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Mardi 14 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for personal thought and inner reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 13, 2010, on the motion for adoption of the recommendations contained in the final report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I believe we have unanimous consent for the time remaining to 10:15 to be divided equally among the recognized parties.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.
The member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to speak to this report from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. It's entitled, as we all know now, Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians.

I have to say from the outset that I'm especially proud of this report. It was an honour to chair this committee.

On February 24 of last year, 2009, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario gave unanimous consent to a motion by Christine Elliott to appoint a Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. That in itself, I think, is unusual in that the motion came from the opposition parties and was supported by all members in the House that day.

The committee was asked if it would consider and report its observations and its recommendations concerning a comprehensive provincial mental health and addictions strategy for the province of Ontario. It would work with consumers, survivors, providers and experts, and it was going to consider the mental health and addictions needs of various groups. Those groups were outlined; they include young adults, children, First Nations, Inuit, Métis people, seniors and francophones. The committee would identify opportunities to improve coordination and integration across the sectors for all people and examine the existing continuum of services

that were available today and the social services that went along with that.

In order to make this report possible in the way that it was presented, the members of the committee, in my opinion, conducted themselves admirably and deserve your admiration as a result of that. Members from all three political parties worked in a non-partisan manner that is more and more unusual around here these days. I'd like to thank all members for their work on the committee: Christine Elliott, from Whitby–Oshawa, was the Vice-Chair and she did a wonderful job; Bas Balkissoon, the member for Scarborough–Rouge River; France Gélinas, the member from Nickel Belt; Helena Jaczek, the member from Oak Ridges–Markham; Sylvia Jones, the member from Dufferin–Caledon; Jeff Leal, the member from Peterborough; Liz Sandals, the member from Guelph; and Maria Van Bommel, the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. They all put their party affiliations behind them and served in the best interest of Ontarians. Each member volunteered to serve on the committee because of their personal commitment to mental health and addictions issues.

I'd like to thank the committee staff for the hard work that they did. Susan Sourial was clerk. Elaine Campbell and Carrie Hull were the research officers.

The people who deserve the most thanks in this entire exercise are the people who came forward to share their personal experiences of what was happening within their own families as a result of either mental health or addiction issues. They were brave, they came forward, they were courageous, and they told their stories. We held public hearings on 30 dates. We heard testimony from over 230 presenters, individuals and organizations. More than 300 submissions were received. We heard from those people providing the service today, and we heard from people who experience the mental health and addiction system directly themselves or through a family member. Personal stories were shared, and for many of these people, they were very difficult moments.

We went beyond the traditional public hearings and made site visits to various locations. The committee toured such facilities as CAMH, St. Thomas and Eva's Phoenix in Toronto. Let me tell you that we also went to several First Nations communities: Sandy Lake First Nation, the Oneida Nation of the Thames, and the Six Nations of the Grand River.

We brought forward an interim report in 2010; we brought forward the final report. I'm going to stop here because I want all members of the committee to have a

chance to speak. I will just let you know how proud I am of the conduct of this committee and how proud I am of the report and the expectations that it has created that this Legislature is going to act in the best interest of Ontarians on an issue that has been ignored for far too long.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to stand on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to talk about my role in the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. As the Chair referenced, we're all pretty proud of the work that we were able to do, the 23 recommendations that came forward as a result of this work.

I'd also like to touch on why I asked and why I was so interested in participating in this committee. I'm sure I am not alone in talking as a member representing a riding where you try to assist family members and you try to help people who are looking for assistance with their family member, spouse or child suffering from a mental health issue or an addiction. What I quickly discovered was that there is very little help out there. I had far too many parents come to me saying that they wanted to get their 16- or 17-year-old assessed—this is not treatment; this is simply being assessed—to find out what was happening with them from a health standpoint. Unfortunately, the further I delved into the issue, I realized that children, these 16- and 17-year-olds, were going to age out—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd just ask that those conversations taking place either become much more quiet or taken outside the chamber so we can all hear.

Please continue.

0910

Ms. Sylvia Jones: As I was saying, as a member of provincial Parliament, you try to assist these family members trying to get assessments and treatments for their children. I was quickly finding out that, in fact, there were not enough services available. Assessment wasn't going to happen until the child turned 18, aged out of the children's mental health sector and, of course, then immediately went on to a waiting list for assessment under the adult mental health system.

It was an incredibly frustrating situation, so when my colleague the member from Whitby–Oshawa brought forward the resolution in December 2008 to study and thoroughly review the mental health and addictions system in Ontario, I thought it was a very good opportunity for all parties to come together on an issue that is troubling all of us. I am sure there is not a member in this House who has not heard a story and had to try to help a family navigate a system that is quite frankly far too fragmented to help anyone. So I do want to thank my colleague Christine Elliott for that work.

Of course, as a result of that December 2008 resolution which was passed unanimously, the select committee was struck. Because of my history of trying to assist families in Dufferin–Caledon, I approached the then House leader at the time, Bob Runciman, and asked

if I could participate, and here we are today almost two years later.

The previous speaker also made reference to the staff who worked with us on this committee. It was hard work. There were a lot of sad stories, a lot of tough decisions. I am particularly proud of the work that Elaine Campbell and Carrie Hull did assisting what ended up being 10 members with very strong opinions in very thoughtful deliberations. I thought they did an excellent job of putting together our thoughts and our desires into a comprehensive but ultimately very readable report.

The 23 recommendations, as we all know, were based on consensus—again, rather an unusual situation in the chamber and in a legislative process that generally spends more time on “them and us” than it does on consensus-building. I'm proud of those 23 recommendations. I'm not going to tell you that they came easily. There were some very good debates within the committee process, but ultimately, I think those debates led to thoughtful and doable recommendations.

Many of the hours that we spent debating and discussing what the recommendations could be or would be were not just pie-in-the-sky ideas. They were suggestions based on how we can do it, how we can make it better now. This is not a 20-year plan. This is not a 15-year plan. These recommendations could be implemented and done now. I truly believe that if the various ministries look at them and review them closely, they will find that they are a reasonable review of the mental health and addictions system in Ontario today.

The first main recommendation, of course, is the umbrella organization, Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. I think that as you read the report, you will realize that many of the recommendations subsequently follow from the idea that we cannot continue to piecemeal mental health and addictions services in Ontario, that we need to have an agency that ultimately has control over all aspects of it.

The history of it, I'll briefly tell you, is that we've seen some success with Cancer Care Ontario. I don't think there is a member who can say that cancer services in Ontario have not improved since the formulation of Cancer Care Ontario. We understand that every single mental health and addictions service or treatment cannot be in every single community across Ontario. What we do want to see and what we do agree with, as a committee, is that regardless of where you live, regardless of where those treatment services are, they should be available to you. That's what we're trying to do with this agency that will ultimately be there to coordinate and ensure that access is available to all Ontarians.

There are some great programs in Ontario. We saw some of them in our site visits. But ultimately, it is not consistent across the province. For whatever reason—the community getting together or some funding available at a certain point in history—there are programs that are doing excellent work in pockets across Ontario. We want to ensure that those programs ultimately become available to all Ontarians.

The other recommendation that I would like to touch on is peer support. There is a growing understanding of the value of peer support in all aspects of mental health and addictions, and ultimately health care services generally.

I remember when I participated in the Chair-leaders event in the spring. I spoke to the organizer, and they actively used peer support workers. What he told me was that when there is a spinal cord injury, peer support workers are there on-site speaking to the individual who has had an injury within hours. Initially, you would think, "That's a physical injury. They have to deal with the spinal cord injury first." But his point was, as a peer support worker, as a peer support adviser, they become part of that support system, part of that support circle that assists people as they are trying to navigate what is, for the vast majority of us, a very different experience. I see a lot of value in using and utilizing those peer support volunteers and workers.

That is, of course, one of the 23 recommendations, and I'm hoping that is something that we, again, can move forward with quickly. It doesn't take a lot of study. All you have to do is look at some of the other peer models that are taking place in other health aspects to see and understand how valuable it can be. The benefit is that that peer support, that circle, that assistance, goes all the way through from when you are initially assessed when you're choosing and deciding on your treatment; it can assist your family as they try to be part of your model of care, your assistance. I see it as a very valuable addition.

I say "addition" because it is not a medical model. We're not talking about replacing physicians and first responders. We are talking about having an additional support system helping people who are suffering through mental health and addiction services.

While we didn't write the report with a vision of who's going to like it and who isn't going to like it, it was a pleasant surprise, shall we say, to find that within a day, three provincial umbrella organizations had applauded the select committee's report on mental health and addictions. The three agencies were the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario division; the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addictions Programs; and the Ontario Peer Development Initiative. I'm sure I'm not alone, as one of nine members of the committee, in that I've also received a number of emails, a number of phone calls, had many individuals and family members approach me who have had the chance to read the recommendations, the report, and are pleased with what we have come forward with.

Of course, after their congratulations, their next comment is, "So what's the next step?" This debate, engaging the rest of the 107 members of provincial Parliament, is certainly part of it, but ultimately we will be looking at the various ministries and the government to start implementing those 23 recommendations.

0920

There has been some movement, and an announcement I think within a couple of days from the Minister of

Health and Long-Term Care, on the OxyContin initiative, and that's a good step in the right direction. But again, I think I'd like to see a little more movement on how we can get that umbrella agency moving forward and ultimately move forward on the other 22 recommendations.

I don't want to use all of our time, because I know that the Vice-Chair, my colleague from Whitby-Oshawa, would also like to share her comments.

In closing, I would just like to thank again the many family members, agencies and organizations who took the time to appear before us, and to open their agencies and their facilities to our site visits. It made our job considerably easier to have that easy access. You answered all of our questions and took a lot of time with us, and I do appreciate that. I'll close with those thank-yous.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: As has already been said by the member from Oakville, as well as the member from Dufferin-Caledon, it was a lot of work putting those 23 recommendations together.

I knew when I started that mental health and addictions needed some work, but after 18 months, 30 days of hearings, 230 presenters and 300 submissions, I'm more convinced than ever that mental health and addictions in Ontario is in crisis. You see, I come from 25 years in health care delivery; I'm a health care worker. I worked in the intensive rehab unit with people whose lives had taken a sudden turn for the worse. They had become either amputees, quadriplegic, paraplegic, brain injured, severely burned or otherwise disabled, but I was not ready for what I was about to hear with my participation on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Not only do people with mental health and addictions have problems gaining access to the care, support and treatment they need, but they get stigmatized and they don't even get empathy from the health care workers who are supposed to help them. We are failing thousands of Ontarians who need our help every day, with often catastrophic consequences on their health, their lives, the lives of their families, their friends and their communities.

I signed the letter asking for the report and its recommendations to be called for debate in the House at the earliest opportunity. Although I would have liked a little bit more than 20-some minutes of debate, I certainly appreciate the fact that the response to our request for the earliest opportunity was certainly acted upon, as this is only our second day back and we have a chance to debate our report in this Legislature. So I'm happy for that.

The first and most important recommendation in our report is the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, an umbrella organization. I will know that all of this hard work has paid off and has been taken seriously when the Minister of Health stands up in this Legislature and announces the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. I cannot wait for that day to happen, and I hope it happens quickly. This alone will bring a

significant improvement in the mental health and addictions system and in the lives of so many people in Ontario.

There are so many ministries right now that offer bits and parcels of mental health and addictions services, from Aboriginal Affairs to Attorney General, Children and Youth, Citizenship and Immigration, Community and Social Services, Community Safety and Correctional Services, Education, Health and Long-Term Care, Health Promotion and Sport, Seniors—and the list goes on and on. The implementation of mental health and addiction services in Ontario will be important, and we certainly would not want this to draw funds away from front-line services. By giving mental health and addiction a home, by shining a light on it, by putting someone in charge of mental health and addictions, if history repeats itself, then history has told us that that will improve quality and accountability and end up with better outcomes for the people who depend on that care, on those services, on those programs.

The second part of our first recommendation has the potential to create quite a bit of anxiety in the field: that is, bringing children and youth services under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I was there way back when, when children's mental health services used to be under the Ministry of Health, and it did not work out so well. This time, the transfer of children and youth back to the Ministry of Health has to be done, and it has to be done well. No one on the committee, and I think no one in Ontario, wants to bring back or subject children to institutionalization in psychiatric facilities and nursing homes, or drugging and various adverse measures such as the use of physical restraints that we saw way back decades ago. What we want, by bringing children and youth under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, is to give young people the opportunity to form stable relationships, to gain access to social supports, strength-based intervention. We realize that they need monitoring, they need short-term crisis intervention and individual and family counselling. This is what we're trying to achieve by bringing children and youth under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. We want these to be in place in a systemic way in communities and schools. Once those services are funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, that does not mean that it would become a medical model; it's just to make sure that the gaps in services such as the member from—I always have a hard time—Dufferin-Caledon mentioned don't exist anymore and the kid, the youth, doesn't age out of a waiting list before ever receiving any programs or services that could help them.

Data collection and accountability is one piece of the mental health and addictions system that is currently lacking. We seem to be swimming in data of all sorts, none of this is standardized, but we continue to lack accountability for the quality and types of services provided for ensuring that front-line practice matches research findings about what actually helps people with mental health and illness, and those struggling with the

challenge of addictions of all kinds. The problems in the mental health and addictions field lead to the disempowerment of consumers as well as front-line staff. There is no consistent approach by any funding body to determine which mental health and addictions organizations are providing excellent services to consumers. We know there are some excellent people out there in the field, but there is no way of telling them apart. With 440 children's mental health agencies, 330 adult mental health agencies, 150 substance abuse agencies and 50 problem gambling agencies, people told us time and time again that they could not find an agency that could help them. There were more reasons why they could not access services than there are agencies that I just named for you. Whether it was geography, language, dual diagnosis, age—there was always a reason why all of those hundreds of agencies that exist could not help them. The only meaningful way to determine quality services is through the collection of standardized data, which often includes qualitative information from the consumers themselves. They know what constitutes quality services for them and what helps them.

0930

Add to this the fact that good, competent staff often feel disempowered within their own agency or within their own field and are concerned about the treatment of their clients and the poor services that they received from other professionals, with nowhere else to turn to correct the problem. You have a system that is unaccountable, top-heavy and provides, at best, inconsistent services to clients. Where best practices do exist, they are overlooked, are not shared and do not inform practice.

Our report recommendations, once implemented, will help to change that. Everyone who came to present to the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions told us their story. There were very many similarities. They told us the same thing: Quality mental health comes from an interdisciplinary team of providers working together.

Furthermore, clinical consultation to front-line staff is often provided by supervisors who are more or less skilled in the area. The fee-for-service model of remuneration for physicians does not work when you provide mental health and addiction services, yet payment models that would include psychologists, psychotherapists, trauma specialists, developmental specialists, mental health counsellors, social workers etc., do not exist or are severely lacking. The recommendations in our report, once implemented, will change that so that we have a fee system that supports good, quality care in mental health and addiction.

We have to talk about stigmatization. We heard it over and over. It is often described as the worst barrier that people living with mental health and addiction face in society—stigma. It prevents them from having friends, from obtaining employment or even obtaining housing. Our report raised this issue. Our recommendations, once implemented, will help to change that.

It could begin with education and training at the college and university level, making sure that what is being

taught is the latest information and that it shows results. There is lots to be done. Mental health and addiction in Ontario is in crisis. I look forward to the day where we take this most important step of announcing the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. I can't wait for this day to be here.

Lorsque j'ai accepté de participer au Comité spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances, je savais que les services existants ne rencontraient pas les besoins des Ontariens et Ontariennes. Après 18 mois de travail, 30 jours d'audiences, 230 présentations et plus de 300 soumissions, je suis maintenant persuadée que la situation est urgente et qu'on ne peut pas se permettre d'attendre.

Il n'a pas été facile d'avoir un consensus de la part des trois partis politiques représentés au comité. C'est rare que l'Assemblée législative travaille de façon non partisane, mais on a réussi à le faire au Comité spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances parce que c'est tellement important d'amener des changements.

Les 23 recommandations que nous avons faites ne seront pas faciles à mettre en oeuvre, mais nous le devons à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes qui dépendent du système de la santé mentale et des dépendances, un système qui ne rencontre pas leurs besoins, avec souvent des conséquences catastrophiques pour eux, leur famille, leurs amis et leur communauté.

J'attends avec impatience la mise en place de nos recommandations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly a pleasure—and I really mean it sincerely today—to follow the comments of my colleagues from Dufferin–Caledon and from Nickel Belt. They've mentioned the umbrella organization Mental Health and Addictions Ontario that we believe is necessary in order to focus our efforts on solving the many, many difficult issues surrounding mental health and addictions issues here in Ontario. I just want to touch on a couple of the responsibilities that we've outlined for that organization that I think are particularly important.

First of all, we see Mental Health and Addictions Ontario as being the repository of best practice of clinical practice guidelines in the field of mental health and addictions. Because we know that in fact while many organizations are providing excellent care, they are doing so in a highly fragmented way. We believe that the establishment of centres of excellence such as the one that does exist at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario as it relates to children's mental health—that concept of a centre of excellence should be extended to study First Nations' mental health and addictions issues, those issues in seniors, those issues in the francophone community. We believe that Mental Health and Addictions Ontario will be the organization best able to disseminate this best-practice information to practitioners in the field.

Another responsibility is to ensure that those who first encounter individuals with mental health and addictions issues have the appropriate tools to actually diagnose the condition—in other words, early assessment tools. Family physicians are often quite bereft of the tools that they need. They often consider that if a child in particular is brought to them by parents, there's a behavioural issue; it's a stage in their life. The parent knows something is wrong. The doctor does not have any easy way of diagnosing a serious mental illness, and in fact many times they fail to do so. In fact, I would say some of the most compelling stories we heard were from parents of children who took their loved one to the physician many times before the child was finally in a crisis in the emergency department in a psychotic state. Their stories were heart-rending. We have to do better in this regard, not only in the family physician's office but also in the workplace, wherever there's a potential for people to notice that someone is not functioning as they normally would. They need the appropriate care in a timely fashion.

The third area of responsibility that we've put to Mental Health and Addictions Ontario is to develop a wait-time strategy. As one parent said, "If I took my child to the doctor and they had the symptoms of diabetes and the physician took blood sugar, that child would be treated immediately." As my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon said, children are waiting up to nine months for an assessment. This is intolerable; it cannot continue. It needs to be addressed urgently.

We've had some successes with wait-time strategies. When you measure and you know you need to improve in accordance with your best practice, you will improve. So we need to have an organization that establishes those wait times for various mental health conditions, and then we need to act on them. As my colleague from Nickel Belt said, we believe that we have reached a crisis situation in mental health and addictions in this province, and it is imperative that we move forward to solve it.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It truly is an honour to rise today to add my comments to those made so eloquently by my colleague the member from Dufferin–Caledon on behalf of the PC caucus to the final report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Entitled *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontario*, this report is really groundbreaking for several reasons. It was released on August 26 and represents about 18 months of work resulting from a private member's bill that I had brought forward in December 2008. It was accepted by the government and was established as an all-party select committee. As you know, Madam Speaker, select committees are very unusual in and of themselves, but even more unusual was the fact that all of us as members of the community came to the same conclusions based on the powerful evidence that was presented to us by over 230 presenters representing all

regions of Ontario over the last 18 months. So I think I speak for all of the committee members when I say that we are really grateful to all of those who took the time to come and present to us; to the people who wrote the over 300 written submissions; to the many mental health and addictions facilities that gave us tours of their facilities and answered all of our many questions; and finally, to the First Nations communities who so graciously hosted us on a number of occasions.

0940

It was really a pleasure to work with my fellow members of the Legislature on this committee, and I'd like to thank them all for their dedication and commitment. I think we're all really proud of the report that we produced together.

It's my sincere hope that the select committee structure can be used for other non-partisan issues in the future so that we can all work together in the way that I believe our constituents both deserve and expect from us.

Finally, with respect to the select committee itself, I would also like to thank the staff who dedicated the same level of dedication and commitment to this project as we did. I would like to thank Elaine Campbell and Carrie Hull from legislative research services, who travelled with us and who basically helped us write the report, spent countless hours on it and were extremely patient with all of us as we made numerous revisions to the report along the way.

I'd also like to thank the clerk of the committee, Susan Sourial, for making endless arrangements, for answering our endless questions and, again, for her dedication.

Before discussing the specifics of the committee's report, I would like to note that the report itself is very brief. It's only 21 pages, with 23 recommendations. This was a conscious decision on the part of the committee. We spent hours discussing what we had heard, what were the common problems and how we could come up with solutions to try and rectify them. We did not want to produce a report that was full, dense with information, where you couldn't see the forest for the trees, so to speak. We wanted to have a series of clear, concise recommendations that could be implemented in a reasonable and practical manner.

As we conducted hearings across Ontario, we heard about many state-of-the-art programs and services that demonstrate best practices that could be replicated across the province. But we also heard about numerous gaps in services, where programs didn't exist to serve children, seniors, newcomers, First Nations—they're simply lacking. Similarly, individuals with autism, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or a dual diagnosis are orphaned. There simply is not a place for them to receive treatment in many parts of this province.

The solution which the committee came up with is the creation of an umbrella organization, which has been mentioned by my colleagues, called Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. This body would be responsible for designing, managing and coordinating the mental health and addictions system in Ontario and for ensuring that

core programs and services would be delivered across the province. Mental Health and Addictions Ontario would be responsible to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, including children's services and children's mental health. In our view, the creation of this body would transform the delivery of mental health and addiction services in the same way that Cancer Care Ontario has been revolutionary in organizing cancer care services in this province.

