade and has intelligently carried on a good, productive working relationship with the people of Cuba.

People in industrialized countries sometimes think that they have a monopoly on good sense and good policy, but in fact we have much to learn from the industrializing world, the developing world. People in this chamber will be well aware of the events in the city of New Orleans when it was hit by Hurricane Katrina. Many drowned; many were abandoned. But in Cuba, with far fewer resources than one would see in the United States, they have an active and effective policy of moving people out of the way of hurricanes when they hit that country. They know how to save lives, and frankly, it would be to the advantage of English-speaking culture in North America to look at what has been done in Cuba, to learn from their very effective programs in protecting and saving human life and to take advantage of that here on this continent.

In saying all of that, I recognize, and it has been my experience—coming from an immigrant background myself—that immigrants have changed Canada and Canada has changed immigrants. There is a Canadian-Hispanic culture that I'm sure reaches back out into the countries where people originated and in turn affects those countries and those cultures. When I talked to people at a Salvadoran event last Christmas, they talked about their interaction with people in El Salvador and how they took what they've learned about politics and electoral process here in Ontario, in Canada, and passed on information to their friends; information that people have acquired here in terms of medical procedures. They have taken volunteer brigades down to El Salvador, giving people the kind of medical coverage in the countryside that is not otherwise available to them. So there's an opportunity through the bridge that is the Hispanic peoples of this province, a bridge between us and the majority of the rest of the Americas, which can bring knowledge, goods and beneficial impact in both directions. For this reason alone, it's useful to have a Hispanic heritage month recognized here in Ontario.

If you have an opportunity to go to things like the Hispanic-Canadian dinner that happens once a year, you

get an opportunity to see the full range of Hispanic cultures, both in the Americas and the cultures as they've developed here in Toronto. What was most interesting to me, not this year but the year before, was being at a Hispanic-Canadian banquet with the entertainment provided by Bollywood dancers. I have to say, that said to me that it was truly a Toronto event, that people mixed cultures—

Mr. Mike Colle: Bollywood dancers?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes. For those who take note of that, I just thought, yes, absolutely. People mix and match cultures. They take the best from all of them and they put them together. We have the Hispanic Canadian Alliance of Ontario, the Ontario Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Development Council, the Hispanic Ontario Lawyers Association and, on a national level, the Canadian Hispanic Congress. We have a variety of organizations, but I also have to say, at the grassroots level, we have—and this is primarily for people from Mexico—Mexican farm workers who have been fighting hard to organize and bring justice to those who work in agriculture in this province. Ontario benefits tremendously from those migrant workers who come here and do work on farms, and I for one feel that this province needs to recognize those workers and their right to organize and should be helping them get the sorts of wages they deserve, given the hardness and the importance of the labour that they engage in.

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I have to say that it's a bit distant in time and place, but if you look at the whole history of the National Farm Workers and the United Farm Workers in California, the organizing work done by Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers over decades to bring justice to those farm workers is extraordinarily inspiring. What they did to change the reality on the farm in California is something that needs to be done here in Ontario so that people who work in the soil with their hands, producing the fruit and vegetables that we enjoy throughout the growing season—those people deserve to be paid decently, and it's my hope that when we celebrate this month, Hispanic Heritage Month, we will also look to those farm workers who contribute with their sweat to making this a bountiful and wonderful province.

We are engaged in substantial trade with Latin America. We engage in trade with Mexico. In 2008, Ontario imported over \$1.7 billion worth of goods from Peru and over \$1 billion worth of goods from Puerto Rico. We exported over \$40 million worth of goods to Panama in 2008. We rely on Spanish-speaking countries for a wide variety of goods and we rely on Hispanic countries for an export market. So for a wide variety of reasons, it's to our advantage to deepen our connection with the Hispanic world in the Americas. It's a good idea for us to recognize the value and the interconnections of the Hispanic community here in Ontario, and it makes sense, every April, to raise the consciousness of people in this province about the contribution and presence of Spanish-speaking peoples in Ontario.

I say to the member: I understand that in bringing this forward, it's quite clearly your intent to make sure that the bridge that exists is strengthened; that our connections are deepened; that the advantages that we draw from this mutual interaction are made much greater than they are now. So I congratulate the member and I look forward to the vote.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: *Remarks in Spanish.*

It's a wonderful opportunity here to support this initiative of the member from Davenport. As you know, he is, as the member from Wellington said, a tireless champion of building bridges. He is a bridge builder, and I think sometimes not enough credit is given to him by those of us who are around this place over the fact that he is promoting trade, commerce, tourism and awareness. He's like a one-person trade ambassador, and his work sometimes goes unrecognized—but I don't have to go on too much longer. The only thing I'm upset with him about is that he has a special relationship with the people of Cuba, yet for the Pan Am bids, Cuba didn't vote for the Canadian entry. I've lodged my complaint with the member from Davenport; I'm very disappointed with the government of Cuba for not supporting Canada when over a million Canadians visit Cuba every year and have been longtime friends with that great nation. So I hope he will intercede on our behalf and note our objections to that.

Getting back to Hispanic Heritage Month: If it hadn't been for Queen Isabella of Spain, perhaps we would be here today on a resolution celebrating Italian Heritage Month. If the Italian city-states at that time had had any foresight, they would have accepted Christopher Columbus—or, as they say in Spain, Cristóbal Colón—because, if they had accepted him, we would have had Italian being spoken in all these 23 countries. But that's history. We shall never forget that big mistake, but it was a positive move for people of Hispanic heritage.

I just want to mention that there are so many incredible contributors to making the world richer who have come from the countries we're honouring.

We've got incredible authors of the past, like Miguel de Cervantes. His great work *Don Quixote* is maybe one of the top three pieces of literature ever put together by any author. A modern author whose great books I really recommend reading is Gabriel García Márquez. I just finished up *Love in the Time of Cholera*, an incredible insight into what's happening in Spanish-speaking countries. I don't have to mention one of the most renowned artists ever, Pablo Picasso; great actors like Anthony Quinn; incredible singers like Plácido Domingo, Carlos Santana; Tito Puente, the mambo king; Chi Chi Rodríguez, the very entertaining golfer; Maradona, although he's sometimes a bit erratic. We've got incredible female athletes like Nancy Lopez in the United States. For the first time in the history of the United States, there is a judge of Hispanic heritage: Judge Sonia Sotomayor has just been made a member of the Supreme Court. Anyway, it goes on and on.

I'd like to thank the first person of Hispanic origin to be elected a city of Toronto councillor: Cesar Palacio is here, and he has been a great advocate of this kind of recognition.

As I think the member for Wellington was saying, in greater southern Ontario there are probably over a million people who have Spanish as their first language, not their second language.

This is an opportunity for us to celebrate, honour and also connect with these incredible countries and people, so that we can have events that will attract tourists, commercial activities, cultural activities, musical activities, art shows, all done here in Ontario, in communities like Guelph, London, Etobicoke North and Scarborough. We have to start celebrating these incredible people who have come here with their art, their music—even in Hamilton. We have to ensure that the people of Hamilton celebrate the incredible contributions of Hispanics who have gone to Hamilton.

This is an entrepreneurial opportunity. As the member from Davenport tells you, it's not just about the incredible music and culture; it's also about business opportunities. I think the member from Danforth said that we have to be more trade-conscious. We can't just relate with the United States. We have to relate with Cuba, Colombia, Chile.

So let's take the lead on this. I again urge you to support this very long-awaited resolution. It's about time. Gracias.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: *Remarks in Spanish.*

It's a privilege and an honour to stand up in my place and speak in support of the resolution which was brought by my colleague the member from Davenport. He's a great supporter of the many different nations and is a great supporter of multiculturalism and the diversity in this province of Ontario. He's especially a supporter of the Hispanic community in the city of Toronto and across the province of Ontario. Very often, many members call him not just Tony Ruprecht; they call him Antonio Ruprecht, in recognition of his ties to the Cuban population and government, and also to the people of Hispanic descent in the city of Toronto.

I want to speak on this resolution because it's important not just for the members from Toronto; it's important to me, too, because I represent London—Fanshawe, which has a big population of Hispanic descent. The first wave came early in the 1990s, when they had the wars in Central America. They came from El Salvador, Nicaragua and many different Central American countries. Later on, we got massive waves from Colombia. As a matter of fact, they now call the city of London "Londombia," in recognition of its growing Hispanic community.

1430

No doubt about it: The Hispanic communities in the cities of London and Toronto, and across the province of Ontario, contribute a lot to the multiculturalism and

diversity, to add to our mosaic another flavour which they bring with them: the food, the culture, the literature, the music and many different other things which enrich our society, enrich our province and enrich our country. That's why I think it's important to support that resolution to proclaim the month of April as Hispanic Heritage Month: to recognize those people who came from the Hispanic countries, 23 countries, to Ontario, to this beautiful province, to celebrate with us our heritage and add to our heritage another heritage which gives us the chance to know more about other countries.

My colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence mentioned important things. You know, when we welcome people, we welcome them not because we are good and nice people—besides that we're a good, nice province and are good people in the province of Ontario, we also depend on them to reach out to their nations, to their native lands, to which we want to strengthen our ties and trade and intellectual abilities and education and all those matters in order to strengthen our presence in this province of Ontario. That's why when we stand up in our places as members elected on behalf of the people of Ontario to support certain resolutions—especially like this resolution—it's important not just to talk about it; it's important to recognize it and also celebrate it; not just in Toronto, not just in this place, but across the province of Ontario, across many different communities who host many beautiful communities of Hispanic descent.

Again, I want to congratulate the member from Davenport for bringing such an important issue to this House. You've got my support and I think, from what I heard from all sides of the House, you've got all their support.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'd like to add my compliments to the member from Davenport, Mr. Ruprecht. As much as we like to address him as the Cuban representative here in Canada, I think we have to recognize him as well as the champion of our ethnic community. For years he has been here, before anybody else in this House, as a tireless worker and spokesperson on behalf of the ethnic communities here in our province.

Remarks in Spanish

I said that I'm delighted to offer congratulations to the people that are here today, as I have a very large population in my own area of Spanish/Latino communities. I have Argentina—a very huge one—Chile, Peru, Uruguay, Peru, Honduras and others as well. I have to say that all of them bring a very particular, wonderful flavour as no other, especially when they combine the music, their rhythm and the foods. It's the people themselves. They have integrated so well into our community and they are extremely hard workers, extremely good citizens, law-abiding citizens, and I think they have enriched our country, our province, our city and our community, as have all the others.

Today is a good day for our community, and we have to thank Tony Ruprecht for having the foresight and

recognizing the importance that they deserve to be attributed as a community. They come from various areas, but all of them bring a unique sense of belonging. And wherever they go—and in my area I have maybe five miles by five miles, but I have about 110,000 people in my district. I have the wonderfully famous Jane and Finch, which I think is a wonderful area, and I have a lot of them in that particular area. They are there, they are working, they are contributing, they are shopping in the area. And if you would only walk in the area and see the shops, see the quality of their product, the wonderful things that they expose, I think that is why our province is so rich. So to Tony Ruprecht, the member from Davenport, let me say congratulations for letting us know [*Remarks in Spanish*] how wonderful this community is.

Sometimes when I give my name, I have to say that I am—take your pick, because my name can be anything in Spanish or Italian.

Compliments to all of you; compliments to the member from Davenport—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Gracias.

Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Ruprecht, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: First of all, let me say, Mr. Speaker, [*Remarks in Spanish*]. Thank you very much to all of you who have spoken, especially of course the members from Wellington–Halton Hills, from Toronto–Danforth, from London–Fanshawe and from York West. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence—if I had a place on this resolution, I would like to put his name on here as well.

We, of course, Mr. Colle, also wanted to say thank you very much to Councillor Cesar Palacio, who is here today as well, because he too helped to formulate this, to a great extent.

In order to complete my remarks, I would like to point out, as most members have indicated but I think it needs underlining, that we have to do diplomacy differently. Just this morning, there was a new term that was used on the radio. It said that we have to do diplomacy in a way that is totally different from what we had practised before. It is a diplomacy that has to connect with trade. It is a diplomacy that we have to look not just to the one country where we do 85% with our trade; we have to look beyond those borders to South America. These are really our neighbours, starting from Mexico all the way to Argentina. If we are smart, we know that this kind of diplomacy will gain us a great deal. That's what we have to do today. It is no longer an old world. It's totally changed. We can no longer be satisfied. That's why these heritage days and that's why this whole idea of multiculturalism is so important to the development of this country called Canada, because we have wealth. Not only do we have the old traditions of being hewers of wood and drawers of water and sitting smugly in our communities; no, we have to do this new diplomacy because it will strengthen Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much and all the members in supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for that ballot item has expired. For those in the gallery and those watching at home, we'll vote on Mr. Ruprecht's item in about 100 minutes.

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 second 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, Mr. Ramal, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to introduce a bill. It's important to me and important to many people across the province of Ontario.

Normally I like to stand up and speak in support of and comment on many different bills. Today I am privileged and honoured to stand up and speak and debate and listen to many people talking about my bill, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional conditional driver's licence for seniors. If I had the chance to rename the bill, I would say Michelle Krohn, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional conditional driver's licence. I say that in the presence of Michelle Krohn, who is with us here today in the gallery with her daughter, Yvonne Racowiz—I guess I said it correctly this time—and also the vice-chair of CARP in London, Dan Procop, who came from London and St. Thomas this afternoon to be present to listen to debate about this important issue.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, all the time all of us, from both sides of the House—different parties, different governments, different people—talk about seniors and what we can do for seniors in Ontario to support them living independently in their homes without any support, and how we can give them the chance to be mobile, to move from point B to point Z without C or D or whatever—without any obstacles.

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Mrs. Krohn came to my office almost a year and a half ago. She was talking to me about the importance of this bill. I listened to her for a long time, explaining the importance of a conditional driver's licence for seniors.

She's an active woman, an active senior, a writer, an author, a publisher. She knows very well the importance of all these elements. She's a great advocate on behalf of

seniors, not just in the city of London or the London area, but of seniors across the province. She knows a lot about the importance to seniors of being able to drive, to visit their daughters—in her case, to go to St. Thomas—to go to a shopping mall or a grocery store, or to go see a doctor without calling somebody to drive her wherever she wants to go. She's still fit; she's still able; she still functions very well mentally and physically.

For some reason, as you know, Mr. Speaker, we have one driver's licence across the province of Ontario, one condition for all people, whether they're young, adult or senior. Therefore, the driver's licensing system we apply to all the people in Ontario does not fit all populations, does not fit all ages, does not fit all circumstances, whether health or physical conditions. That's why she came and told me, "It's important to me."

I also heard that she contacted the member from Timmins—James Bay, Mr. Gilles Bisson; she referenced him in her letter. Because she doesn't live in his riding, he referred her to my riding. She also contacted Mr. Bentley. But as you know, a cabinet minister cannot introduce a private member's bill, plus he's not the minister in charge of that portfolio.

She came to my office and we talked. I was convinced. That's why I went to the Minister of Transportation and the minister responsible for the seniors' secretariat to tell about the importance of this bill to allow seniors to be able to drive in certain conditions.

In my bill, I referenced after 65. I got the 65-year mark not because every senior won't be able to drive after 65, or has to go through that exercise and get a special driver's licence. As you know, when we pass 65 years of age, we are called seniors. We become a senior automatically, according to the label, according to the law we use and practise in Ontario. That's why I used the 65 benchmark.

I know that many seniors past 65 still drive and have the normal driver's licence. But many others cannot obtain a driver's licence, maybe because they cannot drive at nighttime or cannot drive on the highways or cannot drive in certain conditions. That's why many other provinces in Canada promoted a conditional driver's licence.

For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador they have driving restrictions custom-designed to meet the driver's needs. Some of the most common restrictions are speed zone, daytime only, geographical region and adaptive equipment restrictions on drivers who have heart conditions. In Manitoba, for instance, restrictions include class or type of vehicle; convex mirrors on fender; daytime driving only; or specific geographic area in which they can drive. In Quebec, they have a special, flexible program that restricts some drivers to driving only in the daytime.

In some other jurisdictions, they have created different measurements. I go back to Manitoba. They have class 5 drivers. We have the G and regular driver's licences in Ontario. They have class 5 for people who have vision of 20/60. It gives them the ability to drive—not at nighttime

and not on highways—in the daytime when weather conditions are good. Some provinces authorize people who cannot obtain the normal driver's licence to drive at certain speeds, with a label on the car, to drive at certain times or certain speeds or in certain zones.

As you know, we live in a huge province geographically. We cannot customize all driver's licences or the conditions according to Toronto measurements. We have a lot of people who live in different parts of the province. Only 27% of the people of Ontario live in the Toronto area, but the rest of the 13 million live in small cities like London or St. Thomas, or they live in the north, where the population is very, very small and the traffic is not huge, not big.

I think it's important for us, as elected officials in this House, in this place, to represent the people of Ontario, represent the infants, represent the children, represent the adults and represent the seniors. We have to act that way. We have to be balanced in every way in order to address all the issues concerning our population in the province.

In this case, I hope all the members from the different parties stand up and support this important initiative. As I mentioned earlier, we're not inventing the wheel here in the province of Ontario. Many other provinces already have some kind of conditional driver's licence for seniors and they give them a chance to drive. Well, according to CARP—I looked at the statistics—many people have a normal driver's licence and can drive anywhere, any time, but they choose to drive only in the daytime and do not go on the 400-series in Ontario or on highways such as the Queen Elizabeth Highway or the Don Valley in Toronto. They choose to drive inside the city or in the countryside, where the traffic is very limited. Why, for some reason, do we want to block that huge population from driving where they are able mentally, and physically to a certain degree, to drive at certain times and in certain conditions? As you know, we talk all the time about the aging-at-home strategy to allow people to live at home when they become seniors. How can we help them out when we have taken all these provisions away from them?

Also, we live in a province where the population is aging on a regular basis, and the statistics are very clear. In the year 2011, we will have one million extra retirees. Our population of seniors in Ontario is almost 1.1 million. We're not talking about one or two or three or four; we're talking about almost a tenth of the population of Ontario as a senior population.

I think it is our obligation and duty as elected officials to deal with this issue in a professional matter. First, people are talking about safety. We're not talking about giving licences left and right without any conditions. But there are still those conditional driver's licences which allow seniors who cannot obtain a normal driver's licence, who cannot drive on the highways, who cannot drive at nighttime, to drive in the daylight, and also drive on the small roads. They'll also be subject to medical evaluation because we are also concerned about the safety of other people who drive on the road.

I hope all my colleagues from our government side and from the opposition side get the chance and the time to read this bill very well because it's important. I know many people watching us today, and especially the seniors, are looking forward to seeing the passage of this bill.

I had the chance last week to attend an event that was put on by Over 55. We have an organization called Over 55. They have chapters across the province. They deal with people who are past the age of 55 to help find a job and to help them fit into their communities. I get all the support from them too. They told me it's important. "When we get old, when we become seniors, it doesn't mean we're not able to do something for our community, or we cannot volunteer, we cannot work, we cannot do this and this and that. Please give us the chance and give us the ability to continue doing what we do on a daily basis, to continue giving back to our communities in our way. Give us the freedom to be able to visit our daughters, our granddaughters, our grandkids. Give us a chance to be able to obtain a job. Give us a chance to go to the grocery stores without any support from a neighbour or a daughter or a son. Please give us a chance to be mobile, to be able to go anytime we want to see a doctor. We want to go to the mall, to spend some time or do shopping."