Central to the work of our committee was the recognition that mental health wasn't just a health issue, but one which has affected and is affecting virtually every other ministry in the government, including Municipal Affairs and Housing, Community and Social Services, Citizenship and Immigration, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, among others. We don't have time, unfortunately, to speak to all of these issues in the way that we would like, so I would like to concentrate on just a few issues that really spoke to me in a particularly powerful way, and I'd like to spend a few moments on some of these key recommendations.

One relates to an issue that was raised by many individuals, almost all of them family members with a loved one struggling with mental health and/or addictions issues. I can tell you that many people spoke before our committee and shared deeply personal stories, often through tears, and it was very emotional and very difficult for us, as committee members, to listen to it, but I commend them for their courage in coming before us. They were people who loved their family members—their parents, their brothers and sisters, their children—who knew that they were struggling with mental health and addictions problems, who tried repeatedly to get help for them but were unable to do so because their loved one had a right to refuse treatment, and/or they were unable to obtain information from mental health professionals due to confidentiality laws.

We also heard that, as a result, their family members ended up living in substandard housing or, in some cases, in jail or on the streets, where both their physical and mental health deteriorated. On more than one occasion we heard that their family members ultimately committed suicide.

The committee is well aware that the recommendations that we have made in this area are controversial in calling upon the Minister of Health to establish a task force of experts, mental health clients and family members to investigate and propose changes to Ontario's mental health legislation and policy pertaining to involuntary admission and treatment and to the Personal Health Information Protection Act respecting access to personal health information.

We know that any intrusion on our civil liberties is very serious, but we also know that people have a right to be well. This is an issue which has been sidestepped too many times in the past because it's fraught with political danger, but it needs to be dealt with now. As André Picard stated in his recent column in the *Globe and Mail*,

"Inaction will leave us all with blood on our hands." I couldn't agree more. We must tackle this issue.

Any discussion of mental health and addictions in Ontario necessarily involves the issue of stigma. It remains a serious impediment to treatment for many people in Ontario, particularly children. One of the most significant responsibilities of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario will be to develop strategies to reduce stigma and the harm it causes. This harm is widespread. Stigma prevents treatment and often creates lives of hardship and poverty for people because they are unable to find meaningful employment.

People are still afraid of mental illness, and what we need is a campaign to educate and inform employers in the same way that they are informed about heart disease and cancer. Why? Because even if you aren't concerned about mental illness on a human level, you should be concerned about it on an economic level. It has been estimated that mental health and addictions issues in the workplace cost upwards of \$30 billion annually to the Canadian economy, not to mention the cost of disability support programs provincially. People want to work, they want to contribute, they want to be fully participating members of our society, but much work remains to be done.

One volunteer initiative that I am aware of is called Rotary at Work, which was started by a group of Whitby Rotarians. Mark Wafer is a businessman with experience in working with people living with mental health and addictions problems, who is meeting with fellow Rotarians across the province to answer questions and dispel myths. He argues that employing people with mental health and addictions problems should not be approached as an act of charity but as a good business practice, and he has years of experience to prove it. We need more such initiatives working with Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, as well as the federal mental health commission.

I'm just wrapping up, Madam Speaker, if I may have the indulgence of a few more comments.

Our report makes 23 recommendations. Some require funding, but many do not. We understand that it may not be possible to implement all of our recommendations right away, but we are calling upon the Premier and the Minister of Health to fully implement the recommendations of this report. Anything less would do a disservice to the many Ontarians who are counting upon us to be their voice.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I, too, want to applaud the work, first of all, that was done by the members of the committee because there was certainly a lot of time and a lot of work put into the report that is being presented to the Legislature. I want to tell you, I appreciate the work that you've done. More importantly, I really appreciate the work of all those who took the time to write, to come and give submissions and to give witness to what the system is currently—how it works and, quite frankly, how it

doesn't work—so that we can learn from that collective experience that happens in Ontario when it comes to both addictions and to the mental health issue.

0950

I want to come at this from a bit of a different tack. I want to come at it as a person who is the primary caregiver for somebody who has schizophrenia. My sister Louise lives on her own now. She has an apartment in Timmins and she is a patient of the Canadian Mental Health Association. I have permission to talk about her situation. We've talked about this many a time, just so people know.

I just want to give a perspective from a family member. My mother and dad were the primary caregivers until they both passed away, and being the only son in Timmins, the only child in Timmins, it falls upon me to be my sister's sort of caregiver, in the sense of being there for her when she needs me.

There are a couple of observations I've made in the couple of years that I've had to do it. The system tries real hard. The people who work at the Canadian Mental Health Association and the people who work in various agencies who try to work with my sister and do what needs to be done so that she is able to live independently and with dignity, I have to say, are top-notch. I know that because I happen to be the father of two and the father-in-law of another who work in that field. My daughter is a nurse practitioner with the Canadian Mental Health Association directly, so she is providing primary health care needs to people who are patients of the Canadian Mental Health Association, and our youngest daughter, Natalie, is a clinician in the children's mental health field at the Timmins children's aid society. My son-in-law, who is my youngest daughter's husband, Shane—who, by the way, ran the Ironman in Louisville, Kentucky, and came in 630th out of 3,000. I think that's pretty amazing. To Shane Wakeford, congratulations from the Legislature. But he works as a counsellor at the Canadian Mental Health Association. So I am going to come at this from the perspective of a brother, a father and somebody, as a constituency person, who works in the mental health field.

Louise does well. Why? Because she has accepted that she's got a disease. That's really what it comes down to. The big problem in the mental health field is that until the person says, "I am sick and I need help," there's no way of forcing help onto them. So there are many, many people, unfortunately—I think probably a majority—who refuse help because, "There's nothing wrong with me," says the person. And so they are not taking their meds; they are not being properly assessed. They're not even getting their ODSP cheques in some cases, and in many cases are on the streets, not only in places like Toronto but in places like Kapuskasing and Timmins. I have constituents, one in particular who I can think of, without giving any names, who literally lives on the streets in Kapuskasing. Why? He's an individual, a proud, strong, strapping young man, probably in his 30s, maybe early 40s, who doesn't admit that he has schizophrenia. He has

schizophrenia or he's bipolar; I'm not quite sure what the diagnosis is. As a result, he can't get an ODSP cheque because he doesn't have a fixed address, and because he doesn't have a fixed address and he doesn't get his ODSP cheque, we've had to arrange to have the cheque sent to our office so that we can give him his cheque on a weekly basis so he can at least buy some food. The problem is, because he refuses to get any help, he doesn't get the type of support that my sister gets, that would allow him to live in an apartment or a group home and to have at least the basic needs of everyday living taken care of: his meds, personal hygiene, food, a roof over his head.

There lies the problem—there are two parts to this. The first part is, how do you deal with people who refuse help? It's a very tough question. There's one side of me, as a brother, who says, "My God, if there's something wrong with Louise, grab her, strap her down and let's make sure we do what we have to do in order to make sure Louise is safe." But you know what? She's like you and I. She's a human being. She has rights and she has the ability to say no. How do you balance off those two parts, the part of the system and the family who say, "Oh, my God, we've got to do something," and the reality that Louise is a human being with individual rights who is protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—but more importantly, who we understand has the ability to make some decisions?

That is, I think, one of the most crucial parts of how we get services to people. We need to figure out one day how we balance off those two things. I don't know what the answer is, but I can tell you that our family has struggled with it for over 20 years. Louise went from being in a very bad state to only becoming in a very good state once she finally admitted she had a problem and she was willing to have help. Louise does quite well today, but she only does so because she admits that she has a problem and she takes her meds.

The other side of it is in the system. I got quite angry at the Canadian Mental Health Association about two years ago, after my mother passed away, because I wasn't noticing, but Louise was starting to relapse, probably because of the trauma of having lost her mother. Who knows? I'm not sure what triggered it off. Maybe having to make some financial decisions herself, something she had never had to do before—a combination of whatever it was. But she was starting to get sick again, and being that I'm not in Timmins—as everybody here, I'm here Monday through Thursday, so I'm not home during the week, and on the weekend I'm not home because I'm in some part of the riding that may not be the city of Timmins, so I don't see my sister sometimes for a couple of weeks at a time. So she came over to the house one day, because we invited her over for supper, and Louise smelled. It's not nice to say, but these things happen. That was the first indication to me that there was a problem. Where was the Canadian Mental Health Association, where was the ACT team, recognizing that that was a sign that something was going on with Louise? They said, "Listen, we can't force her to do things that

she doesn't want to do." I understand that, but that was a sign that she was relapsing. As a result, she ended up in the mental health facility at Timmins and District Hospital for probably about five to six or eight weeks.

Since then, she has not gone back. She's doing fine, but how we've had to deal with it is that I'm on the phone with her almost every day. If I'm not around, I know that I need to talk to her, and I can pretty well tell by how she talks and what she's saying to me how she is doing. Now that she's into a regimen of making sure that's she's taking care of her basic needs and personal hygiene, keeping her apartment clean, cooking and doing the things that she needs to do, she is doing quite well.

The other part of this is—and I don't know how you deal with this—how do families find the strength, the courage and the empowerment to actually be that person who needs to provide the support to the family member who is sick? Because it isn't easy. I look at many of my constituents—and we all have them in our constituency offices on a regular basis; you know what I talk of. A person comes in and is totally irrational, is mad at the parents and mad at the brothers and sisters, and calls them all kinds of bad, nasty names—it's all their fault—and accuses the family of all kinds of things that may probably not be true. And so finally families go, "Whoa. I can't take this anymore."

Hence, the other problem: We need some system to bridge between that acting out on the part of the individual and giving the families the type of support that they need so they know how to deal with it and learn not to take it personally: This is not your sister, your brother, your mother or your father speaking and who really means this; this is their mental health speaking out for them, and somehow or other you need to work your way through that. I don't know how do you this, because I haven't figured it out after all these years. We need to find some way to give the families the ability to cope with that.

One other thing I want to say in passing: One of the things my son-in-law, Shane Wakeford, the one who did the Ironman, is doing—and I think this is very innovative, and good for the Canadian Mental Health Association. I give the Canadian Mental Health Association a lot of credit because they're pretty innovative. They're always the lead for a lot of things. He said, "Listen, I would like to have a program where I can encourage people to become more physically active." It might not be running the Ironman, but it might be walking to the corner rather than taking the taxi, it might be working out in the gym, whatever it might be, so that people are able to start having a bit of a goal in life and feeling a little bit better about themselves physically, both how they look—because people like me, God knows, need all the help we can get—and in regards to how they feel in regards to their overall physical health. I've really been amazed by what's happened over the last little while, because most of the people—we know them all. They live in our communities. And with most of the people who are in this program, you can see the difference. Not only have

they become healthier, but you can see their mental health situation has improved. Why? Because they feel better about themselves.

I think there is no one answer, and I think that's probably what you heard. As I looked at the committee report very quickly, there isn't one answer. But what is clear is that we need to resource the sector properly. We have to break down the silos that prevent interaction between agencies, and help people to give consumers better choices and better information. We have to empower the families in some way so that they're better able to deal with the family member when it comes to helping make the choices that have to happen. And, God knows, at the end of the day we have to have lots of patience and lots of love for the folks, because I'll tell you, mental health issues and addiction issues are not easy to deal with. It takes lots of patience and it takes a lot of love coming from the family.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to begin by thanking my colleagues on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. As the others have said, it was difficult work, but it was very rewarding to be able to come to a consensus and put forward the report.

I'd particularly like to thank the member for Whitby–Oshawa, who brought forward the motion suggesting the select committee, and the member from Oakville, who managed to keep acting as Chair and managed to keep us moving forward, however slowly.

1000

Like the member from Dufferin–Caledon—since we published the report, there has been a tremendous amount of positive feedback, both from organizations and from individuals saying, “Yes, we think you've hit the right tone here.”

I'd like to thank the member from Timmins–James Bay, because the testimony he has just given is very similar to the testimony that we heard from so many people all around the province of Ontario.

I'd like to begin by reflecting briefly on what we said in our interim report, which reflected on the testimony that we heard.

One of the themes that came out very clearly in what we heard from the people who came to talk to us was the whole problem of gaps in service. We heard about gaps in geography. If you lived in one community you could get access to a children's residential program. If you lived in another community, you couldn't get access to a children's program.

We heard about age gaps. If you had a child who was 15 and had an addiction problem, you could get service, but if you had a child who was 14 or 13, maybe you couldn't get them into that program because they just happened to be the wrong age.

We heard about gaps that were based on diagnosis. There might be a mental health program and there might be developmental services, but if you were so unfortunate as to have a dual diagnosis, that is, somebody who's

developmentally delayed and who also has a mental health issue, no agency would touch you. If you happened to have mental health and addiction problems—and many of the people who have been diagnosed with mental health issues also have substance abuse issues—again, the addiction agency wouldn't take you because you had mental health problems and the mental health agency wouldn't take you because you had addiction problems. There was no place to go if you had both.

Over and over and over again, this theme came through, that despite the fact that we have over 300 adult mental health agencies and over 400 children's mental health agencies funded in the province of Ontario—that gives us something to the tune of 750 community agencies—there's still a tremendous number of gaps in service. Just having a lot of agencies doesn't do it.

That's why the select committee landed on saying that we need a central agency, which we called Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. One organization needs to be responsible for steering the ship.

From an institutional and service provider point of view, they need to be able to decide what the core services are that should be either locally available or at least accessible by referral in every community in Ontario. Then, again from an institutional point of view, they need to be able to look at each individual community and say, “What are the gaps and how do we fill the gaps?” The answer is going to be different in different communities because the gaps are different in different communities.

We need somebody to organize the service so that everybody has access, but we also need somebody who is responsible for dealing with the individuals who are the clients of the service and their families, as the member from Timmins–James Bay pointed out, and help people to navigate the system and to find those services—the mental health, the addiction and also the community services—to find their way through the maze, because so often, services might be available, but the individual who needs the service can't find the service. That's what we want the central agency to do.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It really is a privilege to provide some remarks this morning.

Winston Churchill once reflected that the camel was the result of a government committee trying to design a race horse. He reflected that parliamentary democracy has its shortcomings, but there's no other system in the world.

For people who look at us and our work here, perhaps question period sometimes brings out the worst in parliamentarians. The select committee that I had the privilege of serving on brings out the best in parliamentarians. I think from time to time we should look at amending our standing orders to incorporate the opportunity to have four or five select committees that work during the life of a Parliament, because it really provides the opportunities for parliamentarians to come together in common cause.

There is no question in my mind that we have all dealt, in our constituency offices, with people who face the particular challenges of dealing with mental illness or families that are dealing with mental illness, but for me personally one of the great testimonies that I heard in this area was a number of years ago by Michael Wilson, the former very distinguished finance minister for Canada, a very distinguished Canadian ambassador to the United States. Michael and his wife, Mrs. Wilson, lost their son at 15 years due to mental illness; he committed suicide. You could see the feelings of Mr. Wilson when he shared, in a very extensive interview, what should have been done and could have been done for his young son, an individual who grappled with mental illness from very early years in elementary school to the tragic end to his life at age 15.

I think that part of the testimony and the work of the committee—we heard from parents and caregivers that the struggle with mental illness is something that lasts a lifetime, when an individual, perhaps in elementary school, is indeed assessed and diagnosed and there's the real challenge to stay with that individual through their lifelong journey. One of the things that we concluded, one of the recommendations, is the need to stay with that individual through their lifelong journey, to make sure that we have an approach in Ontario that stays with that individual and stays with that family through that lifelong journey.

I want to reflect, because I was on the committee—I volunteered on the committee, because at the time I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I want to reflect for a few moments on our visit to Sandy Lake, a First Nations community that is in a very isolated part of northwestern Ontario. I can say to the chief of Sandy Lake and its residents that I may never get back to Sandy Lake, but I'll never forget that experience. When you hear first-hand that a large number of their population are addicted to Percocet and OxyContin that are smuggled into that First Nations community from Winnipeg, when you look at the local graves in that community and the headstones, and when you see all the young people who are buried there, many of them as a result of suicide, you know that we can no longer turn our backs on our first citizens of our province.

One of the things that is critically important is the recommendation that provides for a common basket of services for all citizens in Ontario. You and I, Madam Speaker, believe that that is a fundamental right for citizens who live in the province, whether you are in Kenora or Cornwall or Peterborough or Petrolia or Sandy Lake or Sarnia, that you have to have that opportunity to have access to that common basket of services. In our visits to First Nations communities, when they reflect upon the impact of residential schools, the impact of losing four generations of parenting in those communities, and you can see that that has directly caused a social breakdown in the structure of many of our First Nations communities—certainly we took the time to reflect upon that.

The report is a number of recommendations. In many government reports, of course, we have witnessed in the past, there has been a multitude of recommendations. Half of them take you in one direction and the other half go in another direction. But I think it's important that this particular report provides a great framework for the future.

I'll just finish with the words of Lester Pearson, who, in April 1968, when he delivered his last speech as Prime Minister of Canada, said that a wise man once reflected that failures are only made by those who fail to dare, not by those who dare to fail. This indeed is a daring report, and Ontario cannot allow this to fail.

1010

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Let me start out by saying I was honoured to serve on the Select Committee on Mental Health, and I want to thank all my colleagues who served on that committee. I think we should all be very proud of the report that we finally came up with, because we all made major contributions in, if I could say, a very jovial manner, as my colleagues have said previously.

But I think the most important thing is this was a select committee. Members were selected because they indicated their interest to their own House leaders. And you know, by the formation of the committee, we were lucky to have a committee that had a very broad experience level: My colleague from Nickel Belt, being a former nurse and servant in the health care field, was very helpful; my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa, being a lawyer with the experience of the justice system—a system that has failed us drastically in the past—had first-hand knowledge of what has happened in our court system; and my colleague sitting next to me here, who has had experience as a former medical officer of health, and my other colleagues who have had various community experiences or experiences in agencies in their own riding or family and friends.

I have to say that because of the broad knowledge of our committee, I think we've landed on a report that this Legislature should be very proud of. I'm hopeful that the recommendations that we came up with will be implemented, and implemented in the very near future.

I just want to comment that the reason I wanted to serve on this committee is that I had a personal, personal friend of mine who suffered mental health illness, and I have to agree with my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa that today's economy—there's probably \$30 billion a year being wasted because of people who suffer from mental health illness, and it's not well coordinated, it's not well managed. My friend worked for a government agency. He was a senior executive of that agency. He suffered mental illness, and all they did was put him on disability and pay him over \$70,000 a year for seven years, until he took his life.

That was just one person, and if you look at the 12 million or so people who live in our province, there must be many, many others. So I have to agree with my col-

league that employers today are failing to deal with mental health issues in our economy, and we need to reach out to them that they need to do a better job. They do a very good job on workplace safety, workplace hazardous systems, where they train their employees. I think they need to move to recognize that mental health is a contributor to lost productivity and they need to do something in the workplace, because my friend would probably still be around and would be a person contributing to society today had the workplace recognized mental health is an issue.

I want to tell you, the committee landed on Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, and we could have stopped there. But we recognized that if we had done that, we would have left the job to someone else to decide what that agency should do, and we spent the hours dedicated and committed by everybody to go beyond the agency and create a structure which was the strategic goals. I hope the Minister of Health, when she receives this particular report, will take the necessary action, and I'm looking forward to it. Thank you very much.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. This concludes the time available, and so the House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakubuski: I'd like to introduce Marilyn Lee, who is in the public gallery and who is the mother of page Chloé St. Amand.

Mr. Dave Levac: I rise to introduce the mother of our page Caelan Meggs. Mrs. Lisa Meggs is in the members' gallery on my right. I welcome her to Queen's Park and ask her to not post judgment on anybody; just enjoy the festivities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of page Rodney Ramos and the member from Davenport, to welcome his mother, Rowena, and his father, Noel, to the public gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today the new Consul General of the People's Republic of China at Toronto, Mr. Ligang Chen. He's accompanied today by Deputy Consul General Madam Zhang and Consul Ms. Wang. Please join me in welcoming our guests today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of Legislative pages serving in the second session of the 39th Parliament and would ask the pages to form for introduction, please.

Noor Bakir, Vaughan; Megan Brian, Essex; Brandon Chan, St. Paul's; Anika Chowdhury, Trinity-Spadina; Ioana Crant, Windsor West; Thomas Davidson, Ottawa

Centre; Henry Dennis, Scarborough Southwest; Brigid Goulem, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock; Emily Goldberg, York Centre; Ziwen (Nick) Jiang, Oak Ridges-Markham; Lina Ly, Scarborough-Agincourt; Caelan Meggs, Brant—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): He's also a Leaf fan.

Christopher Millar, Simcoe-Grey; Rodney Ramos, Davenport; Emily Rempel, Kitchener-Conestoga; Alex Schmidt, Cambridge; Chloé St. Amand, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke; Audrey Steele, Sault Ste. Marie; Shanthos Thangalingam, York South-Weston; and Lathiha Thillainadarajah, Don Valley West.

Welcome to our new pages. Enjoy the session.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has given me written notice of his intention to raise a point of privilege, as required by standing order 21(c). I would like to thank the member for giving me sufficient time to review this matter.

I wish to advise that I will be deciding on this matter without further hearing directly from the member at this time, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

The member's point of privilege concerns regulation 233/10, made on June 2, 2010, under the Public Works Protection Act. This regulation established a geographical area in the city of Toronto to be designated a "public work" for the purposes of the act, for the period June 21 to June 28, 2010. This period of time encompassed the dates on which the G20 summit was held.