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So this bill is important for many seniors across Ontario because this bill gives them the chance and ability to continue to connect with their loved ones, to be able to be independent to a certain degree and do something for themselves without any support from any organizations or families.

Thank you for allowing me to speak. I'm willing to hear from all sides of the House about the importance of this bill or the rejection of this bill.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I, at the very outset, risk disappointing my colleague the member from London–Fanshawe. The reason for that is that I will not be supporting his bill—not because I don't agree with the intent, because I absolutely do. The objective is clearly to enable seniors to be as mobile as possible, to give them the opportunity to drive legally and safely for as long as possible, and I cannot argue with that. I support that wholeheartedly.

I approached this as not only the critic for transportation for the official opposition but also as a former Minister of Transportation and as someone who wrestled with this issue on, really, a very personal basis. That was through the eyes of my father, who as a senior citizen was intimidated every time he had to go back for that retesting as a senior. I was then Minister of Transportation, and I can tell you, I was lobbied by my father on a number of occasions on this issue. It actually prompted me to call in my deputy at the time to say, "What can we do here and what is the real problem?" We were on the verge, I believe, of actually resolving this issue when, as

luck would have it, we had an election in 2003, and I woke up one day and I was no longer the Minister of Transportation. I ended up on this side of the House, and as happens when there is a transition of government, often these well-intentioned initiatives are sidelined. So I was actually pleased to see the issue come back before the House. But I believe that there is a better solution.

I'll tell you why I don't believe that to issue a seniors' driver's licence is the answer. First of all, I believe that to issue an age-specific conditional licence is, quite frankly, discriminatory, which is one of the reasons why I personally objected to the age of 80 as triggering that annual visitation to retest. I believe that there should be another test, and that is, quite frankly, the ability to drive safely. How do we achieve that? I believe we achieve that by simply putting restrictions on driver's licences, which is what I had proposed to the ministry at the time: that we proceed from a policy standpoint.

The reason I object to a seniors' driver's licence is because you don't have to be age 65 to have a night vision problem. You don't have to be age 65 to have challenges driving under certain conditions. We have a serious problem at the Ministry of Transportation right now, and that is in terms of how we handle medical disabilities and referrals by a physician to the Ministry of Transportation when someone has had a heart attack, a seizure or any particular other issue. Someone is obligated now, as a medical practitioner—if there is an examination that takes place and a medical practitioner has any reason whatsoever to believe that it may affect that person's ability to drive safely, they must refer that to the Ministry of Transportation. Anyone in this province who has been caught in that circumstance knows that overnight they lose their right to drive, and then to try to get that matter rectified through the process that exists now at the Ministry of Transportation is a nightmare experience. We need serious reform of that entire process within the Ministry of Transportation.

I believe that organizations such as CARP, the Ontario Safety League—and I want to welcome the representative from CARP here. We also did our research. I don't know if there's some misunderstanding within the organization, but let me read to you an e-mail that I received from Pam Maher, who's the advocacy and communications coordinator for CARP here in Toronto. I believe it's a national organization.

It reads as follows: "CARP supports a limited licence for competent drivers of any age who have impairments but are otherwise able to drive safely. This limited licence could include restrictions for night driving or on 400-series highways and would provide an alternative to an outright ban on driving. CARP cannot support any bill which has an age determination.

"CARP understands that the Ministry of Transportation is developing a policy on restricted driving and is of the view that this process should be accelerated."

That is from CARP, who, I think, based on the reading, basically agree with me that yes, we should have restrictions that aren't intended to restrict driving; it

restricts driving under certain circumstances but actually frees up the individual to drive under circumstances that are safe.

I have a quote here that I'd like to read into the record as well from Brian Patterson, who is the CEO of the Ontario Safety League: "We oppose private member's Bill 221 as it has no administrative value and will bring no benefits to senior drivers. It will make Ontario the first provincial jurisdiction to isolate senior drivers in the way it does."

Again, I don't believe that this communication that I've read into the record in any way opposes the intent of my colleague's bill, but it does object to the means of getting there. And I have to object. I don't believe that we in this province should be issuing a specific conditional driver's licence just because someone is a senior citizen, just because they are age 65. I do believe, and strongly support and will advocate for a system of being licensed in this province that recognizes certain circumstances under which some people cannot drive safely. That can be done very simply, not by creating yet another class of licence, not by creating yet another driver's licence that categorizes people according to their age, but rather that accepts the fact that some people cannot drive in anything but daylight. So you put a restriction.

I have a little note on my driver's licence that gives me the right to drive a motorcycle. It's not a different driver's licence; it just simply indicates that I have some latitude within that driver's licence to do things other people can't do. In the same way, I believe that we can focus the Ministry of Transportation not to create additional administrative burdens. That's what I am concerned about. Every time we create another bill here, we add level upon level of additional administration. Now we have to hire another unit to look after the seniors' licences. Not that I'm against employment, but the leading employers in this province should be the private sector, not government. I believe there's a more efficient way of addressing this issue.

To the member from London-Fanshawe: I totally support your objective, and my father would be proud of me today that he hears me from the floor of the Legislature advocating for something that he wanted me to do while I was the minister. I lost the time to do that. Hopefully now the current minister, my good friend Mr. Bradley, will have the opportunity to consider the debate that's taken place here and to put in place a system that will in fact free up our seniors as well as anyone else, regardless of age, in this province who now has restrictions that keep them from being as mobile as they could be by implementing a system of simple administrative restrictions.

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I encourage the minister, while he's at this, to undertake a comprehensive review of his ministry's ability to process medical restrictions to ensure that people are not unnecessarily kept from mobility because of a laborious system within his ministry that fails to take into consideration current medical information that could free up people to drive on Ontario's highways.

I leave those considerations. I trust my colleague will take my remarks in the spirit in which they're intended. I will not be able to vote for this bill, but I'm happy to work with him on achieving the objective.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm pleased to join this debate. I want to say I will be supporting this bill and I'll give you the reasons why.

But first of all—I'm sorry; I got baited—I do need to respond to one thing that was said by my good friend Mr. Klees, and that is that one of the bases he is opposed to this on is that all of a sudden government becomes too big of an employer, there are too many people working for government. The first point I say is, look upstairs. Who are the people we hire? They're fire chiefs, fire-fighters, police, nurses, doctors, teachers. They're people who deserve our support and are essential to making sure that our society works. So yes, it takes people to deliver those services, and they work hard for the money that they get. I get a little bit upset when I hear that rhetoric from the Conservative Party that somehow or other it's a bad thing to have people working for the government, because we forget that those people do the very important work that is necessary for this province to function.

The second point I would make is this: We're a \$100-billion business. We have a \$100-billion budget in this province, and it's getting bigger. But if you looked at how many people work for the province of Ontario, if you were a corporation of \$100 billion, we hire far fewer people than the private sector. Because most of our—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, this is much more efficient; trust me. Look at our health care system and go have this debate in the United States.

I would argue that if you're going to spend \$100 billion in the private sector versus \$100 billion in the public sector, the public sector is quite a bit more transparent. Frankly, we hire fewer employees because most of our money goes to some very basic things, such as making sure we have pensions for seniors, making sure we have, in case of need, unemployment insurance, yes, welfare, pensions for people on disabilities. Those monies go to support people.

I just want to say upfront that as a reason not to vote for this bill I find it a little bit hard to take. But anyway, that's my social democratic view. I respect Mr. Klees and his conservative view, but I've got to say I disagree.

I want to then talk about some of the reasons why I think this is a good idea and what we probably need to do at committee in order to make this even better, because I think we should allow this thing to go to committee.

I would ask Mr. Klees to think about that because one of the arguments you make—I understand—is the age discrimination issue. There are those within CARP and others who will argue that 65 years old—if you make it an age-based licence, it's age discrimination. I don't buy that to the same degree, but I understand the argument. Is a person who turns 65 who gets a pension being discrim-

inated against? I don't think so. A child who turns—what is it, 18 or 19 to drink in a bar these days?

Interjection: Eighteen.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Eighteen years old. A child becomes a young adult at 18 years old. Are we discriminating because we don't allow them to drink before 18? No. These are arbitrary numbers that we've picked for reasons within our society. So if the issue is that, I again say that there are all kinds of other precedents out there where we use age for certain triggers in our society to make things happen. But I do understand that maybe what we need to do is—and I think this is what the member is trying to do—provide a mechanism for a driver who says, “You know what? I ain't going to drive on the Highway 400 series any more. I don't want to drive at night. God, I don't even want to drive in downtown Timmins. All I want to do is get in my truck at the cottage and go pick up some wood, or I want to be able to drive to the grocery store, maybe the liquor store,” and do the things that are necessary so that you can enjoy a reasonable life, living independently.

The question becomes, should the legislation say, “Well, this is available for you at 65 and, therefore, you can apply for a licence that has fewer conditions on it”—or it has more restrictions, I guess is the way I would put it. That's one approach. Or do we say to all drivers—you know, there may be drivers out there who say, “Listen, I don't feel safe driving on the Highway 400 series. I don't feel safe driving at night,” because they may have a vision problem or whatever it might be, and maybe we should have a system for all drivers to be able to opt for a licence that has more restrictions.

I think that's a fair debate, but we should allow that debate to happen in committee and allow the bill to get out of this House so that at least we can have that debate. I think it's an interesting one, and I'll give Mr. Klees—he has thought out his argument well. I understand where he's coming from. I don't totally agree, but I understand the argument.

I want to put this to some practical measure, and we all have seen the examples in our own homes and within our circle of friends and acquaintances in our communities. My mother, 78 years old, passed away last year. The thing that drove her over the top was that one of the problems she had for the last maybe seven or eight years of her life was a problem with her vision. So she had to go through a test to make sure that she had the vision to be able to drive, but they would also send her out on the driving test. Man, that would work up Mom. Mom would get worked up for two or three weeks, and her blood pressure would go about up here. She was just livid about having to go for that test—for a whole bunch of different reasons.

One reason is, “Well, first of all, why should I have to worry about some of the stuff that they're worried about testing? I don't do it. I don't parallel park. I never parallel parked in all of my life. I've got a big driveway. I have a house that allows me to do that.” “I don't want to parallel park,” my mother would say; “I don't drive at night. I don't see well enough.” She herself understood her

limitations, and she, like most of us, sees driving and getting a licence not as a right but a responsibility and understood that when she got behind the wheel, it wasn't just about her safety and possibly the safety of other passengers; it's also others who happened to be in contact with these cars as we're out on the streets—pedestrians, bikes, motorcycles and cars. So she understood, as a responsible adult, that she had certain responsibilities.

But the other reason she used to get really upset about it was: “Who are they, telling me, at 76 years old, that I don't know how to drive? Who are these people?” I'll tell you, we've seen that argument in our families, and we've seen that argument with our friends. It is a bit of a blow because we, unfortunately—or fortunately, as some of us will live long enough to see our elder years, our golden years. There's a certain loss of independence that a person goes through as they get older. You get to a point where your kids don't—well, kids sometimes don't listen to you when you're younger, but that's a whole other issue. But you get a little bit older and all of a sudden you're not needed as much. You play a very different role within the family. Your kids are much more independent. The grandkids don't drop in as much. People in society—you used to be in the centre of it; you were the decision-maker, you were in business, you were in the labour movement, you were in politics or you did whatever. All of a sudden, you find yourself somewhat less valued because of what's happening in the circumstance of your life at that particular point.

That was the point my mother was at. It was one of the things that just drove her crazy, this, “Who are they to tell me I can't drive?” I understand that my mother had to go through that because she had a vision problem, but certainly we could have made that process easier for her. That's why I want to thank the member for bringing this forward, because I see this as a good compromise. Mom would have been able to have some dignity as she went through this and said, “Listen, I opt for a lesser licence. I don't need all of this other stuff; I need this. I can survive with that type of licence. If I have to do those other things, I've got my sons to do that, and I've got family and friends who can do that for me as well.” That's fine.

I think of Camelo Bourdignon, who is a long-time supporter of mine and a good family friend of the Alberton family and the Daminiat family. At 80 years old, in perfect health, he decided to give up his driver's licence—Camelo, a strong, hard-working man who emigrated from Italy, who made his life here, like a lot of people who came as new Canadians; a very proud man, worked hard, raised his family and they all did well. But I've got to tell you, I remember talking to him as he was getting close to his 80th birthday. I said, “Mr. Bourdignon, you're turning 80 soon. How do you feel?” He said, “Mad as hell.” I said, “Why?” He said, “They want me to go for a test, and I'm not going. I'm giving up my driving. I'm going to give up my licence.”

It was the only mechanism that he and his wife had to be able to move from point A to point B. In many communities—and luckily for us in Timmins, we have transit, but that's not what he wanted to do.

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The only reason he used his car was to go from his house, which is to the side of the golf course, to the grocery store, which is down the road; yes, to the beer store or the wine store to get a case of beer or a bottle of rye—he made his own wine so he never had to worry about that. He used his car—actually his pickup truck—very infrequently.

Camelo made the point that he felt it was an attack on his pride and it was an attack on him to have to go through a test to prove that he can drive, even though, for all of those years that he's been in Canada, he had a safe driving record. For all of those years in Canada, he did what he was supposed to do, did it within the confines of the law and never got charged. He says, "Who are they to come all of a sudden and say that I'm too old and I can't drive?" Can you blame Camelo? I think he represents the views of many people who find themselves in that situation.

So I want to congratulate my friend who brought this idea forward. I think you did the right thing by going through your local member. We have very selected ability to do private members' bills, and I want to thank my good friend the member from London–Fanshawe for bringing this thing forward.

I think there will need to be a little bit of thinking at committee, and this is what this is all about. I'm sure that when we all draft bills—and I've done it myself—something is going to scream out at us and we say, "Ah, I should have done this," and that's what the committee process is about.

But the basic principle is the right one, and that is to give people an option about the type of licence they're going to have, that you don't have to be measured to a test that you don't want to be measured to because you know you might not be able to meet it because of circumstance, and allow people to say, "I'm going to be happy driving during the day, I'll be happy driving in my neighbourhood, and I'll be happy having certain restrictions, knowing that that's the limit of my ability to drive, but that's all I want." We want to give people the dignity that they need, especially in our golden years, to be able to have the pride of saying, "I've been a good driver, I've done a responsible job as a driver, and I'm not going to have to go through the many insults that having to go through that particular type of test would be."

So it's going to take some amendments, but at the end of the day, I think it is a step in the right direction, and I want to say we will be supporting this bill at this point and look forward to seeing it in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Let me say at the outset that I will be supporting Mr. Ramal's Bill 221, to create an optional conditional driver's licence for seniors.

A driver's licence is really a ticket to independence; it is a ticket to freedom. I want to echo the words of my friend from Timmins–James Bay.

Before my mother passed away, it was almost a similar story. She could not drive at night, but she could

certainly drive in the daytime. When they took her driver's licence away, she not only took that as an affront, but she really decided that from that moment on she became fairly useless, and I'm pretty sure that added quickly to her years.

Let's have a quick look at what other provinces are doing. Look at, for instance, Alberta: a special driver's licence for daylight driving only. Manitoba: a class of vehicle of type and, as the member from London–Fanshawe indicated, a class 5 driver's licence. Look at Newfoundland and Labrador: Driving restrictions are custom-designed to meet drivers' needs.

Prince Edward Island: Restrictions include daytime only. Quebec: Of course it's a whole different combination of restrictions here, but the program places an emphasis on what? On flexibility. Yukon—we wouldn't be the only ones.

So I'm really surprised, and I want to echo your words in a way. I'm really surprised at the member from Newmarket–Aurora. I know he tries to do the decent and the right thing. He tries. But he should also know the process around here. This is not cast in stone. This has the ability to be changed. We need you on the committee. We need you to come forward and say to the committee exactly what you said today, because it makes sense. You can make a big contribution as a former Minister of Transportation.

So we ask the member to change his mind. Stand up and be counted by saying yes, because you know the only way anything will get done around here is not by passing that "hot potato" on to the minister and saying, "Here, you'll fix it." No. Get into committee, please. We beg you, do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Merci, monsieur le Président. C'est avec grand plaisir que je participe à ce débat du projet de loi 221, présenté par mon collègue de London–Fanshawe. Cela démontre aujourd'hui que notre député de London–Fanshawe est à l'écoute. Il est à l'écoute lorsqu'une commettante s'est approchée de lui pour lui parler de l'importance, pour nos aînés avec des faiblesses, vraiment, de temps à autre, de pouvoir continuer à conduire leur automobile. On nous dit qu'il est très important puisque de plus en plus les personnes à la retraite rendent un grand service dans une communauté. Lorsque je dis « rendent un grand service »: ce sont des personnes qui se déplacent pour aller faire du bénévolat. Ce sont des personnes qui se déplacent de plus en plus pour se rendre dans des endroits comme la YMCA pour faire des exercices. Puis aussi, on dépend beaucoup de ces personnes-là pour participer à des activités sociales. Je pourrais dire que dans mon cas moi-même, mon épouse a plus de 65 ans et, même si elle pèse seulement 95 livres, elle est au gym à tous les jours de la semaine. Si elle ne pouvait pas avoir son permis, elle ne pourrait plus se rendre au gymnase à tous les jours pour participer avec les équipes de dames qui y participent.

Mais il faut dire qu'en Ontario, 65 % de nos aînés ont un permis de conduire. Lorsqu'on dit 65 %, ça veut dire

que 35% ne détiennent pas un permis de conduire. Mais il faut toujours prendre en considération que dans ce 35 %-là, beaucoup de gens demeurent dans les secteurs urbains, où les transports en commun existent. Il faut se rappeler que dans le secteur rural, les transports en commun n'existent pas.

Je regardais : sur les 1 200 000 personnes en Ontario qui détiennent un permis de conduire, je dirais que lorsqu'on va procéder à l'acceptation de ce projet de loi-là, on pourrait dire que beaucoup d'autres personnes pourront bénéficier d'un permis de conduire.

Mais je vais vous apporter un exemple de deux personnes. Lorsque j'écoutais le député de Newmarket–Aurora, je dois dire qu'on devrait appuyer ce projet de loi-là. Si nous voulons revenir plus tard avec des points qui ont été soulevés, je suis d'accord avec lui. Je dois dire que dans ma circonscription—je vais vous donner l'exemple de Sylvain Dubois de St-Bernardin, en Ontario : la personne avait une faiblesse de sa vision, donc il voyageait en ATV. La police l'a arrêté parce qu'il prenait les routes de côté et ce n'était pas permis. La personne travaillait chez GM Ménard à St-Isidore. Il a fallu trouver un moyen de transport. Mais l'autre chose qui est survenu : son frère qui travaillait à Rockland, à 45 kilomètres de chez lui, n'avait pas le droit non plus, puis il avait 65 ans, de voyager avec un ATV. Donc, savez-vous de quelle façon il a poursuivi pour aller à son travail? Il voyageait avec un tracteur de ferme, 90 kilomètres par jour. Vous savez que nous avons le droit de conduire un tracteur sur les routes en Ontario. Mais on n'a pas le droit de voyager avec un ATV. Et puis là je dois dire à cette personne-là qu'elle mérite des félicitations, parce qu'ils devaient répondre.