The member has asked me to find that two things about this regulation have breached his privileges: first, its promulgation without prior consultation of the Legislative Assembly, and second, the failure of the Premier and the then Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to clarify confusion the member believes existed about the scope of application of the regulation.

With respect to the first issue, it is simply the case that any regulation, made in accordance with the statute conferring the authority for it to be made, does not require the prior agreement of the House. Or, more accurately, a statute conferring the authority for future regulations represents a prior delegation by the House of the legal, moral and political sanction to the government of the day to make such regulations. There is no case for complaint by the House or any of its members when this power is validly exercised, for it was indeed previously delegated by the House itself. The House, in its wisdom, did have its say when it passed the parent statute, thereby giving its prior consent for such a regulation to be made.

Obviously the House can never foresee in advance all of the circumstances and scenarios that might give rise to a regulation being made under a statute, or what exact form or reach a regulation might have. Nevertheless, the Legislature very routinely passes legislation embedded

with regulation-making authority. When the House passes legislation that includes the power to make regulations, it is effectively waiving its privilege to have a say and to have a role in exactly what regulations say or when they are made.

With respect to the second issue, I am certain the member can appreciate that it is not for the Speaker to dictate what a government can or cannot, should or should not, have to say about any given issue except that which is bound by the rules of this House; nor can a Speaker interpret or divine what the various reactions and understandings of the public might be about any government action or statement, or a government's decision not to act or speak in a way someone might wish, or the motives, if any, of anyone in this equation.

The privileges that members individually, and the House collectively, enjoy are focused and limited and revolve principally around the right to participate in parliamentary proceedings freely and without obstruction or hindrance. Given the exact heads of privilege in the context of what I have just said about this matter, I cannot find that the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has made out a prima facie case for a breach of privilege or a contempt of the House.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Premier: Premier, yesterday I raised the concerns of Ontario families and how they shared with me that your expensive experiments have made life a lot more unaffordable in Ontario. Dalton McGuinty showed just how out of touch he has now become when he suggested that he has a “more intelligent understanding” of Ontario families’ concerns than they do.

Premier, isn't this Premier Dad routine growing a little thin?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to speak to one of those unaffordable experiments that my honourable colleague likes to refer to with respect to full-day kindergarten. In the riding of Niagara West–Glanbrook, there are four schools. We decided, as you know, to move ahead this September with full-day kindergarten.

In St. Joseph Separate School in Grimsby, there are 55 students enrolled in two classes of full-day kindergarten. Our Lady of the Assumption in Stoney Creek: 52 children. In College Street Public School in Smithville—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier, sorry.

I'm going to call the members on comments that they're making in reference to the Premier. I just warn you that, even under your breath, it's not acceptable to the Speaker.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I just want to speak on behalf of the families living in the riding of Niagara West–Glanbrook.

The final school I make reference to is College Street Public School in Smithville, with 81 children there. In Senator Gibson, there are 111 children who have been enrolled in full-day kindergarten. That speaks to meeting the demands of Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, let me talk more about your so-called more intelligent understanding of what families’ concerns are. There is no doubt that over seven years you've displayed that you see families as a collection of two-year-olds, incapable of making priorities and decisions for themselves. Your meddling is usually restricted to banning plastic bags in the kitchen, regulating pizza days in the schools and what kind of pets people can own, but now you are moving to all new territory—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: You're an insult to families.

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I withdraw.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now the Premier is moving to brand new territory by telling seniors, through his smart meter tax grab, to wash their clothes and their dishes at midnight. You're forcing upon communities industrial wind farm experiments that they don't want to host.

Premier, over these last seven years, when did you decide for yourself that you know better what's best for families and neighbourhoods than they themselves do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're aware that the leader of the official opposition opposes full-day kindergarten, notwithstanding the tremendous support shown for that initiative in his own riding.

Something else that he doesn't like are our family health teams. I want to make reference to two family health teams in the riding of Niagara West–Glanbrook. There is one in Beamsville; it has hired 10 doctors and it's providing care to 9,273 patients. There's another in Smithville; they've hired eight doctors and they are providing care to 8,282 patients. These are two family health teams meeting the needs of 17,565 people living in that community. That is very important to families living in that community.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier's “more intelligent understanding” means that Premier McGuinty believes that he knows how to spend the family budget better than families themselves do. We disagree. We believe families should be making those decisions. We believe they should be making their own choices, and they will have a choice between a leader who understands that average,

hard-working families need a breather, they need a chance to catch up, and a Premier Dad who wants to keep spending their money on his expensive experiments and pet projects.

The health tax hit families hard, and your HST tax grab, eco taxes, tire taxes, hydro rate hikes—it goes on and on. Families can no longer afford the Dalton McGuinty government that is chasing jobs from our province and holding families back.

Premier, did you change? I think so, because now families want to see a change in our province.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If my honourable colleague criticizes me, my party and our government for investing in full-day kindergarten, that is a criticism that we embrace. If they criticize us for investing in family health teams for our families, we embrace that criticism. If they criticize us for investing in clean air for our families, we embrace that. If they criticize us for partnering with businesses and creating jobs, we embrace that criticism. We'll do what it takes to stand up for Ontario families.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. You guys are egging them on. Start the clock.

New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier—who, by that last answer, has proven he never bothered to step one foot out of his bubble this past summer. If you would have heard what I heard about the impact of your eco tax grab, your HST tax grab that added 8% to hydro bills, gasoline and average, everyday activities like getting your hair cut, you would understand that Ontario families need a break today. They can't afford—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable members that this is an important time of the day for not only the members here but for people viewing at home. I, too, want to hear what is going on. But one of the things that troubles me is some of the more personal shots that go across the floor, and I just ask members to be respectful of the positions that each of us brings to the chamber and not to bring it to a level of a personal attack on one another.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's something, hopefully, Premier, that pierced your bubble: You took \$1,000 out of the pockets of hard-working Ontario families for your HST tax credit, and then you say you're going to give them \$50 back through an activity tax credit. Basically, you take a grand out of their wallets and give them back five 10s. How did you become so cynical that you believe that Ontario families are actually going to be fooled by this cheap PR stunt?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've had the opportunity at some length to talk about the HST. My honourable colleague continues to claim that he adamantly opposes that particular tax initiative. Again, though, he is not prepared to do anything to remove it. He also refuses to acknowledge that, in fact, as part of a broader package of tax reforms, it's accompanied by corporate tax reductions, the elimination of the capital tax, personal income tax reductions, a transition benefit, a sales tax credit and a new northern energy tax credit.

My colleague says that he's in favour of helping out families with respect to costs. We put forward an initiative. It provides some modest support for families, and it has been well received by families. It's the new children's activity tax credit.

My colleague says that he opposes that, so I ask him, on behalf of families: How can he say that he wants to help out families at the same time he opposes the new initiative to help families with the cost of activities for their children?

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Clearly, after seven years in office, Dalton McGuinty has changed. And now, Ontario families want to see change.

Premier, by your own admission just now, you called your so-called tax credit "modest." But this Premier is so out of touch that if he actually talked to hard-working families in the province, he'd hear them use the word "meagre" at best when talking about the tax credit. Premier, quite frankly, that's when they're being polite. It is not a tax credit; it's an insult to hard-working families in our province.

The \$1,000 that you took away through your HST tax grab was a long weekend's stay at the Great Wolf Lodge and a trip to Marineland, and you're giving them back a movie night. Premier, it's an insult.

When exactly did you get so out of touch with the needs of Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: For a family with two children, \$100 is \$100. I think that's not insignificant. My colleague might say it is. He—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. Stop the clock. The member from Renfrew will please come to order. If the honourable members want me to start naming members for heckling, I will start to do that. I really would prefer not to.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to draw my colleague's attention once again to a report put out by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It concluded, "The Ontario government's HST plan is virtually revenue neutral when viewed as part of a total tax package that includes increased sales and property tax credits and a significant decrease in personal income tax rates.

"No group is significantly worse off or better off as a result of the province's HST plan. Assertions that this is a tax grab have no foundation in reality."

I would strongly recommend that report and so many others to my honourable colleague. Again, on behalf of Ontario families, I ask him to support our new children's activity tax credit.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier says when a family has two children, "\$100 is \$100." Well, Premier, whether a family has one, two, three children or it's Kate Plus Eight, \$1,000 is \$1,000 and a massive tax grab on the backs of Ontario families that they simply can no longer afford.

We're seeing the same Premier Dad approach when it comes to auto insurance in the province of Ontario as well. The Premier says that his auto insurance changes offer families a choice. But, Premier, you know that you're basically robbing families of their current coverage unless they're willing to pay a lot more.

The Premier is so out of touch, he doesn't even know that when the hard-working families of our province hear the word "choice," they know another tax grab is coming from Dalton McGuinty.

Premier, why, every time they hear you bring forward a new idea, do families know it means that life will get more expensive?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think Ontarians would be appreciative of a more expansive view of reality. I want to remind my honourable colleague that he voted against our personal income tax cuts, which, for the average family, result in a \$400 reduction in taxes.

They voted against our transition benefit of \$1,000 for a family. They voted against our new sales tax credit, which will give families who qualify \$1,040 every year. They're apparently going to vote against our children's activity tax credit, which gives an average family \$100; our northern Ontario energy credit, which is up to \$200 per family; and our senior homeowners property tax grants, which we're doubling this year to \$500.

Those are all specific initiatives that help address some of the concerns of our families when it comes to their home economics. Every time my colleague has the opportunity, he votes against that specific support that we will continue to put in place for our families.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. When the Premier first launched his smart meter scheme, he promised, "It will pay for itself." Can the Premier produce any evidence showing that smart meters are saving people money or, in fact, helping people to conserve energy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the first question on this. I know that my honourable colleague is in fact supportive of smart meters and that she would want us to do what environmentalists and many progressive observers of the use and generation of electricity have been calling for for a long time.

The smart meter, of course, is something that we put in place to enable us to lay the foundation for a smart grid, and in particular is there to ensure that consumers can avail themselves of lower rates during off-peak hours so that they can generate some benefits when it comes to their personal billing. That's the purpose of a smart meter.

We will continue to put those in place. I know that my honourable colleague, in fact, supports the use and implementation of smart meters in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ten thousand households in Toronto have been billed using so-called smart meters since 2009. Toronto Hydro has provided some details about how the program is working for these households. Can the Premier explain why consistently, for over a year now, an average of 80% of those people have been paying higher hydro rates?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: There are a number of factors that go into our hydro rates, and I think the member opposite knows that. But what surprises me is that she seems to be backing away from what I thought was a commitment that she and her critic had to the modernization of our energy infrastructure. If we're going to build a strong, reliable and clean energy system in this province, we need to modernize our energy infrastructure.

My question to the member opposite is, do you have the courage to make the decisions necessary to move us forward and modernize our energy infrastructure so we can build that strong, reliable and clean energy system?

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The information we've received from Toronto Hydro shows that people are paying more. That's the bottom line. It also shows that they are not conserving energy—they are not conserving energy. Month after month, the data shows hardly any changes at all. Can the Premier explain why he spent a billion and a half dollars on a scheme that doesn't conserve energy, but does raise people's hydro rates?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I find it hard to believe that the NDP would be against an initiative that's going to modernize our energy infrastructure, that's going to provide our consumers with the opportunity to shift their use off of peak usage and that's going to provide consumers the opportunity to make choices about how they consume energy. This is an important but small part of our efforts to build that stronger, more reliable and cleaner energy system.

I would think we would have the support of that party when we're moving in that direction. Instead, she seems to want to go back to where Tim Hudak is now, and that's back to that dirty system of energy that we inherited, that weakening system of energy, that unreliable system of energy. The leader of the opposition either should get on the bus or off the bus, but the people of

Ontario deserve to know: Do you support our efforts to build a stronger energy system in this province—

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

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier of the province. When the Premier first launched the smart meter scheme, he promised—and I will quote again—“It will pay for itself.” Five years later, we have a scheme that leaves 80% of the people paying higher rates, doesn’t conserve energy and has left Ontario families on the hook for \$1.5 billion. This smart meter scheme is making eHealth look like a bargain.

How long has the Premier known that this program wasn’t working, and why hasn’t he shared the facts with Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.
1100

Hon. Brad Duguid: The fact of the matter is, we’re in the process now. We’ve installed 4.1 million smart meters on the road to installing 4.5 million smart meters. We’re on track. We’re on budget.

Now, time of use is starting to roll out. Barely a million people in this province now have access to time of use, so it’s still early, but the early signs are that people are shifting their use, and that’s saving the system money. That’s ensuring that we don’t have to create more supply.

Our government has saved 1,700 megawatts of energy since we’ve come to office. They, when they were in office, cut conservation measures. We’re now beginning to see where their real heart lies: They don’t support conservation at all.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier doesn’t need experts to tell him his smart meter scheme isn’t working. If he asks people who have them, they can tell him very clearly. One senior wrote this to me: “I keep my house now at 60 degrees in the winter ... I shudder to think I will have to lower the thermostat even further just to pay the bill. Smart meters may be fine if a person is away all day, but definitely not people who are home.”

When was the Premier planning to admit that his smart meter program isn’t nearly as smart as he originally claimed?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said, this program is helping to give consumers the ability to shift their use. It provides incentives for them to shift their use off of peak time.

If the NDP is suggesting that we change that differential, stand up and say so now. If you want us to change that differential now without doing the due diligence that we’re doing now to make sure we get that differential right, then say that, because we want to make sure that as we roll in this program—it’s a new program—we’re not unduly harming those who cannot shift.

There are seniors in our province who have expressed concerns about their opportunity to shift off peak use, so

we’re going to bring this program in. We’re going to do it smartly. We’re going to do it and take the time we need to make sure we get it right. We’re not going to take the advice of a party that cut conservation programs when they were in office.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Across Ontario, people have been telling us what the Premier already knows: They’re paying more and electricity isn’t being saved—some conservation program. Even with smart meters, energy is not being conserved.

Wendy Roussell of Brantford writes this: “I’m on CPP disability and my spouse makes minimum wage.... The combination of the HST with the so-called ‘smart meters’ have me terrified of my first hydro bill.” Only in Dalton McGuinty’s Ontario are people literally terrified of their hydro bill.

Given all the information that’s emerging, will the Premier now acknowledge that his multi-billion-dollar smart meter scheme might turn out to be one of his most ill-conceived and costliest ideas yet?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think what’s very clear today is that the NDP have a choice to make: Ontarians deserve to know whether they’re getting on the bus or whether they’re getting off the bus. We know where the McGuinty government stands. We stand for making these critical investments that are needed to build a strong, reliable, clean energy system. We know—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton, the member from Hamilton East and the member from Oxford, please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We know where the Tories stand: They left us with a weak, unreliable and dirty system of energy seven years ago. Tim Hudak has not learned from his mistakes. He wants to take us back to where we were before.

The question, I think, to Ontarians is: Where do you stand? Are you going to be strong enough to stand with us, to make the decisions we need to make to create a strong, reliable and clean energy system in this province, or are you going to join Tim Hudak and go back to where we were seven years ago?

We’re proud of the investments—

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, a year ago, you, through your former energy minister, George Smitherman, said the Green Energy Act would cost families “approximately 1% per year,” but the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association says your multi-billion-dollar sweetheart deal with Samsung will add \$732 a year to the energy bills of struggling

Ontario families. Your energy schemes have Ontario families afraid to open their hydro bills.

Why did you tell Ontario families who are struggling to keep up that their energy bills would go up by only 1% when you knew they would go up by much more?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We believe in a strong, reliable and clean energy system that families and businesses in this province of Ontario can count on. Ontarians expect us to keep the lights on and they know that to build the energy supply we need to make the necessary investments to ensure that we can do that. These critical—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You used to say “affordable.”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew, you just asked the question. When you’re heckling, I don’t know how you can hear the answer. If you’re not satisfied in the end with the answer, you can call for a late show.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: These critical investments that are needed now are needed because previous governments neglected this responsibility. The Tory system we inherited in 2003 was in shambles. It was weak, it was unreliable, it was dirty. Tim Hudak didn’t get it then when he was sitting in cabinet. He does not get it now.

Not only is our energy plan creating strong, reliable, clean energy, it’s also creating 50,000 jobs, jobs that they—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think the minister needs some new notes.

Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters are not alone in sounding the alarm about your out-of-control green energy experiment. A September 2010 report prepared for BMO Capital Markets entitled Basic Points took note of Dalton McGuinty’s so-called Green Energy Act. They call it a “bizarre electric generation construction program based on very optimistic costs for building wind farms, and wildly optimistic expectations for their effectiveness.”

What more do you need said to understand that struggling Ontario families cannot afford to pay for your experiments any longer?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Not only is our Green Energy Act building a strong, reliable and clean energy system, it’s creating 50,000 jobs across Ontario and attracting billions of dollars of investment into our green energy economy. Ontarians need to know this, and maybe the member should listen for a second—Ontarians deserve to know this: Tim Hudak wants to kill those jobs and destroy the strong, reliable and clean energy system that Ontarians have worked so hard for.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. Order.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Oh, it’s Sarah Palin over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment, Minister.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. We are only into the second question period of this final session. I realize that things are going to be elevated, but there is important business that needs to be conducted.

I reminded members earlier, I’m going to remind them again and I will remind you all in a statement that I will be delivering tomorrow that it is important that we have debate within this chamber, but debate can take place without personal attacks on one another. I will have more to say about that tomorrow.

New question.

1110

PENSION REFORM

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Over the past few years we have witnessed threats to the retirement security of Ontarians like never before, with mighty corporations taking hits to their viability and pensioners’ security, like Nortel, where there’s still faint hope for reasonable, growth-oriented pension solutions.

Will the Premier tell the Nortel pensioners today that he’s willing to suspend the September 30 Nortel windup process and work towards a financial sponsorship model for stranded pensions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite knows full well that even if we were able to, we can’t do that. He is referring to an agreement that was signed among a number of participants, including the Nortel pensioners, with respect to the windup of Nortel and with respect to the overall pension account. The member should know full well that it’s governed by the bankruptcy act; it’s been sealed by a court. Regardless of what our views are in these matters, that is not something that is within our purview to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The Premier knows it’s critical that Ontarians who deferred their wages to their pension plan deserve to have a retirement for which they have planned. Nortel pensioners did their homework, consulted with actuaries, examined the British and Quebec models and have made a sound proposal.

The Premier has the opportunity to take decisive, bold action now to start the growing-up process rather than winding up Ontario’s stranded pension plans. Will he do it? The minister is well aware that this is doable with change in legislation.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The British model failed completely; that needs to be understood.

What the member is advocating is taking hard-earned pension money and putting it into more risky invest-

ments. The member opposite is also ignoring a substantial number of Nortel pensioners who do not want to do that. Those are pensioners who are disabled former employees who have said passionately that they don't want this plan followed.

Our government is proud that we were able to put \$250 million into the Nortel pension benefit guarantee fund through our budget initiatives, which that member and his party did not support. We will continue to work with Nortel pensioners and all Ontarians to build a stronger, better and better-managed pension system for all Ontarians.

ACADEMIC TESTING

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, your office announced the test results of the 2009-10 school year from the EQAO. The results were met with calls to place a moratorium on the large-scale testing that takes place every year. Advocates of a moratorium suggest that the test places a burden on teachers and students, and that the \$100 million dedicated to administering the test and related literacy and numeracy secretariat initiatives would be better spent on other areas in the education system.

Minister, is the money spent to administer EQAO tests money well spent? How will this help Ontario students, specifically those in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham? Do these tests really provide an accurate picture of our education system?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think that it's a very important question. I have the opportunity to clarify why provincial tests are so important and I think that they do provide a very clear snapshot of where all students in the province are with respect to their understanding of the provincial curriculum. It is one measure that we use, and we know that the work done by our classroom teachers always plays a very key role in informing students and families about their progress.

What I can say is how our government has used the results of the tests. Those results have enabled us to drive resources into the classroom. We have increased spending in education by 40% since coming together and we use the results of the test to understand how we can better support teachers in our schools and enable students to be more successful. That's a good investment for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Minister, your ministry released the province-wide test results for elementary and grade 9 students in August. Later this week, I'm looking forward to receiving the results for the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board because they are usually some of the top in the province.

While this year's provincial results have increased, the release of these results brought a warning from some that the slowing increase in results achieved demonstrates that we are very close to a results plateau. I understand that

the ministry's target of having 75% of students achieving the provincial standard is not likely to be reached.

Minister, what results have we seen this year? Are we indeed facing a plateau in test results? What is this government doing to prevent this?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I can say, first of all, is that when we came to government, 54% of our students were achieving the provincial average. Today, the most recent results demonstrate that 68% of students are achieving the provincial average. And it's important to clarify that the provincial average in the province of Ontario is a B; in many other jurisdictions, even other provinces in Canada, it's a C or even a pass. So our kids are doing extraordinarily well, and we will continue to use the test results to inform us how we can continue to support teachers in our schools with the resources that they need to enable school success.

Student achievement is very important to this government, and I think that it's important—I would expect it would be important—to all members of this House to understand how we, with the 40% increase in funding, continue to drive those resources into our front-line classrooms that enable—

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

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. When Dalton McGuinty was caught trying to slip through eco taxes onto 9,000 new products this past summer, he offered a mea culpa. He said, "We came up short." If struggling Ontario families think they've heard that before, it is because they have. After he was caught in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle, he said, "We should have done more to protect the public."

Since you didn't keep your word during last summer's billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle, why should any Ontarian believe you will keep your promise during this summer's biggest eco fee fiasco?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to start by saying, and I think we tried to establish this yesterday, that we believe it is important that we keep hazardous materials that are in our households from ever getting into our landfills. I am surprised that there would even be a question here about whether or not that is the right policy objective.

Now, how we do that is another issue, and I want to thank the Premier, because he decided that we needed to have a review. At our ministry, we are in the midst of that review, and I look forward to sharing with you in this House the results of that review. We know that consumers want to do the right thing, but what we have to do is make it easy for them. It needs to be accountable. It needs to be transparent. That's why our ministry is doing that review, and I look forward to sharing that with the House. But we are determined to keep hazardous

materials out of our landfills so that they are not discovered by our children and our grandchildren one day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, it seems that Dalton McGuinty found inspiration in Britney Spears: Oops, he's done it again. When Dalton McGuinty was caught handing out millions of dollars to Liberal-friendly cricket clubs, he said, "I think we can do better." It took an Ombudsman report that said that property assessments in Ontario were hurting Ontario families with significantly higher tax bills, and guess what he said? "We think we can do better." When the disgraceful conditions of nursing homes in this province were exposed in 2008, he said—guess what?—"We think we can do better."

The pattern of mea culpas with this Premier rivals his taxes and his spending. I've got a question for him: Does he really think Ontario families believe a leopard can change its spots?

Hon. John Wilkinson: This party was elected by the good people of Ontario because your party—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Stop the clock.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, the clock's not stopping. I'm quite content to just let it run. I do apologize to the third party because they have been well behaved, and they are being penalized as a result of actions by both sides of the House.

New question.

1120

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Est-ce que la ministre pourrait expliquer pourquoi M. Brière, un bon francophone de Nickel Belt, ne peut pas acheter une plaque d'immatriculation personnalisée avec le slogan « Tant à découvrir »? Du côté anglophone, c'est non seulement possible, mais il existe 74 graphiques différents qui vont des arts à l'environnement, passant par les sports et les universités. Mais en français on a notre drapeau. C'est tout, point final; il n'y en a pas d'autres.

Ma question est simple : pourquoi M. Brière n'a-t-il pas les mêmes choix?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: J'apprécie beaucoup la question que vous posez. En fait, les plaques devraient être disponibles partout en Ontario, et je vais m'assurer, avec la ministre responsable du transport, que ce point soit corrigé. Ce n'est pas la première fois qu'on me pose cette question-là, et on a été capable de régler les problèmes ailleurs. J'espère que tous les francophones qui voudront avoir une plaque avec « Tant à découvrir » pourront acheter leur plaque près de chez eux.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: On dirait que le gouvernement pense qu'il n'y a pas de vétérans francophones en Ontario, qu'il n'y a pas de fans des Sénateurs en Ontario, puis qu'il n'y a pas de pompiers francophones en Ontario non plus. Mais laissez-moi vous éclairer : il y en a. Il y a

des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes dans tous ces groupes-là. Ce que nous n'avons pas, c'est un gouvernement qui les respecte et qui leur donne des choix. Les néo-démocrates pensent que la Loi sur les services en français est quelque chose d'important, mais on entend toujours la même chose.

Pourquoi, avec les libéraux de M. McGuinty, les francophones n'ont-ils jamais les mêmes droits? Il faut toujours revendiquer ce qui devrait être notre dû.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je ne peux pas entendre et accepter une question de la sorte, parce que s'il y a un gouvernement qui a supporté les francophones en Ontario, c'est bien le gouvernement de Dalton McGuinty.

Avec la nomination du commissaire aux services en français, avec l'expansion de l'Hôpital Montfort, avec toutes nos écoles francophones qu'on ouvre à chaque année dans tout l'Ontario, je pense que c'est un gouvernement qui ne fait pas juste le dire, mais qui met en action l'appui qu'il a pour les francophones.

Tout récemment on a voté en faveur d'une loi sur la journée des francophones en Ontario, et on va célébrer, le 25 septembre prochain, la journée des francophones. Alors, je voudrais demander aux Ontariens de réfléchir à ce que les néo-démocrates, quand ils étaient au pouvoir, ont fait pour les francophones.

HYDRO ONE

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Energy. On July 5, many people in the city of Toronto lost power due to a fire at Hydro One's Manby transformer station. The outage lasted a couple of hours. People's daily routines were disrupted. It was an especially frightening couple of hours for many stuck in elevators or at home without air conditioning on one of the hottest days in the summer.

Torontonians remembered the panic and the anxiety that set in on August 14, 2003, when power failed in this city and across most of the province. Given the hot summer that we've just had, the lights going out reminded us of that summer seven years ago when they went out and did not come back for days.

Minister, what happened at Manby? Is the problem fixed? Torontonians want to know.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I just want to assure the member that Hydro One is pursuing a full investigation into the incident at the Manby station and will make their findings known. Hydro One has indicated that this was an unusual occurrence caused by the failure of a circuit breaker.

I think Ontarians need to be aware that according to Hydro One, the important investments that the McGuinty government has made over the last six years in our energy infrastructure—investments that are not supported by the opposition, obviously—played an important role in three ways. Number one, they were critical in identifying the initial outage immediately; number two, they were critical in containing the extent of the outage;

and number three, they were critical in helping to get the lights back on in a timely way.

The outage in Toronto this summer stands as a shining example of how important the investments we are making are in building a strong, more reliable energy system.

I dare say, had we taken the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, that outage would probably have resembled the one we saw back in—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, fires at transformer stations are pretty serious occurrences, not just because of the dangers to the workers at the station but because shutdowns at stations like Manby place a higher strain on the rest of the grid.

This kind of emergency load shifting can be a pretty tricky process if there's not enough flexibility and redundancy built into the system. If the system is not equipped to handle accidents like this one, we could quickly be looking at a chain reaction of outages throughout the grid in Ontario.

Minister, what are we doing to ensure reliability in our electricity system, especially in the future?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd like to first commend the Toronto firefighters who fought this fire for their, as usual, heroic and effective work. I'd also like to thank Hydro One staff for their quick response to the outage.

To the member's point: This enhanced reliability in our energy system is a direct result of the investments the McGuinty government has made. Our investments in new generation, transmission and our energy infrastructure were all critical factors in ensuring that this outage did not result in a chain reaction that could have catapulted across the province.

Ontarians need to know that had we taken the opposition's advice, or had a similar outage occurred seven years ago when the Leader of the Opposition was in cabinet, Toronto could have been shut down for days.

Replacing the Tories' weak, unreliable and dirty energy system has not been easy. It has required investment, and that's what triggered the rising cost of electricity. But Ontarians demand and deserve a strong, reliable and clean energy system and—

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

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Energy, who likes to rewrite history.

Oakville residents have called on you to change the location of the proposed Oakville power plant. Your ministry recognizes the Clarkson-Oakville airshed is overtaxed and is incapable of accepting additional pollutant loadings. This summer, Dr. David Balsillie's action plan, which your government commissioned, echoed this concern.

I have listened to the people of Oakville, and I agree with them. Will you listen to the people of Oakville,

change your mind and move the location of this power plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We absolutely have been listening to the people of Oakville. We've always been listening to the people of Oakville. We have a member of provincial Parliament in this Legislature by the name of Kevin Flynn who would have it no other way. Kevin Flynn has been working relentlessly in his community on a number of different issues. He has ensured that the voice of his community is being heard—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark and the member from Nepean will please come to order.

Please continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Kevin Flynn has ensured that the voice of the people of Oakville has been heard on this and many other issues.

We will continue to talk to the people of Oakville, to work with the people of Oakville. We have some challenges in this particular part of the greater Toronto area. We're going to do everything we can to meet those challenges.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Perhaps the minister will do what he can to see that that bill comes forward from the member from Oakville to third reading.

Minister, toxic pollutants are discharged into the air by gas-fired power plants. Children are particularly susceptible. Already in Halton, respiratory diseases are the number one reason children are admitted to our hospitals. Yet this power plant will be in an overtaxed airshed within two kilometres of approximately 16 schools and 5,000 homes.

Nanticoke is a willing host. They want this power plant. Halton's airshed cannot handle it. You have the facts from Dr. Balsillie and a viable alternative. Again, will you move that power plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Only an outdated, right-wing Tory party is going to be against cleaner sources of energy. Only a right-wing Tory party is going to be against our efforts to get out of coal by the year 2014.

1130

We are going to do everything we can to work with the people of Oakville and the people right across this province to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe-Grey, the member from Lanark and the member from Nepean-Carleton will please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton as well.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're going to do everything we can, working with people right across this province, to ensure that we build a strong, reliable and clean energy system in this province. One thing we won't do is do what they want us to do, and that's to go back to the past.

That's to go back to the weak system, the unreliable system, the dirty system that polluted our air and impacted the health of ourselves and our kids and our grandkids.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Two years ago, I wrote to the Ombudsman, asking him to investigate the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN and its failure to represent the interests of its community. A scathing report was delivered by the Ombudsman just last month, and it pointed to a number of things, including illegal meetings and a community decision-making process that was nothing more than a sham.

My question is a simple one: How could this LHIN have strayed so far off course, and what does it say for the rest of the LHINs across this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We were pleased to receive the report from the Ombudsman. As my honourable colleague knows, the LHINs are a relatively recent creation in the history of Ontario health care. I know that my honourable colleague does, in fact, support local decision-making. I know that she supports moving away from the seven regional health offices and the 16 district health councils that used to be there instead. And I know that she really embraces this concept of giving communities greater say in terms of establishing their own priorities when it comes to meeting their health care needs.

As I say, we accept the recommendations offered by the Ombudsman, and I can also assure my colleague that we have followed each and every one of those.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Rather than denial, deflection and excuses, will the Premier admit to Ontarians, like the ones living in Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand and Brant, that his out-of-control LHINs need to be reined in and that the wrong-headed decisions, like the closing of emergency rooms, that were made by that LHIN need to be reversed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I have a continuing and abiding faith in the ability of communities to establish their priorities when it comes to their health care.

The alternative being proposed by some—I'm not clear as to where the leader of the NDP is coming from on this score—is that we eliminate the LHINs and restore seven regional health offices and 16 district health councils. That's not a concept that we support. We are very much supportive of this idea of giving local communities local influence into their locally delivered health care.

There are some challenges that will be encountered along the way. As those become apparent, we will continue to find ways to address them so that we can continue to find ways—all of us working together—to deliver the very best possible health care to all our families, regardless of where they live.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, constituents often contact my office regarding the status of employment standards claims that they have filed with your ministry. I know that Bill 68 amendments are intended to encourage faster resolution of claims. However, a related concern has been brought to my attention.

The proposed amendments to the Employment Standards Act would make it mandatory for workers to contact their employers before filing claims with your ministry. My constituents are concerned that this will make it harder for employees to stand up for their employment standards rights. In particular, younger workers and workers who struggle to speak English find this requirement intimidating.

Minister, why is your ministry proposing this change, and what are you doing to address this particular concern?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for Guelph for her question and for being such a tireless champion for her constituents' rights.

We've made great strides on this side of the House, on this side of the floor, to help vulnerable workers, to protect vulnerable workers, and we're going to continue to do just that.

Bill 68, if passed, encourages employees to contact their employer first, as a first step, before filing an employment standards claim. We know from experience that providing early notification encourages an early resolution. This means getting money back into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians faster, and this is what we are going to do. Although we do know that some employees have barriers, we are providing information to those employees in over 20 different languages. Also, if an employee feels threatened or uncomfortable, they can go directly to contact our employment standards office for help.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Minister, because that clarification is important for my constituents, particularly those who are vulnerable.

But many of those who need help the most are often not even aware of their rights as employees. Many of my constituents are newcomers to Ontario, and English is sometimes not their native language. I appreciate the information that you've given us, but what is the ministry doing to get the word out to the public at large and particularly to those vulnerable workers who don't always understand their rights or the legislation?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. I'm glad to hear that vulnerable workers are on everyone's minds here in this Legislature.

We want to assure the member that my ministry recognizes the challenge around employment standards claims that vulnerable workers who don't speak English or French as their first language may have. That's why we're providing fact sheets and information sheets in 23

different languages. They're available on the ministry's website. We've been working with employers, employee advocacy groups and other ministries to deliver this information directly to new and vulnerable workers. We do this through our website, through brochures and through posters. We're making sure that people get the information they need so that they are aware of their rights.

This government is moving forward with a plan. It's a positive plan. Bill 68—

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Wendy and Marc Trottier of Brights Grove have accepted the responsibility of providing daily support for their daughter Amber for the past 26 years. Amber needs 24-hour care. She spends most of her day in a wheelchair and is prone to seizures. They're worried about where Amber will live when they can no longer afford to take care of her.

Some 110 people are currently on a wait list for residential services in my riding through Lambton County Developmental Services. Minister, when can families like the Trottiers expect action on this important issue?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to this family, la famille Trottier, for all the work that they're doing in developmental disabilities. We need these parents who are so involved to lobby and to be the advocates for their sons and daughters, and I really do appreciate that.

I have to say that I'm very proud of the investment of this government in developmental disabilities. We have opened more beds in the developmental disability sector than any government before, and we will continue to do so. Every year, there are more requests for services, either to go into care or to have some respite, and that's what—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary? The member from Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, there's no doubt of the dedication of the Trottier family. There is doubt, however, about the dedication of your ministry in actually supporting these families. The Trottiers are tired of empty promises from your government. When can they expect action from you to decrease the wait list in developmental services?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Every year, this government invests in different services for the developmental disabilities sector. We have invested—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There are a number of—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Stop the clock.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Thanks, Speaker from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

There are a number of cross-conversations taking place here and it's always healthy, but when they elevate to a level that makes it difficult to hear, it's a challenge for everyone. I would just encourage the members that if they want to have a cross-conversation, that's what the chambers on either side of the lobby are for.

Minister.

1140

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Since taking office we have committed over \$176 million in funding to help adults with developmental disabilities live in the community, creating service and supports for more than 2,700 people. Also, this government has created the Passport program, which helps parents with their sons and daughters with developmental disabilities. Every year we're adding to that envelope and we will continue to do so.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I raise this issue on behalf of a constituent in Smooth Rock Falls, Angele Lacroix, whose family has been devastated since the closure of the Tembec mill in Smooth Rock Falls. She writes the following:

"I'm presently enrolled in a two-year registered practical nurse course through Ontario's Second Career program. I hope to convince you that the Second Career program's new guidelines are restrictive and do not allow enough flexibility in assessing and meeting the specific financial needs of candidates like myself in special circumstances. The new guidelines have created added financial hardship on me and others, thereby, in my opinion, the program will fall short of its objectives to help train unemployed workers for new careers.

"Although I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the program, unless I am provided with adequate financial assistance, I will be unable to finish my two-year program."

Premier, what is your government prepared to do to make sure she's able to stay in the program and complete it, and go to a job that she has been promised?

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

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the honourable member's question. Obviously I can't comment on a specific case but I'd be happy, if he provides me with the information, to look into it.

But let me take this opportunity to talk about the Second Career program. A report to this Legislature said that as of, I believe, a week ago Friday we have close to 35,000 Ontarians who have benefited from the Second Career program.

Despite the continuing criticism that came from the New Democratic Party, we moved forward and established the first program of its kind in Canada. We have worked to make sure that it's responsive to the needs of

workers. Last June, in fact, we issued new directives to make the guidelines more flexible based on the feedback that we had heard from both those who were applying to Second Career and from those who are administering the program. Changes to the program in June of last year in turn changed eligibility and brought forward things like a reduction in the number of weeks of active job search that a candidate needed. We reduced the duration of unemployment by half—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, it just doesn't cut it. Angele is going to be forced not to complete this program because your Second Career program does not provide her with the support that she needs to be able to complete it. My office, my constituency staff and myself have already raised this issue with your ministry and the MPP liaison on numerous occasions in order to intervene. That's the reason I asked the Premier to intervene, because your office has said, "There's nothing we can do."

So my question to you is simply this: Angele wants to stay in school. She has been offered a full-time job at the end of her training. Are you, yes or no, going to fix the issue so that she gets the support that she needs to be able to continue on with her education and move to a full-time job?

Hon. John Milloy: I make no apologies for a program which has offered support to 35,000 Ontarians, and as I've travelled throughout the province I have met dozens and dozens of people who are part of this program and moving forward. The program has a financial criteria which is based on the individual needs of an applicant and can offer up to \$28,000 in support. As I say, I cannot stand here and comment on an individual case or that person's financial circumstances. But what I can say is that we have 35,000 Ontarians who are turning over a new chapter in their life despite the fact that that party stood up day after day and criticized the program, asked us to scrap the program and said the program was a flop.

Interjections.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Now you're quiet, and I think it goes in very nicely with some of the comments I'm just about to make.

I have to admit—and I'm sure some of our guests who were here today were not overly pleased with the level of decorum that existed within this hallowed chamber today. I want to remind all members that the use of first names and personal attacks were extremely rampant, I'd almost say to the point where the viewers at home and I'm sure sitting in the galleries today probably wondered if they were watching a rerun of the Friday Night Fights.

This is a Parliament. It is a unique workplace, and we've had this discussion before. There is important work that needs to be conducted here. Our guests, viewers and every member within this chamber have the right

to expect that each of us, as elected representatives, treat each other with respect. I can say to each member that I would encourage you to be here tomorrow or make sure that your staff get the Hansard because I will have more to say about this tomorrow.

In the meantime, I'd urge all of you to reflect on today's performance within this chamber and consider an improved tone for tomorrow.

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

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am honoured to rise today on behalf of the Jewish constituents of my riding of Thornhill who are celebrating Rosh Hashanah. Last Thursday, September 9, marked the first day of Rosh Hashanah or, translated, the head of the year, otherwise known as the Jewish New Year.

Rosh Hashanah is the first of the High Holy Days, which are days specifically set aside to focus on repentance and planning for the new year ahead. The High Holy Days end with Yom Kippur, which takes place this Saturday.

Unlike secular New Year's celebrations, Rosh Hashanah is a very serious holiday where religious observances come first. Many of my constituents have been celebrating the holiday with family and friends in synagogue, including myself and my wife Carole.

Some of the Rosh Hashanah observances include the sounding of the shofar, the ram's horn, which represents the trumpet blast of a people's coronation of their king; eating a piece of apple dipped in honey to symbolize our desire for a sweet year; and other special foods symbolic of the new year's blessings. We bless one another with the words L'Shana Tova Tikatevu: May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.

I wish the people of Thornhill and Jewish Ontarians everywhere Shana Tova, a good year.

RAMADAN

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I'd like to begin, first of all, by honouring the spirit of diversity that governs this House and the government here. Of course, it's in that spirit that I rise today on behalf of all members of the Legislature to recognize one of the great Islamic celebrations and to extend to the Muslim community of Ontario—some 500,000 people strong—felicitations at the end of Ramadan, the holy month of the fast, and the celebration of Eid.

This is a time of celebration, charity, forgiveness and coming together as family, and, of course, it's a time to give thanks for being granted the strength and discipline

to have endured the past month of fasting. I know that my own children, Shamsa and Shafiq Jr. have thoroughly enjoyed this wonderful occasion to dress up, share their cultural knowledge, and overeat and celebrate.

Of course, at this particular festive time, we also remain mindful of a number of tragedies that are taking place across the globe, including the extraordinary flood and disaster unfolding in Pakistan. I'd like to salute not only the government of Ontario but also the federal government for the very generous contributions that they've made, both materially, in resources, and in finances. I'd like to thank, on behalf of all members of the Legislature and the country of Pakistan, Ontarians and Canadians for their extraordinary generosity at this time.

We move together to build a stronger community and to celebrate the global family. With that, I would conclude once again by saying a Happy Eid to all. Eid Mubarak.

VILLAGE OF SEELEYS BAY

Mr. Steve Clark: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak about the community of Seeleys Bay.

As I speak, a determined campaign is under way to have this village on the Rideau waterway crowned as the ultimate fishing town in Canada. Thanks to the hard work of people like Liz Huff, harbourmaster Christine Coulter and 12-year-old Shane White, Seeleys Bay has made the list of 10 finalists in the World Fishing Network's online contest. It's a credit to the spirit of Seeleys Bay that they have made the list by beating out several large cities, despite having just 550 households.

Anyone who has ever wet a line in the many lakes, rivers and streams around the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands already knows Seeleys Bay is an angler's paradise. Bass, pike and perch are but a few of the many species of fish that can be found in those pristine waters.

This is their chance to really land the big one by putting the village on the international stage and winning a \$25,000 prize to help fund community improvements. The winning community will also be the subject of a 30-minute feature on the World Fishing Network. This North American exposure is sure to bring much-needed tourism dollars into the Leeds-Grenville area.

I urge everyone to do as I've been doing and help Seeleys Bay claim the title by voting early and often online at www.wfn.tv before September 28.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to bring great news about the positive impact that our provincial infrastructure funds are having on our municipalities.

A \$2.25-million grant under the province's municipal infrastructure investment initiative was given for the

Pioneer Park stormwater management rehabilitation project in Richmond Hill. The existing stormwater facility was built in 1985 but was no longer meeting the standards for which it was designed. As a result, key infrastructure was at risk, including Major Mackenzie Drive, which is an important dispatch route for York Central Hospital as well as for our fire and police stations. Overall, this is a \$6.3-million multidisciplinary project to rehabilitate the existing flood control facility in order to provide protection to vulnerable areas, protect existing infrastructure, enhance erosion control, treat water quality and stabilize and rehabilitate the East Don River watercourse.

The good news continues: I am pleased to announce that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, FCM, has awarded its first annual Watershed Award to the town of Richmond Hill for this project. The FCM award, in its introductory year, recognizes municipalities which have demonstrated leadership in their efforts to adapt to climate change by reducing their vulnerability to flooding and water damage.