Mais aujourd'hui on dit que lorsque ce projet de loi-là aura passé, on pourrait demander davantage, et puis la qualité de vie de ces personnes-là va augmenter. On dit toujours que si une personne se tient occupée, elle passera moins de temps dans les bureaux de médecin. C'est bel et bien vrai, cette position-là que beaucoup de gens prennent. Donc, on pourrait bénéficier de ces personnes-là qui sont à la retraite, et puis continuer à travailler vraiment et à faire du bénévolat dans les communautés lorsque ces personnes sont à l'extérieur.

Je vais soulever un autre point. Cette dame qui travaillait à une garderie à Casselman a eu une faiblesse. Elle travaillait alors comme aide seulement et puis, tout d'un coup, elle a eu un avertissement du médecin qu'elle ne pouvait plus conduire. J'ai rappelé le ministre puis je leur ai dit : « Bien, il faudrait regarder le médecin. On dit que le médecin a fait une erreur, et puis là on demande qu'on réinstalle ces permis de conduire ». Lorsque j'ai appelé au ministère, j'ai pris ça pour une farce, parce qu'on m'a dit : « Dans le transport rural, est-ce que vous avez encore des chevaux pour conduire, pour aller travailler? » Donc, je l'ai pris pour une farce.

1520

C'est pour vous démontrer qu'avec un permis spécial, cette personne-là aurait pu continuer à rendre un grand service dans la communauté, en se rendant au travail tous les matins. Donc, de plus en plus je dis que ce projet de

loi-là, il y a vraiment un crédit à donner à notre député de London–Fanshawe pour en avoir eu l'initiative.

Je dois dire aussi qu'il faut se rappeler que nos aînés sont les bâtisseurs de notre pays et de notre province, et ils ont dû faire beaucoup, beaucoup de sacrifices dans leur vie afin de nous donner la qualité de vie que nous vivons aujourd'hui. Donc, on doit faire de tout notre pouvoir afin de leur donner des droits dont ils peuvent vraiment bénéficier afin de rendre service à leur communauté, et leur dire : « Merci pour le bon travail que vous nous avez fait, et pour les sacrifices. Aujourd'hui, nous reconnaissons le travail que vous apportez à la communauté ».

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: I rise in support of the bill and compliment the member from London–Fanshawe.

In listening to the debate, I can sympathize with the member from Newmarket–Aurora. He brings a lot of experience to the table. But I have to say this: Unless we initiate something in this House, nothing is ever going to happen. So in whatever way this is going to be done, it is something where a lot of seniors in my area would be delighted to say, “Yes, I have no problem. I don't want to drive on highways, but I have my church five blocks down the street, and I can't walk, but I can drive. I would love to do that”—or take the wife to the doctor just around the corner, or to the dentist, or to do some local shopping. I have a lot of seniors in my area for whom this is the only thing they want to do—especially since a lot of seniors nowadays no longer have anyone to take them around. They have to look after themselves. I think it would be a wonderful thing if we could advance this proposal in the House and let the government know that it is required, that there is a need out there. We don't have to change the entire Ontario traffic act. The wonderful thing is, if the government and the minister want to do it, they can do it very quickly by a simple regulation. They don't have to create anything special or new. They just have to recognize the need and the will to do it; recognize that we have a lot of seniors out there who are still very lucid, very mobile—but 27% of seniors 65 and over have some mental or physical disability. What is wrong with saying, “If you qualify, if you pass the test, then yes, you can do some local driving”? They know their local area, their community, and I think we should afford them that possibility. We are not saying that we should rewrite the act and do something completely brand new.

I think it's important that the House send a message today to the government and the ministry and say that it's something that is needed, that we should be doing. On a regular basis, I have people who come into my office and say, “I am 82 years old. I've been driving for the last 45 years. I've never had an accident. I've never had any problems. But I have to go for a written test.” These are people who never attained proficiency in English, and they are very emotional when it comes to that. So I hope we can push this through the House today.

I thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Ramal, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank the members who spoke on this bill: Newmarket–Aurora, Timmins–James Bay, Davenport, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and York West.

I listened to all the debate. I respect what the member from Newmarket–Aurora mentioned, as he has a lot of expertise in this field.

Mrs. Krohn and the seniors in the province have a problem: We wouldn't extend, to all the people of various ages, conditions on when to drive and how to drive, in daytime or nighttime. I don't think so. That's why we opened the debate in this place.

In debate, we learn from each other. Hopefully, if this bill passes today, we can go to the committee and the committee will enhance it, as the member from James Bay mentioned many, many different times. It's important.

When I talk about 65, it's just because technically, when we talk about seniority—the people who want to go on a pension, they start at 65. That's why we have to have a benchmark, as the member from James Bay mentioned.

I believe strongly that all the people, all the members, all the seniors, all the total population of Ontario, want to have a chance to be mobile. Specifically we're talking today about seniors, because this segment of our society works very hard—comme mon ami le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell dit tout le temps—contributions by the seniors in this province, to make this province for us and to enjoy today. To give them the chance to live in dignity and independence, I think, is part of the small obligation we have to pay them in order to give them that chance.

With that, I want to thank all the members, whether they were speaking in support or against. Hopefully, the members who spoke against can change their minds, and hopefully this bill can go to committee and will be enhanced to serve all the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on the member for London–Fanshawe's item in about 50 minutes.

FIRE PROTECTION
AND PREVENTION
AMENDMENT ACT (FIRE SPRINKLER
RETROFITTING), 2009
LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION
ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE
(INSTALLATION RÉTROACTIVE
D'EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES)

Mr. Sergio moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 214, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 with respect to fire sprinkler retrofitting / Projet de loi 214, Loi modifiant la Loi de

1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie à l'égard de l'installation rétroactive d'extincteurs automatiques.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to initiate the debate on Bill 214, which is a bill to amend the Ontario Fire Protection and Prevention Act, requiring the retrofitting of care occupancies built prior to 1998 and to comply within five years from the date of approval.

I have representation from every corner of the province of Ontario today from our fire departments—too many to mention, but I'd like to acknowledge them. It's a wonderful thing to have them; it's never too many. I'd like to acknowledge the presence of the president of the Ontario fire chiefs, Richard Boyes; Deputy Chief Jim Jessop; Chief Brian Maltby from the Brampton fire department; Chief Steve Hernen from the Huntsville fire department; Chief Ralph Dominelli from the Orillia fire department; Deputy Chief Frank Lamie from the Toronto fire department; Chief Tim Bond; Chief Lee Smith; President Bill Burns from the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario; Ms. Susan Eng, the vice-president of CARP—thank you for coming; Greg Mitchell, business manager, Local 853 of the Sprinkler Fitters Ontario; Dale Hawrychuk, also from Local 853, Sprinkler Fitters Ontario, as business agent; George Downs, business agent with Local 853; John Galt from the Canadian Automatic Sprinkler Association; Gord White from ORCA; and practically every representative from the Ontario fire prevention officers association.

Applause.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you. Thanks for coming. I didn't want to finish my 10 minutes, but they all deserve to be recognized and applauded.

1530

The intent of the bill is to bring some fairness to the situation with respect to care occupancies. The bill calls for providing a safe situation by retrofitting homes built prior to 1998 and bringing them into compliance with those built after 1998, which the government mandated. At the moment, we have a two-tier system of care occupancy, one with fire sprinklers and one without. I think it would be very fair to provide the necessary safety and peace of mind to our seniors in those types of accommodations.

Sprinklers do not go off accidentally; only by a fire and directly above its source. They are safe. Only one in 16 million shows a form of defect. We have more than 400 jurisdictions in North America where sprinklers have been approved and are required. Ontario, on a comprehensive basis, is unfortunately not one of those jurisdictions.

Fire sprinklers provide early warning and receive quick action and reaction to an alarm call. A study by the Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal indicated that 43% of smoke detectors didn't work. In a lot of cases, fire sprinklers may extinguish a fire prior to the fire people

arriving on-site. Fire sprinklers do not require any advance notice. They may come day or night—sometimes when it's already too late.

Sprinklers sit very inconspicuously in a very particular place. They don't bother anybody. They are there, waiting for a fire, if and when it starts. It is better to have them and not need them than to need them and not have them.

Someone says that they do cost money. I wish I could say they don't cost any money; the province is going to look after it. I think it would be very nice indeed if the province would pick up the pace and say, "We have to recognize the importance, we have to recognize the inequity that exists and we are going to do something about it." In whatever form, in whatever way, governments, when there is a will, always find a way—even if PST is joined with GST, or if we cut off some of those wonderful consultants, we could use some of that money to provide safety for those seniors.

With respect to the cost, let me say that we have to think of the cost in lives lost. Last January, at the Muskoka Heights retirement home in Orillia, a fire claimed the lives of four seniors. Many others were hurt and traumatized, and some were dislodged for several months. The cost was \$825,000 in damages; the building was gutted. The cost to retrofit it was estimated at \$41,250.

At Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, a fire took three lives. At Meadowcroft home for the aged, a fire claimed eight lives. At Extencicare in Mississauga, a fire claimed 21 lives. At the Huntsville Rowanwood Retirement Residence, 56 residents were displaced, \$5 million in damages; the cost to retrofit, merely \$120,000. At Cavendish Manor, a fire displaced 89 seniors for months. The cost of damage was over \$500,000; the building was gutted. The cost of retrofitting was estimated at \$280,000.

Since 1980, three coroners' jury inquests have recommended the installation of sprinklers in all facilities built prior to 1998. I think it's about time that we take heed. I'm part of this government and, with all due respect, I would like to say that every day whenever I have the occasion, I will not let it go by to call on my own government and say, "The time has come. This is something we have to address. Something has to be done. Those seniors deserve the attention, to be recognized and given what they deserve."

It's not only for them. Every fireman that is here today and the forces out there are looking not only after our people; they are looking after our family.

When I saw a video called Phoenix Ladder 27, I couldn't be more impressed when I saw firefighters on the roof trying to get to the inside of the house. The roof collapsed and the fireman dropped right in the middle of a fire. So it's not only our seniors; it is those that we have on a daily basis, day in and day out, day and night, trying to look after our family, our neighbourhoods and our seniors as well.