This is an excellent example of our provincial investment dollars making a direct impact on municipalities.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last Friday, I was privileged to attend an impressive event along with our town of Halton Hills firefighters and Halton region's emergency medical services personnel. We are greatly indebted to these fine and courageous individuals who demonstrate professionalism and skill in all that they do to keep our communities safe.

Now our firefighters and EMS staff have new facilities to train and prepare to respond to emergencies: a new fire headquarters on 10th Sideroad and a new fire EMS station on Maple Avenue in Georgetown. These impressive new buildings are now officially open, and I want to publicly thank the government of Ontario for its \$1.9 million in funding, which contributed substantially towards the total \$9.4-million project cost.

In the 20 years that I've been privileged to serve in the Ontario Legislature as a member of provincial Parliament, I have gone to bat for our volunteer fire service many times, most recently to push hard for fairness across the entire fire service when it comes to presumptive workers' compensation coverage. These are concerns I care passionately about because of the respect and affection in which I hold our volunteer firefighters for all that they do. I want to express my sincere thanks to the Firefighters Association of Ontario for making me an honorary member of the fire service a few months ago in recognition of the public issues we've worked on together.

Looking to the future, we will continue to support our volunteer firefighters as a means of beginning to repay the debt of gratitude we owe to them, which can never be fully discharged. Thank you.

1510

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: This morning I had the privilege of being at the Victoria Park station of the Toronto Transit Commission. I was there because all three levels of government in the past saw fit to put money into the Toronto Transit Commission to upgrade the facilities of the subway system that runs across and up through the heart of Toronto.

The past funding surely worked. But the sad reality is that all the credit that the federal Conservatives who were there today and the provincial Liberals who were there today gave themselves will not be there tomorrow. The federal program will be discontinued if you are to believe Mr. Flaherty, and I have no reason to doubt him. The McGuinty government has postponed \$4 billion to Transit City. This has caused a great deal of anger and confusion amongst the mayor and city council, and they are justifiably angry.

It will be a long time, I suggest, before we see the kinds of upgrades to the system that I saw today at Victoria Park station. I think the people of Toronto need and expect the government to start taking the kinds of actions it promised. Postponing the \$4 billion was not the right thing to do. Building what was built today at Victoria Park station is what should be happening across this entire city so that people have the kind of access they need, the kind of access that they absolutely have to have in order to get them out of their cars into the transit system and to make the city move again.

MISSISSAUGA-STREETSVILLE BARBECUE

Mr. Bob Delaney: This August, about 2,500 people from western Mississauga gathered near Lake Aquitaine in Meadowvale to enjoy some good food and entertainment at the Mississauga-Streetsville annual barbecue. Co-hosted with my federal counterpart, MP Bonnie Crombie, our community gathered on the first weekend of August to enjoy some food with their neighbours and to be entertained by some of the finest performers in Mississauga.

Attendees applauded performances from the Culture Philippines of Ontario dancers, Astra's Belly Dancing Troupe, the Butler-Fearon-O'Connor School of Irish Dance, Habeeba's Belly Dancing Troupe, Chinese dragon dances and the Canadian Dance Company, as well as a wonderful performance by vocalist Rachel Bawn.

Special thanks to our community volunteers who helped out serving food, cutting watermelons and ensuring that all who attended had an enjoyable afternoon at our Meadowvale neighbourhood get-together.

Residents visited booths from local community groups such as the Eden Food Bank, St. John Ambulance, the Sierra Club of Peel and the Mississauga St. Michael's

Majors hockey club. As the local MPP, I was delighted to speak with so many residents and their families and to meet the community partners that make western Mississauga the best place to work, live, play and raise a family.

JIM DEVLIN

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise today to talk about a man whose life is much like a Hollywood story. Over 50 years ago, as a young man, Jim Devlin went looking for a job and was hired to clean buses for Trentway-Wagar bus company in Peterborough. Jim worked hard for Trentway-Wagar all his life. He went from an employee to owner of this company, a company that made Jim very successful. Over the years, Trentway-Wagar transformed into Coach Canada Lines Ltd., one of Canada's largest bus companies, a company that employed 1,000 employees and a company that Jim Devlin was president of for 34 years.

He then sold Canada Coach to Stagecoach but stayed on as president to run the local operation. Jim Devlin not only was a successful businessman in Peterborough, but he also gave back to his community and currently sits on the Peterborough Petes hockey club's board of directors. In an article that recently appeared in our newspaper about Jim Devlin's amazing career, he was quoted as saying, "The most important aspect of my career has been the people I've had the pleasure to work with. I know that on September 1st, when I head into an unknown lifestyle for me (winding down), it will be the people that I worked with that I will miss most." Jim never forgot his roots and always recognized and appreciated the values of those he worked with.

Mr. Speaker, Jim Devlin is an example for others to follow. I wish him, his wife Joanne and family all the best in his retirement. It is very well deserved.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I rise in the Legislature this afternoon to share the news that full-day kindergarten has arrived to seven schools in Bramalea-Gore-Malton as of this year. This exciting program will greatly benefit my constituents, from the youngest of them to working parents. It will help build a stronger foundation for future learning so that our children can achieve more in school, go on to post-secondary education, find great jobs and build a stronger economic future for all Ontarians.

Before- and after-school programs will create a safe, stimulating environment for our children to develop the emotional, social and academic skills they need to succeed in life and help parents access the affordable daycare they need to balance commitments to their family and work.

Full-day kindergarten means a brighter future for our students and for all Ontarians, and I'm grateful that it has been introduced in Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated September 14, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition that came to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. They keep coming in, and I know this may be something that happened a while ago, but people are still upset about it. It says:

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is signed by people all over my riding.

RECYCLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to read this petition sent to me by a group of grade 7 students at Lisgar Middle School whom I visited on a number of occasions. On this occasion, I want to acknowledge Lynn Hutchinson and Rachael Huson for collecting the signatures. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials.... This

initiative fits directly into the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do. We implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval into law;

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

“We ... would like to support” and enthusiastically encourage “the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and..., to pass into law such a program, as described in the attached letter outlining the red box recycling initiative, as presented.”

On their behalf, I'm pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Lina to carry it for me.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to be back here in this important function of reading petitions on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

“Whereas the citizens of Ontario depend on the convenient, accessible advice and services provided by their community pharmacies; and

“Whereas Ontarians want to ensure their pharmacists are there when they need them; and

“Whereas patients can talk to their pharmacist after work, when they can't get to their doctor's office or when their doctor's office is closed; and

“Whereas Ontarians [want] assurance that their pharmacies will continue to be able to provide valuable health services to their community;

1520

“Therefore we, the undersigned petitioners, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to please not cut services to the neighbourhood health care community pharmacies provide” in Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this on behalf of my constituents.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Welcome back to everyone. This is a petition to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations, etc.;

“Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of

repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

“Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

“Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

“Be it resolved that ... the undersigned support MPP Cheri DiNovo’s private member’s bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman’s powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act.”

I certainly agree with this and will affix my signature.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Pat Hoy: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas grandparents often become a family’s first reserves in time of crisis. Grandparents act as fun playmates for children, role models, and family historians, mentors, and help establish self-esteem and security for children.

One potential aspect of the divorce is the disruption or severance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship.

Also, in cases of the death of a parent, (the maternal or paternal grandparents’ child), should continue to enjoy access to the grandparent by the living parent, as visitation and access was fully established prior to death of parent;

“Due to the increase in life expectancy, most children have living grandparents. Coupled with the fact that 60% of divorced couples have at least one minor child, the potential for severed contact could be quite substantial;

“In Canada, the issue of grandparents’ rights of access to grandchildren has not been given recognition in legislation, with the exception of the provinces of Quebec, Alberta and BC. In all other provinces, grandparents may only petition the courts for rights to access as interested third parties. In the absence of a specific statute providing grandparents with legal standing to access, there are continuing difficulties in obtaining contact with grandchildren;

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

“That grandparents have legal rights to access to visitation with their grandchildren in the event of parental divorce or death of a parent.”

It’s signed by a number of residents from Merlin, Thamesville, and Chatham.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have some more petitions that come from people all over my riding. Here’s one. They say they realize this is likely a little too late, but they’re sorry. It comes from the Quill Learning Network in Walkerton. The petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’ve signed this. As I say, it comes from all over my riding.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients; and

“Whereas” since “October 2009, insured PET scans” are “performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

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

“We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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

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

RECYCLING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just have a petition from some good folks in Mississauga, Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the grade 7H students at Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used

dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials (as illustrated in their letter, attached). This initiative fits directly in the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to reduce as much as they already do. We implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval into law;

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

“We, the undersigned, would like to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass into law such a program, as described in the attached letter outlining the red box recycling initiative, as presented.”

I'd like to support these enthusiastic students at Lisgar Middle School and will affix my signature to it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

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

“Whereas the Ontario PC caucus supports public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Ontario families have already paid Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which has been wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care in our communities and putting independent rural pharmacies in Bruce and Grey at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

—reduce local pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

—increase out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

—reduce critical health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to rural pharmacies.”

I've signed this. This comes from Ayton, Ontario.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of the city of Greater Sudbury.

“Whereas the strike at Vale Inco's mines, mill and smelter in Sudbury and Port Colborne” lasted for a full year; and

“Whereas this strike caused hardship to the 3,300 workers, their families, the communities and the busi-

nesses and” contributed “to a significant net drain to the economy; and

“Whereas the resumption of production with replacement workers ... produced undue tension in the community; and

“Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers....”

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

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition that has just come in here, and it's again from all over my riding, from Wiarton, Owen Sound, Sauble Beach and other places around the riding. Again it's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I've signed this also.

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TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: In the limited time left here on petitions:

“Whereas the McGuinty government's harmonized sales tax ... will increase the cost of gasoline at the pumps by 8%”—as we already know; and

“Whereas Ontario families are still hoping to recover from the worst recession in recent memory and gasoline remains a necessity for essential travel in business, commerce, employment, education, travel, health care and more; and

“Whereas gasoline is already taxed by the province of Ontario at 14.7 cents per litre and the HST would add an estimated \$1.7 billion windfall from gasoline and diesel fuel alone; and

“Whereas if your family spends \$100 a week on gasoline, this will add \$8 per week, or \$400 per year, to the total cost; and

“Whereas Canada’s provinces and territories have the power to regulate gasoline prices;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario legislature to ease the burden of the HST by reducing the existing provincial gas tax by an amount equal to Ontario’s share of the HST on gasoline and diesel.”

I sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WATER OPPORTUNITIES AND WATER CONSERVATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE L’EAU ET LA CONSERVATION DE L’EAU

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 13, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters / Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l’eau et modifiant d’autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l’eau et d’autres questions.

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

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m quite surprised—it’s the government’s turn to speak on this bill and they are not taking the time to address this most important issue of water and water safety. It’s another example of a government that has a lack of courage to stand up and defend the incremental, creeping costs of services that the people of Ontario demand, need and expect. Someone should be standing up and speaking openly. I’m sure there’s a degree of concern. No bill is perfect. I can say from the beginning, our critic yesterday, Mr. Barrett, spoke at some length and outlined some of the concerns. Our primary position, to start with, is that we are very supportive of safe, clean, accessible drinking water in the province of Ontario.

We also want to listen to the people of Ontario instead of having what some would say is a secret agenda to manoeuvre or socially manipulate the people of Ontario. This is what is most important about my remarks here today: that I am responding, not with my own direct concerns but the concerns that have been raised during the Environmental Bill of Rights posting of this legislation.

This legislation, Bill 72, was introduced in May 2010, just prior to the summer recess. Then it was posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights for a period of time—a period of time when most Ontarians would not be paying as close attention to things such as this particular posting

on the Environmental Bill of Rights. On top of that, I can also say that I have contacted the lower-tier and upper-tier municipalities in my riding of Durham.

This same minister, Minister Gerretsen—who is no longer there, which might be some indication of the manoeuvring that’s going on—tried at the same time, during the summer and in the shadows of night, to bring in the eco tax. He was quickly and roundly chastised by the public and the media for trying to slip it through—I was going to use the word “sneak,” but that’s been ruled unacceptable, so I’ll just say “slip it through” when no one was paying attention. I put to you, Madam Speaker, that the same motive exists in Bill 72: trying to have a manoeuvring ability on such an important issue as safe, clean drinking water in the province of Ontario.

On this bill, on a first look, we would say our position is, we clearly support clean water and the promotion of clean-water technology. In my remarks, you’ll see how, in the past—in 2002—certain bills were passed when we were in government that demonstrate that very clearly.

Interjection.

Mr. John O’Toole: The House leader for the Liberals is squawking over there, and what she says is absolutely, patently false. She should stand and withdraw because she hasn’t got the foggiest idea what she’s talking about. There was a commission that ruled—if you want to participate, stand in your place and participate; otherwise—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I’d just remind the member to speak to the bill, not individuals.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I withdraw.

Mr. John O’Toole: Our position, as I was trying to outline, is that we would be taking all actions that promote and sustain. This bill clearly has a hidden price tag, and they refuse to admit it. And the fact that they are not standing and addressing the bill, and trying to shut down the debate, is one more example.

The bill sets up yet another Liberal bureaucracy, not unlike eHealth, not unlike the OLG and some of the other failed bureaucracies. I can only say that our former government committed to enacting all of the recommendations of the O’Connor report and, also, we were committed to embracing the excellence centre on water at Walkerton.

The problem here is when the problem occurred at Walkerton—I want to put this on the record here—there were two people, the Koebel brothers, who falsified records, and to falsify them, they had to know what the standard was. Now here’s the issue: To do that means they were misinterpreting the data or at least wrongfully reporting the data to OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency, which, by the way, was created by the NDP government.

I can only say that the bill has five particular schedules in it, some of which I would have no problem agreeing with, but when you look around, what are the municipi-

palities saying about this bill? For the rest of the time here I'm going to read, with your indulgence, Madam Speaker, a report. This was issued by the regional municipality of Durham, and I want to thank them for the work they provided during the summer, when everyone was obviously on vacation. I want to thank the commissioner of finance, Jim Clapp, and the commissioner of works, Cliff Curtis, who issued a report on June 15, during the last few weeks of council's meetings, which is one of the things—councils didn't even get a chance to actually debate these things.

The background is, "The strategy will promote new business and ... commercialization of water and waste water technologies." Nobody has a problem with that—trying to do things better. We can all do better. But to presume that you have it right—we're seeing it now. They also ascribe here, in section 2.3, "recent provincial initiatives that included elements that are covered in the ... bill." This is very much a copy of what's happening under the time-of-use meters, these so-called smart meters, that you're seeing in your home.

This is just a prelude to them actually taxing well water, which happened a long time ago—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. Put it in the record books.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Taxing private water.

Mr. John O'Toole: Taxing water: That's exactly what this bill does.

It says, "Recent provincial discussion papers seeking out input from the Great Lakes strategy and the Stewardship/Leadership/Accountability" conference in the summer of 2009.

It goes on to say there are other protections in the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act. These were acts that were implemented when we were in government.

The summary of the bill I would encourage all members to read.

In the very limited time that I have left I'm going to talk about some of the concerns raised by the report that I'm referring to. It is report 2010-J-33, issued June 15 by the region of Durham.

"The bill requires municipalities and water utilities to prepare, approve and submit to the Minister of the Environment sustainability plans for municipal water, waste water and storm water services under their jurisdiction. The content of the plans is to include:

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—an asset management plan;

—a financial plan;

—a water conservation plan for the community and municipal operations;

—strategies for maintaining and improving the service;

—a risk assessment plan which identifies factors that may interfere with future delivery."

That's all gobbledegook for downloading responsibilities to the municipality.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Downloading? Ha!

Mr. John O'Toole: Exactly what they're doing. Mr. Rinaldi says they're downloading. Well, what have you uploaded? What have you uploaded? Nothing.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: You've taken all the OMPF money off the municipalities. You took all the OMPF money up, Rick, Mr. Bartolucci from Sudbury.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, if you want to intervene, you'd better tell the whole story. They are the party—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to make your remarks through the Chair.

Mr. John O'Toole: Very good. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The other side is intervening, yet they did not take the opportunity to stand and speak to this bill. That's what's so discouraging here. They are not willing to participate in the debates on legislation that they are proposing, which, I put to you, is very, very intrusive.

The report I'm referring to here says:

—set performance indicators and targets for these plans (related to finance, operations and maintenance);

—require periodic progress reports—more work for the lower-tier or upper-tier municipality.

"Part IV of the bill proposes that through regulations, public agencies including municipalities ... will be required to:

—prepare water conservation plans;

—achieve conservation targets...;

—promote and consider water efficiency and ... procurement processes" for the goods.

But it goes on. What gets more troubling, Durham's comments on the bill are specific to this: "Providing sustainability plans to the minister circumvents the autonomy of council." In other words, it actually cancels the autonomy of council in Durham region, which automatically runs the water and water treatment plants already.

"Although staff recognize the merit in requiring an asset management plan as part of the sustainability plan for water and sewer systems, there are numerous concerns with the sustainability plan requirement as follows:

"It does not acknowledge that long-term financial planning is an integral part of Durham region's business plan process. Regional council approves three annual financial planning studies related to water and sewer." Those plans are already in process and required. This is duplication, another example of how with this government, it costs more to do less.

Also, "future capital and operating costs and sources of funding (upfront funding, development charges, user rates) to ensure the long-term financial viability of the systems," that's already in place under the Development Charges Act. All capital has to be apportioned over the future number of years to accommodate the growth.

"It does not address the issue that municipalities should be implementing a 100% user pay system with full metering (elimination of flat rates)." Cities like Toronto are still flat-rating, which does not encourage

any sort of conservation. “Durham region is already fully metered and no funding from property taxes is used to finance the water and sewer systems. This is necessary to ensure residents pay the true cost of water and sewer services and is vital to water conservation.”

“It does not address”—this is this Bill 72—“the issue that some smaller systems should amalgamate to create larger water service areas to benefit from economies of scale” and sharing technology and expertise.

“Regulation 453/07 under the Safe Drinking Water Act already requires municipalities to prepare financial plans for drinking water systems. Additional demands for plans and reporting will add costs and effort”—and time—“to already considerable bureaucracy and reporting related to water.

“The requirement for municipal plans to be approved by every municipality serviced could cause delay and duplication in a two tier system. Where a joint plan exists this makes sense, but not for an upper-tier system that delivers both water and sewer.... Will an upper-tier approval be necessary for a lower-tier sustainability plan?

“4.3 The introduction of targets or performance indicators by the minister could be problematic”—and this is the Durham region officials, not some politician—“in part because municipalities have very different systems and physical characteristics. For example, Durham has 14 water supply systems, including lake-based and groundwater systems over a large geographical area. This differs greatly from areas like Toronto,” Peel or the other regions “with fewer systems required over a smaller geographical area with more” densely populated areas. “Durham region already establishes benchmarks as part of the annual budget process. Different targets or benchmarks would be required to accommodate the various systems throughout Ontario.” This is more bureaucracy, more cost and less accountability, in my view.

“4.4 Decision-making with respect to municipal water and sewer systems should remain with regional council. Regional council should decide on the necessary capital program to accommodate future development, necessary rate increases and rate structure. Various rate structures are used throughout Ontario to recover costs (i.e. increasing block rate, declining block rate and single block rate etc.). The region is concerned that the future regulation will provide authority to the minister to alter or restrict a region’s rate structure or rate increase.” This is more duplication and more bureaucracy. That’s what this bill really is.

“4.5 The concern about municipal autonomy has also been raised”—very similar to Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. They expunged all municipal authority in that bill, and this bill is a copy of that. It’s a template for how the Liberals do business—“as a result of a private member’s bill” which was created by their own prior minister, David Caplan, “(Bill 13) which also relates to water and sewer systems. If passed, this bill would establish the Ontario Water Board as a crown agency to regulate municipal water” and watershed systems, therefore

expunging any authority that the municipality has today by law. “This action basically creates another level of approval which is not required.” This is the region of Durham.

“Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA)

“4.6 Proposed changes to OCWA would expand its authority to ‘assist’ municipalities in providing water and sewer services. The proposed legislation defines that assistance to include ‘financing, planning, developing, building and operating.’ These activities are already successfully undertaken by the region of Durham through approval by regional council. Staff understands that there are areas in Ontario which may benefit from the expertise of OCWA and the efficiencies of shared resources but the larger regions possess the expertise and economies of scale required to efficiently manage their systems.” There’s no problem with standards. There’s a problem with duplication and bureaucracy here.

“Conservation efforts”—this is very important.

“4.8 The bill proposes that a conservation plan”—much like Bill 150. I understand clearly that about 50% of all water that’s processed is wasted. Running the tap while you’re brushing your teeth or whatever else, it’s not properly used. That’s a report I could share with the House if they wish—“would be required as part of the municipality’s sustainable plan and a separate water conservation plan is required by public agencies including municipalities (for water usage at municipally-owned facilities).

“4.9 Water use is already trending downward in Durham” region to accommodate efforts both at the residential and non-residential levels. They’re actually doing their homework. Many areas are not. The province should deal with the areas that are not in conformance instead of taking the one-size-fits-all McGuinty approach. “During 2003-08, residential consumption per customer decreased by approximately 14%.”

We know in Ontario, for instance, that our water usage is around 260 litres per person per day. In Europe and other jurisdictions, it’s about 150 litres per person per day. So yes, we have work to do. We would agree with that. But the way you’re going about it is like all things. Specifically, the smart meter is another example of what you’re doing to the electricity bill. We heard today in question period that this is increasing the cost and burden for people who are consuming essential commodities like electricity and water.