In a recent study, the American Community Survey also shows that those occupants are mostly seniors 65

and over. As I was saying before, 27% of them have some sort of physical or mental disability. It's very difficult to move those seniors very quickly out of a building. As I said before, someone many eons ago said, "Be ready, because you never know when I come, and when I do come, I'll come as a thief," and fire is something like that. They don't have to warn us. They don't have to warn the seniors. If it happens on a weekend or at nighttime, the difficulty increases because that is the time when most of those facilities have less people around, less staff around, therefore it becomes more difficult to provide assistance and move those people out on a quick basis.

As I said before, it is unfair that we continue to have a two-tier system of care occupancy. We have some 577 long-term-care facilities—77,000 residents in those particular homes alone, but there are others. I think it's fair to say that if the government were to take the issue very seriously—and it should, and I'll make sure it does—at every chance I get, I will remind my own government that it's our responsibility and to fulfill the responsibility towards our seniors to look at the needs of our senior population.

Costs can be alleviated in many, many ways, but first of all, before we get to the cost of retrofitting these homes, we have to think of not only the lives lost, which is totally unacceptable; we have to think of displacing so many seniors. And what about the families? I think it's a concern all around.

I call on the members of the House to move this along and I hope that this will serve as a very strong message to the government saying that we have to recognize that we have a problem. We cannot continue to have a two-tiered system for seniors in our province. We should be taking a lead. We have taken the lead in our province in many, many ways. We have done, as a government, many wonderful things, and many wonderful things for our seniors. I would hate to see that my own government would let hundreds of thousands of seniors down because, if you will, of cost.

I think the House today should send a good message to our government and say, "We have a problem and we want you to address it." The supporters that you see here today are saying the same thing. They are sending the same message. It's time that we address the problem. Three coroners' inquests: They called for the same thing years ago. This government hasn't done it so far. Previous governments didn't do it either. Does it mean that we should lie back and not call for any action? No. I think it would be wonderful if today our government would recognize those calls and think about those people who lost their lives and listen to the call of our fire people here today and say, "We have to address it. We can't go on. It isn't fair. Our seniors deserve it. Let's give it to them."

I thank you, Speaker, for your time today.

1540

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise in support of the bill before the House. The member from York West has brought a matter to the House that, as he so rightly but diplomatically puts it, I might say—of course, he has to as a member of the government caucus—has been ignored, and ignored by successive governments. I don't hold the government that I was a member of in any way innocent here.

But what concerns me is that after, as the member indicated, a number of coroners' reports, the response of the current Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Rick Bartolucci, was to direct a study of the matter. I don't think we need any more studies. I think what we have are some very glaring examples of what can happen.

We have, over the last number of years, had a number of very tragic circumstances. I go back to 1980, when 25 residents lost their lives at the Extendicare nursing home; 1989, at the Ottawa Centre nursing home, where three residents lost their lives; in 1989, at the Nepean Extendicare Starwood nursing home—there were two residents who lost their lives there; in 1995, at the Mississauga Meadowcroft Place nursing home, eight residents lost their lives; in 1997, at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre—three dead; in 2008, in Huntsville, at the Rowanwood Retirement Residence—56 homeless. Thank God, there were no injuries or fatalities. The building was totally destroyed. When we talk about the cost of not acting on these, I think this is an excellent example of where we have to have some long-term thinking. Of course, the most recent circumstance was at Orillia's Muskoka Heights Retirement Residence, where there were four residents who lost their lives, with four in critical condition.

I just want to refer to an article that appeared in the October 13 edition of the *Globe and Mail*. Christie Blatchford reported on this and she quoted Oakville Fire Chief Richard Boyes, who is also president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. And I want to take the opportunity to welcome members of our fire services from across Ontario to the House today, and to say, on my behalf and certainly on behalf, I'm sure, of all members of this Legislature, that we thank you for the work that you do every day. We also thank you for your show of support here. I can tell you that it's one thing for a member to bring forward a piece of legislation; it's yet another thing to have the turnout from leaders within our province who understand this very well. Your being here is a much stronger message than anything we could say from the floor of the Legislature today. So thank you for your presence here today.

I refer back to Fire Chief Boyes's comments in this article. I commend him for challenging the government as he has. I want to just quote what he said: "What you have to look at is that the province has passed a number of other public safety laws.... What makes this so much different? Why not pass one more law? The political will doesn't seem to be there, because it's the right thing to do."

I think it goes to the heart of what makes governments take action under some circumstances and delay under others. This issue that we have before us here should not take any lobbying. The evidence is so clear. We have the recommendations from the professionals right across this province who experience the dangers of not having this protection. On behalf of the PC caucus, I want to encourage the government to not only consider this an important issue, but that they act.

My colleague made reference, in his introduction of the bill, to the cost, and obviously that is a matter of discussion. There is an issue that we have to consider with every piece of legislation that comes before us, and that is the practical implications of that legislation. Clearly, there will be a cost to this. It's for that reason that I would ask the government—and my support for this bill is correlated with my appeal to the government to also step forward and make it possible for the funding to be accessed for these care facilities to implement these systems that are being mandated by the proposed bill. When we consider the long-term cost of the tragedy, then this becomes a non-issue for the government.

I have a concern that we in this place continue to pass regulation after regulation and law after law without any consideration for the people who actually have to foot the bill to implement what we have mandated. It is easy in here to simply stand in our place and vote for something and then we pass it on. We say, "Craft this up as a bill," and then we issue the regulation and we wash our hands. I believe that in this case particularly we have a responsibility—the government has a responsibility—not just to wash our hands but to actually put in place a mechanism for funding that will allow this regulation to be implemented in the way that it should.

I know it's difficult for my honourable colleague to be very strong, if I can put it that way, in being a member of the government, but I would encourage him to rely on some of his colleagues in the official opposition to put the pressure on when it comes to funding because we have no hesitation in holding ministers to account. That's our job. In fact, Her Majesty expects that of us, so we're doing that.

I want to commend my colleague for bringing this forward. I want to commit to him that not only will we support him here; we'll support the bill in committee and we will support him in his efforts to convince the government not only that this is the right thing to do but that there should also be the appropriate funding mechanism in place to ensure that it gets implemented without delay.

With that, I defer the rest of my time to my colleagues and look forward to a celebration on the day the government accepts this bill and announces the appropriate funding for its implementation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just want to stop the clock for a moment because I too want to welcome Chief Richard Boyes here to Queen's Park. My parents and his were the best of friends all of their lives. They're all now deceased. Richard's father, before I was

born, was chief of the Alliston fire department. Maybe some day, if I keep doing this, Richard will get out of Oakville and come back to Alliston and retire. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Further debate? Start the clock.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know that my good friend Mr. Miller from Hamilton East—

Mr. Paul Miller: Stoney Creek.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Stoney Creek; sorry. I've told you, I never could remember the names of the ridings around this place. I've been here for 20 years; what is it?

Anyway, I know that he wants to speak to this and will bring a perspective that would be a bit different from mine. He sat on municipal council and sees this also from the perspective of what it means for local municipalities.

First of all, up front, I want to congratulate the member for bringing this forward. I think this is, as we say in the business, a no-brainer. This is something that is basic.

We know what happened. At one point the laws or the regulations were changed to make sure that from a certain date—what was the date, 1996 or 1986?

1550

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It was 1986.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Was it 1986? Whatever the date was, don't quote me, but all homes for the aged had to have sprinkler systems installed in new construction. But we never dealt with the previously constructed stock that's out there. The member is trying to undo what has been a problem for some time. I'm not going to list the names of the institutions, but there are a number of cases where fires have happened, and in some cases where sprinklers were not installed, lives were unfortunately lost and people were injured. So clearly, we're trying to do what is the right thing.

I want to pick up on something that was said by both members so far: It's one thing to pass this bill, but it's quite another thing to make it happen. Far too often, one of the things we do around this place is pass well-intentioned legislation and then governments sort of sit on it for a while. The bill in fact gets passed—gets third reading—and gets proclaimed, but then it's never enacted. I think your first challenge is going to be to make sure the government actually does enact it. I think that in the end it won't be just a question of the bill; it's going to be a question of also changing some of the regulations that govern this particular issue. That's really going to be the challenge. It's one thing to get the vote; it's going to be quite the other thing to get government to want to move forward on it.

I want to say that frankly that is a pox on all our houses, because we've all been in government at one particular time with this particular issue. I guess we've all had an opportunity to look at this, and for various reasons it's not been done.

I want to say to the member, you have quite a challenge ahead of you. I recognize, as you do, that this is a cost item. For that reason, government will look at not doing this quickly, because they recognize that as

soon as they enact this legislation and the regulations are changed, what's the first thing the home for the aged or other facility is going to say? "Where's the beef? It's fine that you passed this law, but how am I going to pay for this?" I'm going to see a whole bunch of people who run institutions knocking at the door, saying, "I need some help."

That's what the government worries about. They know they're going to have to do something; maybe not pay 100% of it, but they're going to have to pay for some of the cost of actually doing the retrofit. So the challenge the member is going to have, really, will be to overcome those two hurdles: to make sure that the bill gets enacted and that there's some kind of commitment and recognition from the government that it's going to cost some money.

As the member said, this is money well spent. We have learned over the years that a fire sprinkling system is a very effective way to try to suppress a fire early on. We know it is effective, we know it saves lives and we know it prevents additional damage that would otherwise happen to property. I want to say to the government that we will support this. I look forward to the discussions we will have on this particular issue in committee.

The member says he's going to come to the Legislature every day and try to keep this issue alive and keep the feet of the government to the fire. I look forward to question periods. I look forward to the tough questions that I think will have to be asked of the government, because I think he recognizes, as I do, that it's going to take a fair amount of intensive prodding in order to move this forward.

I think the member well understands that it's not just having a chat with the minister and raising it in private; there's also going to have to be some public scrutiny to this thing, and question period, press conferences and other means to put on some public pressure are some of the things that I think the member has to be prepared to do—and understand he is going to need to do—in order to do this.

If he's looking for help in that fight, I, along with my good friend Michael Prue and, I would imagine, Mr. Miller and others don't have a problem helping with that issue and raising that issue ourselves. But it's also going to take some questions from the government side of the House, and I'm not talking about "Mr. Minister, you know this is a great thing and it's wonderful and how can you inform me" types of questions, but the type of question that actually raises the question: "When can we expect action from this government on this particular issue?" I want to say to you that I will support you in that and, if need be, even join the fray.

I want to end on the last point, and that is the issue of coroners' inquests. The member is quite right. First of all, fortunately, there have been a number of coroners' inquests that have made these recommendations. When tragedies happen, we hope that we learn from those tragedies, and that's why we have coroners' inquests in the first place. The real problem is that often these

recommendations are put forward and fall on deaf ears. I think that brings us to a point: If we're going to have coroners' inquests that bring forward recommendations such as these, there needs to be some sort of mechanism that allows us to have some confidence that what is being recommended by the inquest is actually acted upon. Because it's quite one thing to make the recommendation, and it's quite the other thing to make it happen.

I want to end on that note, and I know my good friend Mr. Miller would like to have a few words on this as well.

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

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to speak in support of Bill 214, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 with respect to fire sprinkler retrofitting, put forward by my colleague from the riding of York West.

As many of my colleagues know, I've been attempting to raise the issue of fire safety awareness and the benefits of residential fire sprinkler systems since 2003 when I was first elected as a member of provincial Parliament. With the assistance of firefighters across this province, I've spearheaded three separate attempts to change Ontario's laws to mandate sprinkler systems in all new residential construction using private member's legislation. For more than two decades, as has been mentioned earlier, a dozen coroners' juries and inquests have all recommended changes to the Ontario building code to include residential sprinklers.

I was very pleased, therefore, when the Premier recently announced that our government was going to amend the building code to require new multi-resident-unit residential buildings over three storeys to have sprinkler systems as of 2010. That's a wonderful first step.

Prior to my election as an MPP, I worked as a municipal councillor for 12 years, and one of my responsibilities during that time was to get group homes, boarding, lodging and rooming home operators to voluntarily comply with the Ontario fire code—no easy task. The city of Brampton, like many communities across Ontario, licenses these facilities, and a condition of their licence is an inspection by the fire department. Some of the homes had difficulty complying with the Ontario fire code, largely due to the age and the physical configuration of the home. Our fire and emergency officials recommended to many of those operators that residential sprinkler systems be installed.

Today I'm going to tell you two stories, both of which happened in Brampton. These incidents give me faith that we're on the right track.

In July 2008, a fire broke out in a three-storey, century-old home that was being used as a supportive lodging house, a facility that would have been on my radar when I was on council. Nineteen tenants lived in Genesis Lodge, many of whom suffer with mental illnesses and physical limitations. The fire originated in a mattress in the front bedroom on the second storey and

was set by a disgruntled and disturbed tenant who was asked to vacate the residence earlier that day. Some 10 years earlier, the owner of that supportive lodging home had been given some very wise advice by a firefighter I know. He told them to install residential fire sprinklers.

The sprinkler system was activated in the bedroom. Firefighters arriving on the scene needed only to remove the smouldering mattress from the room, so it resulted in very minimal fire damage. Had the sprinklers not been installed, the outcome that July day would have been significantly different. Not only were all 19 residents, three staff and a cat evacuated safely, but the property itself was saved and returned to service two days after that fire. It is interesting to note that it's estimated that less than 30 litres of water were used to control the fire in the mattress.

The next incident happened only a couple of months ago in November 2009. A fire started at 1 a.m. in a dryer located in a home's basement. The Kennedy Road and Vodden Street area house is an assisted living home, with four people living upstairs and three residing downstairs. The property owners chose to install a sprinkler system back in 1998 and the fire in the Reigate Avenue home had been extinguished by the time the fire crews arrived early that Saturday morning. A fire left unchecked can move quickly, causing considerable damage and increasing the potential threat to life. Water damage caused by high-pressure fire hoses used to bring a blaze under control can be very costly for homeowners. In this case, the damage was negligible and the residents were back in their home three days later.

This is in sharp contrast to the two other house fires which were investigated the previous weekend in my community, one of which was also believed to have started in a basement clothes dryer. Victims in these cases were left with hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages, and it will be months before the homes are fit to be lived in.

These incidents are a testament to the benefits of residential fire sprinkler systems, and a decision to invest in a sprinkler system based on the advice of a Brampton firefighter to protect the residents and the staff was paid in full those two days. It's a clear example to me of how effective an automatic fire sprinkler system can be.

1600

In closing, I want to further emphasize how important I believe sprinkler systems are. There are too many Ontarians, both civilian and firefighters, who are losing their lives in preventable fires.

I believe so strongly in residential fire sprinklers that I've become evangelical, if you want to describe it. I feel like Victor Kiam, the spokesperson for Remington shavers, who said, "I believed so strongly in the company that I bought it." Well, I believe so strongly in residential fire sprinklers that I am having them retrofitted in my own home. I'm getting the costing right now. It's going to be messy. It's going to be awkward in an older home, but I believe strongly that there's no price you can put on the value of loved ones, somebody that you care about.

It's too important. I will be making this happen, and I expect to have it the next time I speak in this House about residential sprinklers. I'm happy to support the local member.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I too rise in support of Bill 214, and I want to commend the member from York West for bringing it forward.

I was sitting here and listening to the member from Brampton–Springdale and her efforts as it relates to getting sprinklers in residential units, and I want to commend her for all the work that she has done three times with a private member's bill. I think it points out the challenge that even though you get a private member's bill and you get unanimous support in the House, that doesn't quite make it so. It doesn't necessarily get called for third reading or get implemented for third reading. I want to commend her. I think also that it points out, as she mentioned, that the Premier announced that he was going to take steps toward achieving the goals that were in her bill.

I think that's part of the other reason for having these debates in private members' business. The bill may never get passed but, in fact, the idea is there, and if it's a good idea and if it's supported by all, hopefully we can see government move forward on that issue. I would hope that in this case, with the support we see in the gallery today and the support that we are hearing on the floor of this Legislature today, that that's what will happen with this.

Exactly a year ago we had a tragedy in my riding and, in fact, we brought forward a bill to make it mandatory to have carbon monoxide detectors in every home in the province of Ontario. That bill, too, was passed unanimously in this House at second reading, but it is still waiting to be dealt with at committee. I just want to point out again that even though the bill has not been passed, it has done a tremendous job of getting the public message out there for people to get a carbon monoxide detector to prevent that silent killer from getting them and their family.

I just wanted to point out to the member from Brampton–Springdale that it took three bills and a considerable length of time since the third one for the member to finally get around to doing her own home. I want to say that I did mine immediately. Prior to introducing the bill in this Legislature, I went and got two carbon monoxide detectors for my home to protect my family.

But I do want to say that it does bring it to our attention that this needs doing, and that's why I commend the member from York West for bringing it forward. I thank you for bringing it forward. I will be supporting it, and I hope that this message today will get out to the public, that all these homes have this protection to save lives, as we've heard before.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to welcome the fire prevention officers and the fire chiefs from all over Ontario, and a special welcome to our chief in Hamilton, Jim Kay, from Sophia Aggelonitis and myself.

I'd like to start off by saying that we are supportive of this bill. Having called for the mandatory regulation of retirement homes to be equipped with sprinklers, this is a long time overdue. This is a good step, but we are concerned that it will not go far enough because it does not deal with many of the other issues arising due to the lack of regulation in retirement homes.

I'm even more concerned that the private member's bill will fall to the same fate as so many other excellent ones have and never move past today. For example, Linda Jeffrey's Bill 72 regarding municipal fire sprinklers easily passed second reading and it died there, in spite of the need for action.

We need to bring broad changes to the retirement homes sector, and need a full regulation of these facilities. This bill is one step in that process.

There's a clear need for this bill. Examples: In April 2008, through the quick and efficient actions of retirement home staff and a stroke of extremely good luck, all residents of the Rowanwood retirement residence in Huntsville escaped injury in a horrific fire that completely destroyed that home. In 1995, eight seniors died because of a fire in their retirement home in Mississauga. In January of this year, two seniors died in a retirement home fire in Orillia. Inquests following all of these fires pointed to automatic fire sprinklers—they may have prevented the tragedies that occurred.

Some of the concerns with the bill: New Democrats have long called for regulation of retirement homes. These facilities are increasingly being treated as health care facilities, yet lack the regulation that would ensure they meet the standards we expect for facilities providing care. Seniors who live in retirement homes need to be protected. If retirement homes were regulated, this would become a non-issue, as the LTC facilities have mandatory fire sprinklers.

Let us not forget that there is much work that the government needs to do to protect seniors.

The letter from CARP is another example in support of this bill.

Other issues impacting firefighters: mandatory retirement, Ontario labour board, fire responder status. When the firefighters were at Queen's Park yesterday, they were lobbying for other important changes; information on these can be found in the attached sheets.

Fire kills nearly 100 Ontarians each and every year, and it injures many more, the overwhelming number at home. Despite mandatory smoke alarms and improved building construction, there has not been a substantial reduction in the number over the last decade. The cost to the Ontario economy in relation to health care expenses, property loss and personal impact is in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Smoke alarms are simply not enough.

The age group of 65-plus constitutes 25% to 30% of fire fatalities in Ontario every year. This demographic

has more difficulty hearing working smoke alarms; as well, their reaction time is likely much slower. The installation of sprinklers in retirement homes would be one step in the right direction.