The graph that I have here from the region illustrates the drop in annual residential water usage per customer, and it is a considerable improvement: 14%.

“4.10 There are a number of factors that could have contributed to the steady decline in per customer” usage of water:

“The 1996 Ontario building code revisions which required the installation of six-litre toilets in new construction. From 1985 to 1995, 13-litre toilets were approved for new construction” back 20 years ago. They are no longer acceptable. That’s something a municipality can require and does in Durham region.

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“Existing residents have replaced inefficient appliances (toilets and washing machines) with more efficient fixtures.”

“Durham Region’s water efficiency program, known as Water Efficient Durham, was launched in 1996 to implement the regional water use efficiency strategy,” with great success.

I can only go on to say that this report is worth reading, but it also cautions us that this is actually another example of Premier McGuinty trying to imply that many regions aren’t functioning properly and that he knows best.

In conclusion, I’m just going to say that the “estimated costs for municipalities to comply with the proposed act are a major concern...” That’s in the report. “In addition, as user rates are used to fund the necessary system improvements (per legislation) and pending capital needs, the ability to pay will ... be considered for certain segments of the residential sector.”

Your water bill is going to go up 8% per year, and with this it’s going to go up about 20% a year. The consumers of Ontario should be outraged and concerned. Look at your electricity bill.

Time-of-use meters: This is another initiative by Premier McGuinty to increase the cost of essential services like electricity and water.

I’d encourage people to look forward to Bill 72 and the government’s silence on this important bill of public safety, when they’re saying nothing. I think it’s a shame, and I would hope that even in their ability to respond in the two minutes that they would actually take time to at least explain, if not take exception, with some of the remarks that I may have made.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I sat here through the duration of the comments by the member from Durham. He makes some very important points. He appeals to the government backbenchers to stand up and participate in this debate.

One of the things I noticed—and the comments by the member for Durham underscored this for me—is that every time you’ve got a bill with a flowery preamble like this one has, there’s very little that follows it. Think about it. The more flowery the preamble, the less substantial the bill. I’m going to speak to this, as a matter of fact; in around seven or eight minutes’ time I’m going to address some of the silly stuff that’s in the preamble, as well as some of the perhaps insubstantial stuff that’s in the so-called body of the bill.

I want to make it clear that the New Democrats are going to support this bill on second reading. We’re going to force it to committee. No way are we going to let this bill be ordered for third reading without it being forced into committee. New Democrats have every intention of ensuring that this bill goes to committee, and we will use the standing orders to make sure that this government puts this bill in committee.

Having said that, the majority of the members on the committee are going to be government members and they will control the amount of time and the number of people who have access to that committee.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I thank the government House leader for withdrawing those scurrilous comments. I thank the Speaker for her sage intervention.

As I say here, I’m running out of time already. I thank the member for Durham once again. I’ll be speaking to this; so will Mr. Prue. He’s here as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the remarks made by my colleague from Durham. I really find it painful to recall the events of Walkerton, but his outrageous depiction—what I can only describe as revisionist history in relation to that particular episode—compels me to remind the members on that side that prior to Walkerton, they had removed the safeguards, the checks and balances that protected our drinking water supply.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member has just made a statement and I think it’s incumbent that she explain which safeguards were removed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That’s not a point of order.

The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Unfortunately, some time elapsed. That was precisely what I was going to do. Medical officers of health no longer received drinking water reports from municipalities. Public health laboratories were privatized. The medical officer of health for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, when he started to suspect that the illness caused in Walkerton might be related to the drinking water, had the greatest difficulty in receiving those drinking water reports. That delayed the opportunities to prevent 2,000 people becoming ill and seven people dying. I don’t consider that a laughing matter, and I think it’s imperative that we put the record the way it was found in Mr. Justice O’Connor’s report.

Unfortunately, because time is so short, I don’t have the opportunity to rebut some of the other comments, and I hope that some other members of this Legislature will be prepared to put the record straight.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to provide some comments in response to the member for Durham. I just find it amazing that the member for Oak Ridges–Markham—finally, we have somebody from this government who is going to stand up and speak on this bill. I just can’t believe the fact that we had their opportunity first and it was passed to our party. It’s fine.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We spoke on it yesterday.

Mr. Steve Clark: We spoke on it as well, House leader. We spoke on it as well.

I'll take you back to some of the comments that the member for Haldimand–Norfolk mentioned, because one thing you can't say about this government is that they don't like anniversaries. They also like a lot of green smoke too, because they throw up a lot of green smoke when it comes to the energy file. Bill 72 is no exception. You know, it was extremely close to the 10th anniversary of Walkerton when this bill was introduced, and here we are now, some four months later, and finally we are now hearing some more about Bill 72.

It's not uncommon as well that near the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, on April 22, the government announced an initiative about waste diversion, yet we are still waiting on that legislation. However, we sure weren't waiting for what happened on July 1, with eco fees. I can remember calling my constituency office on the Monday after that weekend.

Let's face it. We had the HST brought in by this government, we had the eco fees brought in by this government, and we had the microFIT boondoggle where they switched rates on people. My staff in the constituency office, Lynn Campbell and Pauline Connolly, had more calls that day than any other day they worked for an MPP, and they worked for my predecessor for about 15 years. That's the type of government we are dealing with here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Durham, as I always do, especially when he got into the portion talking about municipalities, because as members of this House know, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario recently held their annual meeting in Windsor, Ontario. I was there, as were many members of the government, of the opposition, to listen to what municipalities had to say, what the reeves and the mayors and the councillors had to say to the government. One of the things they talked about was the costs, the costs that are being borne by the municipalities that don't have the monies to do it properly. And this bill, unless there is some financial remuneration made to those municipalities, will impact severely on their bottom line, on their ability to carry out the functions that this Legislature sets. The member from Durham set that out quite well.

He also asked about the authority, whether we need to establish different authorities, more than what exist today, whether the municipalities in their collective right, all 444 of them, are doing the right thing by water conservation, by water purification, by sewage removal and all the like. I'm not sure whether the body of the bill contains that information for us to make the kind of assessment that we need to. I commend the member from Durham.

I believe the government will be sending this, after second reading, to committee. I look forward to hearing

what the municipalities have to say, as well as I look forward to what the First Nations have to say, because I think those are the two glaring potential errors that are contained within the body of the bill.

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I welcome the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, and if she wishes to speak again today—I think what she had to say was quite cogent, and if she seeks unanimous consent to speak again, I for one would want to hear what she has to say on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank the members from Welland, Oak Ridges–Markham, Leeds–Grenville and Beaches–East York.

I did also read the member from Oak Ridges–Markham's remarks yesterday. You used about 30 minutes; you had an hour. You're the only one who spoke and, today, I commend you. I recognize you are a medical doctor. I also recognize you were the medical officer of health for York region, I believe it was, and you do know of what you speak. I'd ask you if you get a chance to speak again today to say—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. I'd ask that you direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr. John O'Toole: Exactly. I'd ask that the former medical officer of health for York region—does this imply that our municipalities are not able to do the job or are not doing their job and that our water's unsafe? That's what the subtle language of this says, that they're not capable or competent.

I can understand that some regions of the province may need help. Indeed, First Nations in northern Ontario is just one example where people are dying because of not having adequate water. Get on with the job as opposed to building another bureaucracy here. I call on you, unlike the northern planning act, to actually consult with First Nations, consult with northern communities.

Actually, one of the recommendations and conclusions of Durham region's report, and I can read it, was for “a standing committee of the Legislature for public hearings after second reading. This may be another opportunity for the region to submit its position.” They also say, “However, there are numerous concerns related to sustainability plans” related to duplication of efforts, increased costs and a loss of local autonomy.

I can say to you, Madam Speaker, this is an important topic: safe, clean water for every citizen, child or adult. The people of Ontario deserve no less. This bill's a lot of bureaucracy, and at the end of the day it's a tax coming out—

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: My colleague Mr. Prue, the very capable member from Beaches–East York, will be addressing this bill this afternoon as well—if he has time, if he gets to his turn in the rotation, because, of course, I only have 20 minutes. After I speak, of course, there's 10

minutes for questions and comments, and then the Liberals have 20 minutes. For the life of me, I don't understand why a Liberal—here, we've been away for three months now, give or take, and for the life of me I don't understand—I mean, I've been jonesing for the place. I don't understand why Liberal members wouldn't be full of vim and vinegar and eager to get up on their feet and speak to a bill, especially one that the government says it's so proud of. This government's had a hard time over the summer. It has been the summer of McGuinty's discontent, of the public's discontent.

You know where I live. I live down in Welland, on the Welland Canal. I'm pleased and honoured to represent the folks in Welland, as well as Port Colborne just south of us, again on the Welland Canal, on Lake Erie to boot, and then Wainfleet just west of there and then up north to Thorold and the south end of St. Catharines, all on the Welland Canal. We've got lots of water where I come from. As a matter of fact one of the most contentious local issues over the last five or six years was the insistence of a couple of city councillors on installing water meters.

When I go back home to Welland on the weekend, if I get there for Friday morning—I can't always get there for Friday morning—I go down to the Port Colborne farmers' market, an excellent farmers' market. The peaches and plums are still very fresh. Corn's still there. The farms are producing great vegetables still. It's been a remarkable year. Cherries suffered a little bit, but the peaches have done well. And the apples, of course, are out now.

But when you go to the market—that's what you do in places like Welland and Port Colborne or places where so many of the other members of this assembly live—you talk to folks, and you listen to what they've got to say. Well, all hell broke loose several years ago when, some would say, a misguided council imposed water meters on the citizenry of Welland, and the myths that were exploited were substantial. There was an effort to paint us as living in some sort of desert where water was a scarce commodity. But as I say, we're around the canal. We've got Lake Erie to the south of us and Lake Ontario to the north of us, and the Niagara River—although the American contribution to the Niagara River, at least downstream, makes it less than palatable, never mind potable. The imagery that was painted was of the person watering their lawn, and the wasted water in watering the lawn, and, “Why should those people pay the same water rates as people who don't water their lawn?” Most people that I know who have lawns water them; at least, they used to. Or what about the fellow or gal who washes their car? There was this effort to create this very distorted picture about, “Who's the water waster?”

There already was a surcharge, as you know, as there was in most flat-rate communities, for people who had a swimming pool, let's say. They had a surcharge on their water bill. One of the troubling things about water meters in and of themselves is that they defeat what I understand historically was the fundamental role of public water:

Public water was a health and safety issue. Before we had public water systems, cities were very, very dangerous places to live in. If you didn't burn up, you got any number of communicable diseases that, more often than not, blew up into plagues because of the lack of water for sanitary purposes. You didn't have water for the purposes of sewage systems.

I've always perceived water as a public right. I have always thought that there's something inherently wrong about metering water when what that means is that the young family with four or five kids, folks who do laundry every day, are going to pay far more for their water than I do—sure, they'll have used more water—when, in fact, I can afford to pay more, while they can't.

I've always been a flat-rate person when it comes to water, excepting the surcharges. I believe that a combination of property taxes and, more importantly, income taxes should be used to provide safe, clean water to everybody in the community. Why I am talking to this is because people talk to me at the market on Saturday morning in Welland or Port Colborne. There's a Thorold market too—very, very small. Pelham has a market on Friday nights; I'm sure it's Friday nights—very, very small.

I talked to you about the preamble. The rule of thumb is, the longer the preamble, the more flowery the language, the less likely there is to be any substantive legislation following it. I want to put to you that it's very much the case here. The preamble—and this is so condescending. It really is. Premier Dad has done it once again, although just this last week, I realized that if he has been Premier Dad, now that he introduces Internet gambling and Poker Lotto, he's Premier Bad.

The Premier actually said—because we were concerned about some perhaps inappropriate lobbying of the Premier and we raised it with the Integrity Commissioner. The Premier said, “The only people who lobbied me for mixed martial arts were my kids.” I don't disbelieve him, but he hasn't dared to tell us that it's kids who lobbied for Internet gambling or that it's his kids who lobbied for Poker Lotto.

He has had a bad few months. The G20: Remember that, back in June, and the secret legislation that has been interpreted at least three different ways now by the very authors of that legislation, the members of Mr. McGuinty's own cabinet? That was bad. He had to flip-flop on mixed martial arts. That was bad. You add Internet gambling—and the remarkable thing is, you just saw this House debate, earlier today, the report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. What would that committee have thought and what would they have said had they been warned that the Premier was going to introduce Internet gambling so that 13-year-old kids can be sitting in the privacy of their bedrooms at their computer maxing out mommy or daddy's credit card? It will happen. And Internet gambling is the most addictive form of it. The neuroscience is pretty well developed: It's highly addictive stuff. You don't even have to shower and shave and go out to the casino to do Internet gaming;

you can wake up after a bender, be sitting there in yesterday's underwear and get right back at the computer console. There's no interaction. Like the drunk who doesn't bother to shower or shave before he has his first beer in the morning, the gambling addict won't bother to shower or shave before he or she sits down at that computer console.

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And the Poker Lotto: very clever stuff. Brilliant. Brilliant, because you see, the problem with scratch-and-win tickets is that people take them home and scratch them, or to the Tim Hortons, and it might be a day or two or three days later that they go back. With the Poker Lotto, whether or not you win on the hand that you're dealt on the screen—I tell you, I spent two bucks to see it work. Didn't win a dime, but I didn't expect to.

The Poker Lotto, the screen on top of the blue machine—it's a virtual card game. The hand deals and flips over the cards. It is very fast. I've watched people do the scratch-and-wins, and to most people, it's like lovemaking. They want to make it last long and do it slowly and affectionately. You've seen them, haven't you? They want to maintain the suspense. They scratch one and they contemplate and they go "Maybe." Then they scratch another and then maybe they'll have their coffee. I've seen people make a scratch-and-win card last 30 minutes. With Poker Lotto, it's less than 30 seconds. It's approximately, if I recall, five seconds to be dealt that hand. By then you're caught up in it, and then you're going to try again, another toonie. It's a toonie at a time. These aren't high-stakes games. It's a toonie at a time.

We know what the intended market is. It's not the high rollers; it's the people who stop in at the corner store for their bread or milk or cigarettes or for their lotto ticket. And it's not just Wednesday or now, of course, Thursday, Friday and Saturday; it's literally Sunday through to Monday inclusive. That machine and that game is designed to get people in that corner store on a daily basis to play the numbers racket. That's bad.

So Premier Dad is really Premier Bad. Premier Dad is really a secret racketeer. Premier—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I withdraw.

Premier Dad is dealing from the bottom of the deck. He fancies himself a card shark. But keep an eye on the ace up his sleeves and, again, for that notorious dealing from the bottom of the deck.

Bill 72 talks about how Ontarians can learn how to conserve. Individuals can change their behaviour. Oh, come on. This is a real urban/rural divide issue in and of itself. Anybody who grew up in the country like I did, down in Crowland, down in the east of Welland as a kid, where we had a septic tank and a weeping bed system—we learned how to conserve water, not because we didn't have a source of water, but because you had to be careful about when and how you flushed. And the weeping beds: You know those, the weeping beds? We had a pretty big one, and the bright green stripes showed you where the

tiles were, right, Mr. Hillier? You knew exactly where the nutrient was flowing.

Ontarians are smart people. They will conserve; just ask them and help them.

And those low-flow toilets, member from Durham? The three-flush toilets. How do you save water when you've got to flush it three times? Tell me.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, please. They're two- and three-flush toilets. You end up using more water than less, until you just get disgusted and upset and say, "I'll come back in an hour."

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's true.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Can't let that happen.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It does happen.

Ontarians will conserve water. You know what one of the problems we've got down in Niagara is? We've got old communities like Port Colborne and Welland and Thorold, old historic industrial communities that have infrastructure under the ground that's decaying. Year after year we're reminded by the region that we lose gallons upon gallons of water from when it's treated to when it gets to the tap in underwater pipes that are corroded. Simply the passage of time has made them highly inefficient—huge losses of water.

Communities are going to be called upon to create plans. Of course, the government is going to have, I dare say, aspirational targets. What is an aspirational target? An aspirational target is the same thing the gambler has when she or he puts a toonie down to buy that stupid Poker Lotto ticket. They aspire to win but they're not going to.

By the way, while we're getting to those lottery machines, you put warning labels on cigarettes and alcohol. The minister responsible talked about Poker Lotto as a new, fun game. He talked about Internet gambling as entertainment. Please. If we warn people about drinking and smoking, why aren't there big signs on those lotto machines that say, "Sucker, you're going to lose your money"?

The government says it's concerned about problem gambling and problem gaming, yet it has reduced from \$40 million to \$28 million its contribution to gambling addiction treatment programs. It's a pretty big reduction, isn't it? The government says it's concerned about problem gambling and problem gaming, yet it promotes, through OLG, its gambling schemes with huge, glossy ads—the disgusting and, as Jim Coyle wrote, I believe, revolting happy dance. For the vast majority of people who gamble, it's not a happy dance; it's a sad dance. And they're not very impressed with Premier Dad. They understand that he's really Premier Bad.

Cities like Welland that have lost a whole lot of their industrial tax base are cash-strapped. Residential taxpayers can't afford any more. Increasingly, I'm talking to seniors who have built their homes, who have paid for them and who are worried about not being able to continue to live in them because they can't afford the

new electricity rates. They're going to be hammered on fuel rates with the government's HST added to the cost of heating fuel come this winter. And for electricity rates, you ain't seen nothing yet, because not everybody has an air conditioner, but everybody has a furnace, and most of those furnaces have motors in them that drive fans, and that's one of the largest electricity users in your house. You ain't seen nothing yet until you see your winter electricity bills. These people are truly afraid. They talk to Mr. Prue in his riding. They talk to me in my riding. I'm sure they talk to every single one of the people in this chamber in their respective ridings. They're fearful about not being able to live in their homes. Property taxpayers in Welland can't pay any more. There's just no more left in the bank account. There's no more left on the credit card.

You saw in the *Globe and Mail* today that one of the significant depressants in terms of economic recovery is the fact that consumers don't have money. It's on the front page of the *Globe and Mail*. Consumers don't have money to spend. Recoveries are driven by several factors and one of them is by consumers, people who buy things that other people make. Canadians don't have money to spend, and they don't have money for hydro rates that are skyrocketing thanks to Premier McGuinty. They don't have the money for HST fees on everything from kids' sports and ballet lessons through to heating fuel and, quite frankly, dying. The government can talk all it wants about creating new water technologies and about municipalities developing plans to upgrade water systems, but they need the money to do it.

You've got Wainfleet down there, a small community, a lakeside community, a farming community. You've got a whole strip of lakeside houses, many of them historic, that are at risk of having the Big Pipe imposed on them, because somebody decided that their wells, sewer systems, septic tanks and weeping beds weren't adequate. The region won't red-tag the bad septic tanks and force those people to upgrade them. Wainfleet doesn't have a regional representative. Its mayor is *ex officio* on regional council. Wainfleet residents don't get to vote for a regional representative as a stand-alone representative. So you've got a big-city region, St. Catharines, telling country people how to live in the country. Those people know full well how to live in the country. You're looking at a proposition that is going to cost individual homeowners \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 each—who knows?

It's simply unaffordable. The municipality has a modest tax base; it can't afford the work on its own, and the region is reluctant to accept its regional role of supporting smaller communities that don't have the infrastructure and don't have the tax base or the resources to finance it, and to boot, the cost of it is going to be tremendous, even for the regional municipality of Niagara.

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So where are Mr. McGuinty and his Minister of the Environment when it comes to helping out the folks in Wainfleet? Nowhere. The Premier is too busy thinking

up new lottery schemes. He's on the phone with Tony Soprano, figuring out how he can milk the pockets of Ontarians in the next round. Maybe we'll have dice games on every corner. He'll be like that character—what's that musical about the craps game and so on? I don't know. But it will be like—what's the guy?

Mr. Michael Prue: I don't know. There's an old song, "Mr. Lee."

Mr. Peter Kormos: He'll have the big gold cufflinks and the hat and the big pinky ring. I've seen those guys. They used to play upstairs at Bill's pool hall, their Saturday night poker game or craps game, the guys from Niagara Falls—with big hands. And they all had names like Joe Mountain and stuff, right? You would never talk back to them.

We'll call him Dapper Dalton. He'll be the dapper don of Ontario, and he'll have a pair of dice in his hand, rattling them all the time. But be careful, because them dice are shaved. You know that, don't you? You can't get a fair game with Dalton McGuinty. You're going to be taken to the cleaners. The cards are marked, he's dealing from the bottom of the deck and the dice are shaved. Mark my words.

This stuff, as I told you, we're going to support. It's going to go to committee; we're going to insist on that. Let's see what municipalities big and small, the ones with minimal tax bases, have to say about the obligations that this might impose upon them, obligations that they'd love to fulfill but simply can't afford to, and have received no support from this government, because this government has done nothing to upload the Harris download; nothing at all. It has maintained the Harris legacy very well.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have to say that all through the summer I did look forward to coming back to the Legislature, and one big reason was that I wanted to hear the member from Welland, because it's always good to hear you speak, sir, so thank you very much. I heard your whole 20 minutes very closely, to the point that I went running and got some extra notes to rebut some of the arguments you were presenting. I heard a lot about lottery and all kinds of things, but I had to cobble together what you were trying to get to. I think what you were trying to get to is to see what kind of investments this government has been making when it comes to waterworks in smaller municipalities, or municipalities in general.

I wanted to, in my very limited time, share some numbers with you. Since 2003, since the McGuinty government came into office, \$1.8 billion in infrastructure for municipal water systems have been invested—\$1.8 billion. Another \$1.5 billion in low-interest loans through Infrastructure Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Low-interest special loans.