The NDP has been moving forward on important issues relating to fire safety in Ontario for years. Example: Michael Prue's private member's bill, Bill 14, on wooden fire escapes finally passed committee clause-by-clause yesterday. This is the second time that essentially the same bill made it to committee. Ms. Jeffrey's bill was concerned with new buildings; that all new buildings in Ontario should have mandatory sprinkler systems like they do in BC. Mr. Prue's bill was concerned with old buildings and eliminating wooden fire escapes. Both of these were, and are, sensible changes that are supported by Ontario's firefighters and chiefs. The government must show that they are prepared to take the steps necessary to allow these types of bills to become law and not just die either waiting for committee approval or waiting for third reading.

There has been a lot of work done in this Legislature to support the work of firefighters in our province. New Democrats fought for a long time to ensure that volunteer firefighters—and let's not forget that the majority of communities in Ontario are staffed by volunteers—are given equal coverage for health and safety issues.

We have fought to ensure that fire prevention is of the utmost priority. This is yet another step.

The government side may argue that this bill is not needed because as of April 1, 2010, fire sprinklers will be mandatory in all high-rise buildings in Ontario, and this would include retirement homes. But today we have an opportunity to protect residents in older buildings now.

In closing, I believe this is a very important bill that has been brought forward and discussed many times in this House. It's time to stop stalling. It's time to push it through third reading, it's time to make it law, and also help our chiefs and firefighters in this province do an even better job than they do now. They do a magnificent job protecting the people of this province. I'm proud that they're here today, and I'm proud of the service they do in our province. Thank you, gentlemen.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, I want to thank the member from York West for bringing such an important issue to this House. It has been mentioned by many different members. I know the member from Oxford has spoken passionately about it. He has a similar issue in his town. Also, the member from Brampton–Springdale has brought this issue to this place many times and has held many different events in this regard. The member from Beaches–East York, as has been mentioned, is passionate about it, too.

1610

The member from York West today brings such an important issue for us. There is great evidence. All the fire chiefs from across the province came today to witness this debate. I think everybody is in support.

Everyone spoke in support of this initiative because it's important. It's about safety for the people of Ontario, safety for many people who live in long-term-care facilities, nursing homes, retirement homes, halfway housing and many different dwellings which we know are subject to danger if we don't provide them with the support they need. That's why the member from York West today brought this issue to the House.

Hopefully this bill will pass and go to the committee and then will be cleaned up in the committee and become a strong bill to serve the people of Ontario, because all of us were elected in this place to create safety mechanisms for all the people who live in Ontario.

I spoke about cost and about accountability, spoke about initiatives, how it's going to be implemented and if the government is going to take it and support it. It's a great indication. The member from York West represents the government of Ontario. He's a wonderful member of our caucus, and I think he has a great passion about this issue. That's why he brought it to our attention today and opened it up for us and gave us a chance to debate it.

I'm going to support it myself because it's a very important issue. Because I worked with group homes before, I have a great connection with nursing homes and retirement homes in my city of London, especially in my riding, London–Fanshawe. I spoke many different times with the CEOs and managers of those homes. Those are very important things for them and very concerning for them: how they can evacuate their residents if some fires happen in their places.

As I mentioned, I used to work in Woodstock's Oxford Regional Centre as a counsellor with mentally challenged individuals, so it was a main concern for us. We used to go through a lot of training on a regular basis to make sure to evacuate all the residents in good time, in the right time, and eliminate casualties and death. That's why I think if you have a sprinkler, according to all the statistics, you reduce the chance of death by a great number. I think the fire chiefs from across the province, all the firefighters who came, had a good reception yesterday to educate us on the job they do on a daily basis, and you guys came here today to witness this debate. It's important to you and important to us, because the most important thing to all of us in this place is the safety of the people of Ontario.

I'm going to leave a few minutes to my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence to comment on this bill too.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Just briefly, I want to say that I had the good fortune over the years to work with Bernie Moyle, who was my fire chief when I was a city councillor a long, long time ago. He did a lot of great work in this area as Ontario's Chief Fire Marshal and certainly taught me a lot about the importance of prevention.

I think the member from York West has hit upon something that is of urgency, and I think he has given us a pretty good impetus to move forward with this. Like all

private members' bills, what it takes is, as members of the Legislature and stakeholders, we have to support his efforts. He can't do it by himself. Over the years I've been in opposition and on the government side, I've had the good fortune to see six of my private member's bills become law. I guess the one I'm most proud of is the red-light camera legislation. It took me about five years of work to educate people about the importance of having red-light cameras at high-collision intersections, but now they're all over the province of Ontario. That started as a private member's bill, but again, I got help from a lot of police officers, Chief McCormack at the time, and others, and we educated people. Now they're used to save lives.

This is an initiative to save lives, and I think we have to get the insurance companies on board to start promoting this, because in the long run, the insurance companies should be giving deductions in premiums to the facilities that install these sprinklers or, rather, to these individuals, like the member from Brampton West.

Also, in terms of tax credits given for home renovations, why not tax credits from the federal or provincial governments for these kinds of initiatives? What could be more important than to encourage people to save their loved ones from these kinds of situations? This is where this bill needs some support to make it a reality so that it will finally be implemented, because the cost of not doing it is incredibly higher than the cost of these preventive measures.

Let's support this bill. I think it is something that will be looked upon as a thoughtful and a necessary initiative, which many seniors, especially, who can't advocate for themselves will deeply appreciate. It is a bill that deserves all of our support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Mr. Sergio, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much to the members from Eglinton–Lawrence, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Oxford, London–Fanshawe, Brampton–Springdale, Timmins–James Bay and Newmarket–Aurora. Thank you all for your kind and welcome comments.

I want to add one thing, and I'll take the liberty of doing it now. Someone, during the various conversations, brought up the fact that, if approved, this may have an effect on the number of firemen in Ontario. This is not an issue, because the moment the alarm goes off, our forces have to leave their stations, they have to be on the job, and they never know if there's a small fire or a big fire. So this is not an issue.

With respect to cost, let us just take a look at all the homes, all the facilities that were built after 1998, which means they were built with sprinklers. Someone, somehow, had to pay for those sprinklers, so that's not an issue today.

By 2021, one quarter of our population is going to be 65 and over. I think that's a concern that we have to be aware of.

I think today belongs not only to our seniors in Ontario, it belongs to the fire forces, from all the corners

of our province, who recognize the importance and the need. I think we have to dedicate today to them for the support that they have shown with respect to this bill.

I have to say to my friend from Timmins–James Bay, we are not alone in this battle. We have their support, and the support of all the hundreds of thousands of seniors in the province and the various organizations. When it comes to questions—you had questioned that side; I will worry about this side.

I thank you all for your support. Thank you all for being here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for private members' public business has not completely expired. It expires in about four minutes. The chair has no choice under the standing orders but to suspend the House for four minutes.

The House suspended proceedings from 1617 to 1618.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for private members' public business has basically expired—because I think we all want to go home at some point.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Yes, all right. Let's just vote.

HISPANIC COMMUNITY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 52, standing in the name of Mr. Ruprecht.

Mr. Ruprecht has moved private member's notice of motion number 123. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

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)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 53.

Mr. Ramal has moved second reading of Bill 221, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional conditional driver's licence for seniors.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Ramal?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I just want to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly? Agreed? So ordered.

FIRE PROTECTION
AND PREVENTION
AMENDMENT ACT (FIRE SPRINKLER
RETROFITTING), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION
ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE
(INSTALLATION RÉTROACTIVE
D'EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item 54.

Mr. Sergio has moved second reading of Bill 214, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, with respect to fire sprinkler retrofitting.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? So carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Mario Sergio: To the Standing Committee on General Government, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the general government committee? So ordered.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 2, 2009, on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 196, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of Barrie and the Town of Innisfil / Projet de loi 196, Loi concernant la modification des limites territoriales entre la cité de Barrie et la ville d'Innisfil.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I just think, as you know, Mr. Speaker—you're very close in your riding—this is a longstanding dispute between Barrie and the township of Innisfil, and there has been an attempt to come to a resolution here. There are obviously two different perspectives in terms of what Barrie is going through as one of the fastest-growing cities—I think it's the first- or second-fastest-growing city in Canada. It is caught

dealing with its growth, and the growth is quite incredible.

I'm sure you recall, as I do, the bus station right by the lake there in Barrie. That's all there was to Barrie in those days: essentially, neat little homes in a very tranquil community. But Barrie's population, if I'm not mistaken, is now over 300,000, and it's almost impossible to recognize Barrie when you go through, compared to what it was.

The growth of Barrie, the need to continue to create economic development opportunities and efforts to ensure that there are enough future employment opportunities in Barrie to maintain the tax base have necessitated this adjustment of the boundary. I know the minister has been involved—and this started way before Minister Watson. I think when you were in government, Mr. Speaker, there were discussions about this going on even back then. So there is an attempt to try and come to some kind of reasonable compromise on this. I know it's impossible to keep both sides happy, as Innisfil's needs and perspectives in terms of trying to ensure they keep their town in a more compact form are something that has been in conflict with what Barrie had to do.

Anyway, we're attempting here to do something to remedy this situation. This is an attempt to resolve it so there is progress in this area in accommodating the needs of that beautiful part of Ontario. I just hope that we can proceed and do the best we can in adjusting this contentious situation with this initiative.

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

Seeing no further debate, Mr. Watson has moved government notice of motion 167. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1625.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O’Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L’hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l’Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L’hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l’Énergie et de l’Infrastructure
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L’hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l’opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L’hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L’hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L’hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L’hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l’Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L’hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l’Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l’opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Eric Hoskins, Pat Hoy
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, Reza Moridi
David Oraziotti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Yasir Naqvi, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Arnott
Ted Arnott, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Sophia Aggelonitis, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
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