Another \$50 million through the Ontario small waterworks assistance program, helping small municipal-

ities when it comes to waterworks projects. Let's not forget—because you used the word “downloading,” sir—all the work this government has done in uploading social services from the backs of municipalities, which the previous government had downloaded, back to the province. We're talking about ODSP; we're talking about Ontario Works; we are talking about the drug benefit program, which will result in significant advantages to our municipalities. I can speak for my own municipality, the city of Ottawa: We are looking at about a \$100-million-per-year saving when uploading has been fully completed. That is significant.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Welland, as has been said, is always informative when he speaks, and I do appreciate the fact that he has. He did point out a few things, one of which was the inconsistencies of the McGuinty government, saying one thing and doing another, and that certainly is the case here, I believe.

If you look back on the history of this bill, the bill in 2002, Bill 175, was the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, which did many of the things that are required in this bill except it did not create another bureaucracy and didn't impugn that the lower-tier municipalities were incapable or unwilling to have clear water systems.

I reported today on Durham region's work on the importance of clean, safe drinking water under regulations which are set by the province, and they are doing it, including the full cost recovery.

That bill that I reported, Bill 175, did have in it the full cost recovery model, required guidelines, and entities, mainly municipalities, to prepare approvals for reports of provisions of water services and water safety. The report also included inventory and management plans—many of the same things. So I don't really understand, when the economy's going south, why they're busy talking about things that may need attention.

The member from Welland pointed out—I think his summary, his last remark, was that they haven't uploaded one thing that was downloaded. In fact, they've overwritten a lot of stuff by giving it different branding. The Green Energy Act is an example of another form of taxation through your electricity. This bill is another form of taxation through your water bill. They're going to mandate certain kinds of conservation measures. If you use more than 600 litres per day, which is kind of the average today—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I, too, was very glad to come back after the summer to hear my colleague from Welland, although I must admit that I get to hear him more often than you, and I get to hear him in caucus meetings and around the province as well.

He always speaks the truth. He always speaks from the bottom of his heart. He speaks in ways that his constituents can understand. What he had to say today was

totally relevant: How are small municipalities going to be able to afford the costs of this particular bill?

Nobody is going to deny that we need to conserve water. Nobody is going to deny that some of the provisions of this bill are welcome and that they need to be enacted. But the question comes down to, how is it going to be enforced and who is going to enforce it?

Is this government going to get the necessary funds from running all of these new poker schemes? Are you going to get it from gambling? Are you going to get it from watching people beat their brains out in the middle of a ring? How are you going to get the money? How are the municipalities going to get the money? This is the question that the government has not answered.

We know that some of the larger municipalities—and my friend from Ottawa spoke about that. You know, that's the second-largest city in Ontario. That's like Toronto. I mean, we live here, and although times are tough and monies are tight, there is a way to struggle through. But when you go to small-town Ontario and you tell them that they're going to have to redo their water or their sewer system, when you go to northern Ontario and you go to a First Nations community that struggles with 80% and 90% unemployment and no revenues, how are they going to fix their system when you enact this legislation? That's what I want Liberals to stand up and talk about. That's what the member from Welland talked about, and I hope that one of you will stand up and say how it's going to be done. I commend him, as always, for his speech.

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

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments on Bill 72, the Water Opportunities Act. Of course, we know how vital water is to all of us. It sustains our lives and that of all things on earth, so it's a very important topic indeed.

Our proposed Water Opportunities Act will make Ontario a water technology leader. This is the focus of this particular bill and what we want to expand in this age of green economies. We want to build on this knowledge and provide it to the world.

I saw on a television show recently that probably more of the world is lacking in water than most people might realize. They don't have the expertise to find the water. They don't have the expertise to make it clean and potable for their people. Certainly there was a great concern in that particular show that we need to do something to help our fellow man in this regard, and this is a way in which that might be achieved. In some cases, water is very, very deep into ground. It's not something that we are particularly accustomed to. I have a well on my farm that's about 130 feet or so. We also have water as close as 30 feet to the ground in the same area. But in other countries it can be extremely deep.

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Some folks think that water may become a greater issue than oil in the future of the world, and that may be the case. I don't know if it is imminent, but certainly

there are writers who think that water will certainly be more important than what oil is to us currently, and I think that just emphasizes the need for to us take the water opportunities that we propose.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Welland has two minutes to respond—and I believe you were looking for Guys and Dolls.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I believe you're right. But what's the name of the character? The gambler?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm advised it was Guy Masterson.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Right you are, Speaker, Guy Masterson. That's the character I'm thinking of. Thank you very much, Speaker. The Speaker guides us through these debates and counsels us and provides resources that are beyond the call of mere mortals, so I appreciate it. Guy Masterson, yes. That's the gambler—the craps game.

The Speaker, of course, is assisted by her clerks, and one should never underestimate their role. But they play such a quiet role here. Some day we're going to have to see them burst out and give counsel loudly and aggressively.

Here's the moment of truth. Because as I sit down in one minute's time, it is now the Liberal turn in the rotation. Some Liberal backbencher, after three months of not being here, three months plus, will have the chance to get on her or his feet and speak to this bill and explain how excited they are to be back here. They have a full 20 minutes. Talking about how scarce water is, time is scarce here. We only have 20-minute speaking slots, and for the life of me, I've never passed one up if my life depended on it. You couldn't pay me to bypass a 20-minute speaking slot—you couldn't pay me enough. So here's a chance for a Liberal member to stand up, be heard, to demonstrate. There are some very articulate speakers on the other side of this House, some very capable speakers. I want to hear one of those loquacious Liberal backbenchers defend this bill right here and now—20 minutes, Speaker.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I guess today is the day to make mention of how much we look forward to coming back to the House. I heard some nice comments from the member from Ottawa Centre about hearing the member from Welland's eloquence. Of course, I'm happy to be back here so we can hear the scurrilous comments of the government House leader to the member of Welland. I've been along forward that all summer, for sure.

Here we have Bill 72, and what is the name of this one? This is An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010, and it goes on. Just before I came down here to the House, I thought, "You know, we have an awful lot of water legislation in this province, don't we?" I always found that we had a fair bit of water legislation, and I was surprised that we needed another piece of legislation. So I went on e-Laws and did a little browsing

to see what pieces of legislation we already had for water. Lo and behold, I printed off five of the acts so I could do a little reading. There are five them here, but actually there are about 350 in total. We have things like the Safe Drinking Water Act, O. Reg. 170/03. We have the Environmental Protection Act, O. Reg. 153/04; the Ontario Water Resources Act, regulation 40; the Clean Water Act, 2006; the Nutrient Management Act, regulation 267/03; and we could go on and on—the sustainable water and sewage act from 2002.

About 350 pieces of regulations are governing water in this province, and today we have another bill, Bill 72, to govern water. I remember a short while ago the Premier of this province, the leader of the Liberal Party, Dalton McGuinty, promising that he would not bring in any more regulations unless he took away one of the regulations. That was his commitment, to get rid of the red tape. So I want to ask the members on the opposite side, which one of the existing regulations are you going to take away? Which one of the existing 350 regulations are you going to remove as you introduce Bill 72 to, of course, keep up with your leader's commitment that for every one that he introduces, he would remove another one?

Now, of course, I'm being a little facetious. We all know that keeping promises is a very difficult undertaking for the Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and his cabinet and backbenchers really don't expect him to keep promises. They're just those things that you put out in the window for the media to have a little bite on, show the public that he'd really like to do that but, really, don't expect him to achieve that. That's really not—no expectation on the part of Liberals to uphold promises.

But I think what we can see with Bill 72, what's really clear here, other than when you read the bill, you can see that what's evident is that there is a steady drip of incompetence with this Liberal government when it comes to water legislation. It's just drip, drip, drip, another drip, 350 drips of incompetence. But there is an underlying motivation to that steady drip of incompetence that we see with all this legislation: money.

Water is so, so important to this Liberal Party, to this Liberal government, because it is a revenue stream for government. Water is not important because we want clean water. Water is not important because it is a necessity for human life. Water is important because it's a source of revenue for the Liberal Party. That's what is important about water: making water into a commodity that government can derive significant revenue from.

That's what Bill 72 is all about. And, of course, we all know that government revenues, government income is not something that they create. It's not something that they produce. Government revenue is something that they take from somebody else. That's what government revenue is, and Bill 72 allows government to take more money. They're creating another agency. And what's the name of this agency? It's quite an amazing little name that we have: the Water Technologies Acceleration Project.

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So here we have another agency. If the Liberals haven't already learned their lesson from eHealth and OLG, from the endless scandals from their agencies and their untendered contracts, the endless scandals of the patronage from their unelected, unaccountable agencies, what are they to do? They're going to create another agency under Bill 72, another unelected, unaccountable agency. That now puts us past 600 of these pork barrel agencies by the Liberal government who will take money from somebody else, put a cost on other people, put a cost on municipalities.

It's interesting, right in section 3: "Part III of the act requires certain municipalities, persons and entities to prepare, approve and submit to the Minister of the Environment municipal water sustainability plans...." We saw all this during the Clean Water Act debate. I'm sure that many of the Liberals here remember that Clean Water Act debate, the committee hearings that went around the province, where you took the authority to charge for private water under that bill and you're reinforcing it now with Bill 72 and another unelected, unaccountable agency.

We'll go back to some of these other acts. The Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act was another one. We don't often hear about that one. The Lake Simcoe Protection Act, the Fluoridation Act, the Toxics Reduction Act—all these acts have a significant component of water regulation in them. The Beds of Navigable Waters Act, the Conservation Land Act—and we go on and on. There's, of course, a raft—the Conservation Authorities Act, regulations 98, 99, 100, 101. We can go on and on with existing legislation, but nowhere in those 350 regulations could they do what they want to do with Bill 72, so they think. They don't think they could have created another agency out of one of those 350? I think that if they really tried, they could have, but they want to really strengthen their hand, at the cost of municipal government. Municipal government is going to have such a burdensome time covering this.

We heard from the member from Durham very clearly about the professionals at the municipality of Durham raising their concerns of just how much this is going to cost. It's not something they can put an exact figure to, but we know it's a huge cost. It is creating immense concern with all municipalities, as this government just continues to roll out the red tape.

During the holidays I got my new pocket edition of Ontario Provincial Offences. That's the new pocket edition. That was done up before some of the acts that are being introduced in the House this session. It has another 150 more pages in it this year than last year. It has increased by about 1,500 pages since this Liberal government came to power in 2004. Just in 2004, this book was only 2,000 pages; it's now 3,500 pages in length. You need to have some pretty deep pockets living in Ontario with Dalton McGuinty as Premier. You're going to have to get bigger and bigger pockets, not just to hold that book, but to keep Dalton McGuinty's hands warm in

there as well. A half a million regulations we now have in this province, over half a million regulations.

What is the solution for the Ontario Liberal government? Let's take some more money from some more people by creating some more legislation and some more unelected, unaccountable agencies, third party agencies. We've heard that term, third party agencies, arm's-length agencies, but the only thing that's really arm's length about them is that the Liberal arm is attached to them. The Liberal political arm is attached to them and embraces them. They're the ones who appoint their friends, their buddies, into these nice positions, like Pat Dillon. Pat Dillon is on the WSIB. He's on Working Families. He gets quite a few of those perks.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: You guys voted for all of them.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The member from Algoma, what was that? You're endorsing Pat Dillon taking all that patronage money? Very important. It's very good for the member of Algoma to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Your comments will go through the Chair.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Unelected, unaccountable agencies, boards and commissions are the lifeblood of this Liberal Party. Of course, they breathe with tax money. They just can't get enough tax money. And these agencies, boards and commissions are their favoured vehicle. This is their favoured vehicle to take more money from people.

I know that earlier today the Speaker ruled some words out of order regarding the way this is done by the Liberal Party, but we do know that agencies, boards and commissions provide a certain level of camouflage for this Liberal government. They provide that covering that the Liberals hope deflects the public's view of who's taking their money.

This is Bill 72. I can just see the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, whatever minister of the day—when the municipalities are up in arms about this new cost, when their taxpayers are up in arms about this new cost on water, Premier McGuinty will say, "It's not me, it's not us; it's this new agency that was created."

It's much the same as what we see with the LHINs, the local health integration networks. When they close emergency rooms and the hospitals in Fort Erie or throughout the province, the Minister of Health says, "It's not me that's doing that. It's this unelected, unaccountable local health integration network," which just happens to be fully stocked to the brim with Liberal friends. They're just loaded to the rafters with friends of the Liberal Party, loaded to the rafters with consultants from Courtyard, loaded to the rafters with you know what. They are loaded at the expense of individuals and municipalities.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see the member from Algoma is getting a little upset. I guess it's cutting a little too close

to the heart about the costs and the actions of this Liberal Party and how they demean and diminish the role of people in this province as they just continue to create the half a million regulations—because, of course, there's nothing as important for the Liberals as taking more money.

1650

With the 350 different regulations and schedules that are already on the books, why do we need another one? Can we not have water in this province that doesn't require over 350 separate regulations and schedules? Here's just one, the Ontario Water Resources Act, and it's 126 pages in length. Another one, the Environmental Protection Act, is 160 pages. The Safe Drinking Water Act is 160 pages. How many bloody acts does this Liberal government need to pass to have clean water in this province? That's three pieces of legislation—and there are over 350 different schedules and regulations, all far more substantial in length than those. The regulations just on the Nutrient Management Act—over 300 pages in length.

This government's view is that we need more red tape, more cost, and they want more money. As I said at the beginning of this speech, what we've seen here in seven years of Liberal Party rule is a drip, drip, drip of incompetence, red tape, legislation, taxation, fees, plus unelected and unaccountable agencies growing at the same rate as this book of half a million regulations. That's what this province has seen for the last seven years. That's why this province has become a have-not province under this Liberal government. That's why we've gone from being the engine of Confederation to the caboose of Confederation—because this Liberal government sees their interest as taking more money from people.

The idea that they should safeguard the public's interest is completely unknown to them. What they see as important is safeguarding their political interests. It does not matter what the individual in Peterborough thinks; it's what the Liberal Party thinks. It's not what the municipality on Manitoulin Island thinks; it's what the Liberal Party thinks.

We are on a dangerous road, and here Bill 72 continues the same path that the Liberals have started.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and I want to say to him that the summer did not diminish even one iota his fiery passion for this place. It did not diminish one iota, either, the way in which he speaks words that he truly believes. I listened to what he had to say, and although I do not always agree with every position he takes, he is right to take on a government. That is the role—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No. That is the role of an opposition member—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Did you agree to some of those things?

Mr. Michael Prue: I would agree to some of the things you say. So that works two ways.

What he had to say today was taking on a government that I think has become very complacent, taking on a government that has not done its homework on this bill or a great many other bills, taking on a government that seems able to shift with the wind on any number of issues, from online gambling to people beating their brains out in the middle of a ring to any other thing over the summer, and he is right to say what he had to say. He is right to bring up what needs to be said in terms of the municipalities, what needs to be said in terms of First Nations communities, and to ask this government to take a soul-searching look at what you found out this summer. Surely, most of the government members went back, as I'm sure the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington did, and talked to their constituents. I'm sure what he is saying today is what he has heard from most of them. So I commend him, and I'm glad to be back in this place. I'm glad to listen to what he has to say. And I'm hoping against hope that after I speak—because I'm the next speaker up—that a government member will stand up and actually say something on this bill. I have been waiting all summer to hear what you have to say on this and other bills, and I'm hoping that somebody has the fortitude to do exactly that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd certainly like to take this opportunity to comment on the remarks by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I'd like to tell him that I'm proud to be a member of a government that takes both the safety of our water supply and its legislative responsibilities so seriously. We need those acts. We need those acts and regulations to ensure that our water is safe not only in terms of the quality of the water supply but, as this act does, to ensure that we have sufficient quantity going forward.

I'd like to remind him that the McGuinty government has put in place measures that make our drinking water supply the best protected in the world. Not only do we have very stringent science-based standards currently; I'd like to assure the member that the work is ongoing. In fact, in the Ministry of the Environment the issue of water quality standards is alive and well, and as the science continues to come in, we are looking at those current standards to see if they need amendment. So whether it be the level of tritium in drinking water, trihalomethanes, these are the subject of ongoing review.

What we have at present in Ontario, according to our chief drinking water inspector, is a very safe supply of water. Some 99% of water tests show drinking water of a quality that is for human consumption. We do still have “boil water” advisories in effect—one of those checks and balances that are so necessary, that our medical officers of health initiate in their communities at the slightest suspicion of a threat to the drinking water supply. This is the kind of action that marks a civilized

society, and I'm proud to be a member of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to provide some comments in regard to the speech made by my colleague the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, my neighbour to the north. He does speak very passionately about this government's record, and again I think he made a very compelling argument when he showed and talked about the 350 schedules and separate pieces of regulation that are involved with water right now. He only showed three of them, I believe, and as he highlighted, there were hundreds of pages—page after page after page of regulation and separate schedules in regard to water.

Again, I hope, as the member for Beaches–East York mentioned, that there is a government speaker soon, because as I mentioned earlier in this debate, when I had just a brief moment, this government again seems to be wonderful in trying to get green headlines. They wait until the 10th anniversary of Walkerton, they make a big announcement, and now we wait four months. At the time they entered the legislation—I believe it was May 18—there was no debate. In fact, our critic from Haldimand–Norfolk, who spoke yesterday, was all ready to speak on the act in May, and it just passed by. On April 22, the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, where people look to their government for action, they look for them to do something, and this government makes an announcement, introduces a Waste Diversion Act, and we haven't heard a peep from them since. Again, we didn't hear a peep from them after that May 18 announcement, after that April 22 announcement. We want to hear something from them today.

1700

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm just excited. I'm pleased to have listened to the comments of Mr. Hillier from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, but I'm excited about the fact that the next speaker is Michael Prue, the member for Beaches–East York. When I was checking his riding name, I realized that if you can't call it “the Beaches” anymore, you've got to call it “the Beach.” Your riding name shouldn't be Beaches–East York, it should be Beach–East York, and that's a problem that he's going to have to deal with, perhaps through private members' public business.

Michael Prue, of course, was the very competent, successful and popular mayor of East York and accomplished a great deal and did a great deal around the whole issue of water and clean water. One of the interesting things that many people don't know is that John Papadakis, a paralegal down in Fort Erie way, was a member of his, Mr. Prue's, council at the time and was the deciding vote in Mr. Prue becoming interim mayor. Then, of course, he won in a municipal election in his own right to be the very successful mayor of East York.

So his views on this particular bill are views and his comments are comments that we should pay a great deal of attention to. He's been there in the municipal trenches, if you will, as a councillor and then as a mayor. I suspect he may comment on the inability of communities to raise the tax revenues that are going to be necessary to comply with the requirements that this government's going to impose on them, and that if communities don't have the assistance of their provincial—and, for that matter, federal governments—naught can come of this type of bill, this type of legislation.

Once again, New Democrats will be supporting it, we will be forcing it to committee, and we'll be looking forward to hearing what municipal leaders, big city and small town, have to say then.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the members for Beach–East York, Oak Ridges–Markham, Welland, and, of course, my colleague from Leeds–Grenville.

Listen, I would first say this: The member from Oak Ridges–Markham said that we have the most and best protected water anywhere. I would ask this House and ask her, how many of those 350 regulations have you read? How do you know if it's protected or not? Because I can be absolutely sure the member has not read all 350 pieces of legislation. I don't know if she's read Bill 72. But what we can see is that Premier Dad has told all his members not to speak to Bill 72, right? Nobody's allowed to speak to Bill 72. They've missed a couple of rotations now. There is one member who is allowed to speak, the member for Oak Ridges–Markham. Everybody else, it's—what's that movie? Youse Be Quiet I think is the name of that movie, that Premier Dad has told them all to do.

We can see and we can judge by their actions. This Liberal government has advanced a bill, but they are too fearful and two cowardly even to get up and speak to it. They won't speak to their own bill. Now, just how important is a bill, a piece of legislation that not one of them has the you-know-what to stand up and speak to it? Premier Dad has sent them all to their—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member to refer to the person by the title or the riding.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you. The Premier has sent them all away, no more speaking.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It is a privilege to stand and to speak to this bill, the Water Opportunities Act. I want to preface the remarks, my 20 minutes, by saying how glad I am to be back here and how I am glad on this very first bill that I've had the opportunity to debate since coming back that I will be supporting it, at least to send it to committee.

I think it's absolutely essential that we hear from two groups in particular. The first is the municipalities of the province of Ontario, all 444 of them, which I am sure are

going to have much to say about this bill and amendments to be made in order to make sure it works for them. They need to be there to talk about the cost that may accrue to them if the bill is passed as it currently exists and whether or not they are going to be capable of and able to carry out what is contained within the body of the bill.

The second group I particularly want to hear from is the First Nations communities, particularly those in Treaty 9 areas and Treaty 3 areas in northern Ontario, because it is those communities particularly that, over the course of time, suffer from unclean, unsafe drinking water. They do not have the wherewithal or the abilities to make sure that they themselves and their children have the kind of safe drinking water that we here in Ontario and we here in Toronto absolutely take for granted.

This glass in my hand here—and I don't want to use a prop—this is some of the safest drinking water in the entire world. When I was on Metro council as a mayor, we were proud of the fact that the water that came out of the taps in Toronto was unquestionably safer than almost everything that you could buy in a bottle in any store in Ontario, no matter whether it came from Ontario, the United States, Europe or Fiji. You've all seen those Fiji glasses and bottles. This water is safer. It is tested every hour on the hour and is the safest water possibly in the entire world that people can drink.

That is not true elsewhere in Ontario, and it's not true in spite of the fact that we have the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Environmental Protection Act, which are both very good acts and which would protect the citizens of Ontario if they were enforced more rigorously. I think the first thing that this Legislature has to do is pass the necessary funds or, even if funding is not necessary, empower the bureaucracy to go out there and enforce those acts to the maximum. That's the first thing we need to do to protect our drinking water.

The second thing I would say unequivocally is that the provisions of this act are meaningless, the act that we're debating here today, without cleaner water in the first place, without better fish habitats, without swimmable beaches and without safer drinking water. If we don't have all of those things above, then why would we need a Water Opportunities Act? We need to make sure that what we have, we're doing right and we're doing correctly. Today, a lot has been said about municipalities by my colleagues and even by me in giving my two-minute hits. I'm going to leave that to the end of my speech if there's time, because today I really want to talk about our First Nations communities.

You know I am from Beaches–East York. You know, every member of this Legislature, and probably almost everyone watching television, that this is in the downtown core of the present city of Toronto. You know that this is a very urban place. It's only five kilometres from this building, the start of Beaches–East York. And you know that we, as I have said, pride ourselves on the water that we have.

But what about First Nations communities? This is a government bringing forth this bill, and this government needs to know, from your own statistics, and I've heard some quoted today, that between 2006 and 2008—three years to five years after the McGuinty government was first sworn into office—there were 679 boil-water alerts and that Ontario led every other province in boil-water alerts. That's our province. That's what we have. That's the legacy. That's the legacy of this government. One cannot be proud that we had 679 boil-water alerts in those three years. That is tantamount to one for every two municipalities in this province—one for every two, every year. In that same time, eight out of 21 of Health Canada's high-risk systems are in Ontario. They're First Nations communities in Ontario. Eight out of 21 high-risk water systems are in this province.

1710

The former Minister of the Environment had this to say about his bill before it was actually brought forward to the House, and I think he was right. I want to quote him, because I think we need to follow what he had to say. Former Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen said that First Nations issues were amongst his concerns when drafting the soon-to-be-released Water Opportunities Act, and I quote Mr. Gerretsen: "It would not be right for Ontario to export our tremendous technology without first making sure that our people, including First Nations, have the best protection when it comes to the quality of their water." That's what he said, and he's right.

We need to make sure that the technology that we have is used and utilized in Ontario before we are going out to the world to sell what we have. Anyone in the world would say, "If you have this technology, why aren't you using it yourself? If you have this technology, why are the people in Kashechewan breaking out in sores from drinking the water? If you have this technology, why are there 679 boil-water alerts?" I know that if I was in some country that was looking at the technology from Ontario, I would be asking those questions, and I think the government needs to make sure that we not go off trying to sell the technology that we are not proud to use ourselves. We need to go out there and say to the world that there are no boil-water alerts in Ontario, that there are no First Nations communities at risk, that the technology we have we're proud of and we use it, and that the technology we have is made in Ontario and that every municipality, all 444 of them, and every single First Nations community has it too.

I think what Mr. Gerretsen had to say as minister when the bill was brought in was right. And I go on. I go on to talk about Kashechewan. Some of you in this room, I know, have been there. I'm sure that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has been there. I'm sure that the Minister of Natural Resources has been there. I'm sure that a great many members of the Legislature have been there. I went with some of them myself on a tour when we were discussing a bill put forward by my colleague Gilles Bisson about revenue resources. One of the stops we made was in that place.

It is almost an idyllic place, save and except that it's constantly at risk of flood. If you go there, you will see it's surrounded by lakes and rivers and streams and muskeg and, if you go there in the winter, by snow and ice. There is so much water around Kashechewan. In fact, there is so much water around all of these northern communities, that's the thing that you're struck with: the absolute, total abundance of water. And yet the water to drink is unsafe.

People live by the river, and the river, as I've said, constantly floods, as it does in most of those communities, especially in the springtime. Members who have been around the Legislature or here in the last Parliament will remember that there was quite a debate that went on around the people of Kashechewan and bringing them out of that community and finding them somewhere safe to live in Timmins while we tried to resolve the problems.

When I was there on one occasion with my colleague Gilles Bisson—I do travel with him from time to time through his riding when I get the opportunity—we went into Kashechewan and we went into the water treatment plant because it was unsafe and because people were getting sick from drinking the water. And I will never forget my colleague Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins—James Bay, confronting the employee of that water plant because the water was absolutely unsafe. It went through a whole bunch of tubes and there were chemicals added to it and there was a whole bunch of scientific things that I as an engineer did not understand, but in the end the water that came out of the tap went to people's houses. And Mr. Bisson did something that I thought was absolutely brave. He took a glass of the water, and he took a second glass of the water. He held up the glass in one hand, and he gave the other glass to the employee. He said to the employee, "Is this water safe to drink?" The employee said, "Yes, it is." Bisson said, "You drink that glass of water, and then I'll drink mine." Do you know, the employee would not drink the water that he was producing and sending into people's houses? He would not drink that water. Of course, Gilles Bisson didn't have to drink the water, and I mercifully did not drink the water either, not without boiling it. That's the story of those First Nations communities. I never forgot what happened that day.

How can we, as a province, pass a bill like this with a straight face and say that we want to export our technology when we have places in this province that don't have access to it?

Mr. Gerretsen, to quote him again: "It would not be right for Ontario to export our tremendous technology without first making sure that our people, including First Nations, have the best protection when it comes to the quality of their water."

That's what I'm asking this government to do. I'm asking for somebody, I hope, to stand up after me and say, "Yes, we want this bill passed. Yes, we're sending it to committee. Yes, we commit ourselves absolutely to making sure that that technology goes to every single

community, especially the First Nations communities in northern Ontario, so that they never again have boil-water alerts, so that we never again have to airlift them to Timmins and put them in hotels so they can be safe, so that they never again have to be confronted, forced and challenged to drink the water that they produce."

I think that's what we need to do. I'm hoping a Liberal will stand up and say that that's part of this plan, because if it's part of this plan, then it's a good plan. If it's not part of this plan, who are we fooling? What place, what country, what city in the world wants to take our technology when we don't use it ourselves?

What is true of First Nations is also true of many of the smaller remote, rural and northern communities of this province. The boil-water alerts may not be as frequent, the problems may not be as severe in some cases, but they are there nonetheless. The cost to these smaller communities can be prohibitive. It costs a lot of money to put in a new facility. It costs a lot of money that they don't have.

I need to hear from a government member where the money is going to come from for the municipalities. I need somebody to stand up in this House and explain it today, preferably. If nobody is going to stand up and explain it today, at least make sure that somebody is there with the facts and figures when I'm sure that these remote and northern communities come forward in committee to talk about the costs to them.

In discussing this issue with people at the AMO conference—and I was there, going around and talking to people from northern communities, rural communities, mayors, reeves and councillors. They're very worried about where they are going to find the infrastructure money to build what is necessary. They have roads, they have bridges that they're struggling to maintain. They have water systems that are antiquated and, in some cases, 100 years old. As the legislation gets passed, they need to know how they're going to be able to enforce it, how they're going to be able to do what is right. They all agree it's right, but how are they going to be able to do it? Many rural, remote northern communities, small ones across this province, are in pretty dire straits when it comes to money, when it comes to the tax base that is necessary to build and maintain what is necessary and what this law will enforce.

I'm asking you to think about them as you pass this. I'm asking you to think about where they're going to get the money and to listen to them about how it's all going to unfold. These same communities, most of them, have declining populations. You don't have to go into the Far North. Go into some places in Niagara region. Go into some places in Essex. Go into some places in eastern Ontario. Go into some places in central Ontario, where the towns are not as big today as they were 20 and 30 years ago. Go to Smiths Falls. Go to all of these smaller, rural towns and, in some cases, cities around Ontario and see that they are not expanding in size. There's no new subdivisions going in bringing extra wealth. It's difficult to attract industry. Sometimes the schools are closing. The tax base is getting smaller.

1720

We all know that in northern Ontario we had to pass a special bill in order to maintain the number of seats that the north has. We had to pass that bill and we voted for it. We had to because the population is declining, and because the population there is declining, so is the population of those towns and cities. How can you expect declining population with less jobs and less people and less resource base to pay? How can you expect them to pay when this is brought into effect? It is causing some degree of alienation across northern Ontario and also across parts of rural Ontario and less urban Ontario when bills like this are passed without the necessary revenues that go with them or the time frame.

Now, my friend from Ottawa stood and up he spoke about two things. He said that the government has given \$1.8 billion in grants since 2003, and I don't doubt that to be true. I know it's true. We've looked those up ourselves: \$1.8 billion in grants in the last seven and a half years. I'm not going to say that that's a bad thing. But what that works out to is less than \$15 per person per year for a water system. Let's talk about what this really is. That means every citizen of Ontario can expect that the Ontario government will give their municipality or the like \$15 per year per person to help maintain a water system. That's not very much; \$1.8 billion sounds like a lot of money, but it's not very much, when you're living in small-town Ontario and when they tell you it's going to cost half a million dollars to upgrade your water system to make sure it meets Ontario's standards and to make sure that the technology we have here in Ontario can be brought to use for them.

He also talked about the \$1.5 billion in loans that were given to municipalities. Again, I have to say that's not very much, but only those municipalities that can afford to pay them back took them. And I see my good friend there, Mr. Arthurs, a former mayor from Pickering, now from Pickering-Scarborough. He knows; he's nodding his head. Only those municipalities that can afford to pay the money back actually take it in loans.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: That's why they call it a loan.

Mr. Michael Prue: That's why they call them a loan, and he's right. But those municipalities that are not in the best financial shape don't take those. Those are the ones I'm most worried about, and those are the ones that this government needs to listen to when this comes to committee.

As was said by my colleague from Welland, I was a mayor, the mayor of East York. I prided myself and our council prided itself on trying to upgrade the water system in East York. We got our water from Metro because that's the way the system worked, but it was our responsibility to distribute it. We had an older community and it took us the entire time that I was on council, both as a councillor and as a mayor, redoing the streets one by one, lining the water systems to make sure that the leakage went down, fining the companies that were putting things into sewer systems. We had to raise the rates so that that the sewers and water would pay for

themselves. We raised the water rates. I'm proud to say that as mayor I never once raised the tax rate, but we did raise the water rates and we did it to try to conserve the water and to make sure that we could pay for the infrastructure as we went, and I think municipalities generally want to do that. So that kind of authority has to be given as well.

Last but not least, in 10 seconds I want to say again that we will be supporting this bill to send it to second reading, but please listen to the First Nations communities and the smaller rural and northern communities that come to debate.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: Thank you to the member from Beaches—East York for his comments on the bill. I was listening and taking some notes here. The Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act is a key part of our Open Ontario plan and will make Ontario a water technology leader. You spoke very eloquently about some of the concerns raised by municipalities.

In my riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, the city of Kawartha Lakes—we've been holding consultations. The honourable member from Peterborough, Jeff Leal, attended, as well as our federal counterparts. The Trent Canal system runs through our ridings. Water is a very important part of what we do. And the colleges and Trent University are involved in this consultation piece as well, with the ultimate goal to create a water technology centre of excellence in the area where we can tap into the expertise of people like Dr. Brent Wootton, who has a tremendous project on using green methods of sewer treatment as well.

Yesterday someone suggested that 25% of the water in our municipal systems leaks out. So of what's measured coming in and what's measured going out, 25% of that water vanishes, which is a financial loss for the municipalities and something that needs to be addressed, because if they could recapture 25% of that and be paid for it, this would be a revenue generator for the municipalities. When I was inquiring about infrastructure projects that were taking place across the province and looking through the lists of what was being approved, there were a lot of roads paved, there were a lot of bridges built, there were a lot of hockey arenas applied for, but I can't recall seeing one municipality that applied to have their water systems repaired.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Another good presentation in this Ontario Legislature, and through this debate it does give us an awful lot of information to bring forward during committee hearings. I assume there's going to be some committee hearings. I regret the fact that over the last two days we've been actually getting very little information from the government. Right from the get-go they had an hour to present their case; I think they used perhaps 15 or 20 minutes. So I commend the third party and the opposition for using up their full time and presenting as

much information and as many ideas as possible as we work our way through this piece of legislation.

I do appreciate the presentation from the member from Beaches–East York. I'm a traditional guy. I worked in Toronto in the 1970s. To me it's the Beaches. I always thought there was more than one beach in Toronto.

The member made mention of Kashechewan and the predicament in so many native communities where, whether it's lack of training, even though our government did initiate the centre of excellence in Walkerton recommended by Justice O'Connor, whether it's lack of funding or lack of maintenance and knowledge of how to run the equipment in some of these communities—but the overall point is that these kinds of communities are caught with the inconsistencies of the myriad of legislation, not only in the provincial—there are many, many water bills, and there'll be one more by the time we're done with this—but the federal jurisdiction. Primarily, native communities are federal jurisdiction, as are the territories, and other issues, transboundary issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The people of Beaches–East York are incredibly fortunate to have Michael Prue as their representative here in the Legislature. He has demonstrated once again what it means to be a competent and quality MPP. He knows the issues, he addresses them in a forthright manner and he analyzes the issues with a view to ensuring that the best possible thing is being done for the people of Ontario here in this Legislature. That to me is what an MPP should be doing. And I contrast Mr. Prue today with Liberal members who just seem disinterested. They're here. I see them here. There's one, there's another, there's another, there's another over there. I see Mr. Delaney. I see Mr. Craitor, Niagara Falls. I see the member from Mississauga–Streetsville right up there.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I have to remind you that that is not part of the parliamentary procedure.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I wasn't going to say that they were absent, because that would be unparliamentary.

But I see any other number of members here, and—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: What about me?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course, she's here; you can hear her. The audience knew you were here. They can hear you on my microphone. Do another one. Do another yell-out, Ms. Pupatello.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to make sure that your comments are consistent with the bill being discussed.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Besides, I should have referred to her as the Minister of Economic Development and Trade—

Interjection: Demure or demurrer?

Mr. Peter Kormos: —who is either demure or demurring.

But you heard Prue, and that's the way it should be done. Let's hear from some of these—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen intently to the member from Beaches–East York. He and I both share a common background in municipal politics. I do take a great interest in this piece of legislation. Just recently—and I invite the member, any time he'd like to join with me, to come to Trent University to see the great work that's now being done by the Worsfold Water Quality Centre at Trent University, looking into a number of issues and coming up with solutions that will be identified under the Water Opportunities Act.

I just want to take a moment, with the great assistance of my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: I invite the member from Beaches–East York to come with me on Friday when we'll make a major announcement at Siemens in Peterborough. They are a North American leader in manufacturing, designing and engineering technology in waste water treatment centres. They're going to take advantage of the Water Opportunities Act to expand their product line for North American delivery and increase their engineering capacity to develop these waste water treatment systems. One of the unique features about Siemens in Peterborough is they have also established a training centre for municipalities in Ontario that actually purchase their equipment, to come and do their training with that equipment so that they know first-hand how to deal with it.

He makes a good point about Kashechewan. We were particularly pleased to be one of the host communities for the residents of Kashechewan who came to Peterborough, and they certainly shared with us the fact that they had a water treatment system plant that, of course, wasn't upgraded, and they lacked the capacity to actually run that plant.

One of the things that we'll be looking at here under this act is the opportunity to take the expertise that is developed at Siemens in Peterborough and share that right across the province with every community.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): You have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the members from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Haldimand–Norfolk, Welland and Peterborough for their comments.

Yes, to the member from Peterborough, I may take you up on that opportunity—unfortunately, not Friday. You'll have to invite me back another day, but I may do that.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk raised the oft-quoted and thorny issue that First Nations communities are largely under federal jurisdiction. No one could deny that, under the British North America Act, that is in fact the case. However, other provinces have got around that. Other provinces, particularly Quebec, have recognized that the First Nations communities in those respective provinces are also citizens of those provinces.

I believe, and I think we should all believe, that First Nations peoples living in Ontario are Ontario citizens who should have the same benefits and privileges as every other Ontario citizen. Whether they come under federal jurisdiction or provincial jurisdiction, we need to ensure, as a provincial government, that they have the same rights, duties, obligations and privileges as every other citizen. That includes the right to safe drinking water, the same right that we would grant to any of our citizens under any of the laws of Ontario or any United Nations charter which Canada has signed.

Having said that, I think we have a responsibility to understand that some of the poorest and most isolated people in this province need special attention. That, I think, will start when we start listening to what they have to say, when we invite them to the committees and when we do the things that are necessary to include them in the full aspect of the life of Ontario.

This can continue with this bill, and I look forward to hearing what they have to say.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I should say that I am extremely pleased to be able to share my time with the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

The member for Beaches–East York talked, and I know he was very hopeful that we would hear a speaker from the government. Again, they have let their chance pass by. We're very pleased to be able to speak to Bill 72, the Water Opportunities Act.

I know that the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock had mentioned municipalities applying for infrastructure water systems. I'm very pleased to talk about one of those applications, because I was involved with that. As some of the members know, prior to my election in March, I was the chief administrative officer for a small rural municipality located in my riding. I was the former CAO of the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands. I was appointed in early August 2009.

At the time, I had been a staffer with my predecessor, Mr. Runciman. I had dealt, obviously, as most MPP staffers do, with MPP liaisons through different ministries. I was out of Mr. Runciman's office, so I did have a couple of contacts with these MPP liaisons. I remember calling up one at the request of the mayor of the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands, Frank Kinsella, and requesting a meeting with the Minister of the Environment at AMO.

The minister at the time was John Gerretsen. Now he's the Minister of Consumer Services. Certainly, the minister was known to me for many years. He was the former mayor of the city of Kingston. I was a former mayor of the city of Brockville.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Exactly; that's right. Both of us served on the board of directors of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

I must admit that the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound also was a former member of the AMO board and

AMO executive until he decided in 1990 to run for member of provincial Parliament. I want to congratulate him on his 20th anniversary. I'm sorry that we're now separated by a seat, but you were a great mentor to me when I was first in this House earlier this year.

Getting back to the meeting with the Minister of the Environment then, John Gerretsen: We were there to talk about the Lansdowne water system. Lansdowne is a small community in my riding of Leeds–Grenville, one of the villages that is in the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands. They had an infrastructure project that the federal government, the province and the municipality cost-shared to install treatment barriers to the existing wells in the municipality, to provide new water metering for the homes and the businesses within Lansdowne, and to expand the treatment building proper.

The whole cost of the project was \$962,500, with each partner—the federal government, the province and the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands—spending \$320,834. The important point is this: That community, that entire water system in Lansdowne, is 298 users. That's 298 users, including the businesses and the residences: an extremely small distribution system. When you look at the municipal share—and this is a municipal share; it's a local improvement—you're looking at \$320,834 between 298 users, over \$1,000 per user. That's an extremely large amount of money.

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The question we had asked the minister at that meeting at AMO was, how do municipalities support and sustain small water systems? A very, very valid point. If you look at that system, again, 298 users, and you compare—I live 20 minutes down the road from Lansdowne in the city of Brockville, where the minimum water bill is \$27.96 a month. The average bill in that community, in the city of Brockville, is between \$35 and \$40 per month. Madam Speaker, members of the Legislature, the minimum rate in that small 298 person and business system in Lansdowne: \$90 per month. That's the average bill people have in that community. There, you've got a very small system that the council and the corporation of the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands felt needed to be fixed, felt needed to be sustained, and the cost was over \$1,000, in addition to the fact that the users were paying \$90 a month, three times what I pay 20 minutes down the road in a community with about 9,000 households. It just doesn't seem right.

We asked the minister whether there was any assistance for rural municipalities, whether there was any break rather than providing it as a local improvement, would the minister provide us with some suggestions? And he did. He provided us a suggestion—and his staff were there—that we pursue what was called hardship funding, where we could get 80% of our share. I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, as the brand new chief administrative officer, this was a great report that I could give to council, that the minister and his staff were referring us to a hardship program where we could help those 298 users up to 80%. It was wonderful news. There was much excitement within the community of Lansdowne.

So we went through the process and we found that we had to apply to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, because there was this joint committee, and the infrastructure—you know, the feds were involved, and we had to apply. Well, we applied. The community applied, the municipality applied, and it came back. It dealt with bureaucrats and it bounced back and forth to the committee and there were letters, but finally, the answer came back. Finally, the suggestion from the minister for that small community to go after hardship funding was finished: The answer was no. There was no hardship funding, there was no assistance, and that small water system again had a tough time in running. Again, there wasn't any advice on conservation. There wasn't any advice about technological improvements like we see here with Bill 72.

I wanted to make that a cautionary tale, so to speak, after I heard from some members talking about how municipalities didn't apply for water. There were municipalities that applied to upgrade their water systems. But again, it just shows that for the small, rural system, they've got it tough. It's tough to deal with all of the regulations. My friend the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington talked about 350 regulations, the hundreds and thousands of pages of documentation that this government has laid out for municipalities and individuals. It's staggering.

I want to talk about this bill. I know that in my previous couple of hits, I talked about the fact that this government loves to make green headlines and they love to make announcements. Back in May, when they announced this piece of legislation, there wasn't any debate, there wasn't any discussion here on the floor. There's hardly any discussion here today. Other than a couple of members here and there with two-minute hits, we haven't heard from the government. You missed a great opportunity again. You talk about your agenda or other people's agendas. You could have talked about your agenda today. You could have talked about how you were going to engage municipalities. You could have talked about all of the good that you think you're going to bring with stakeholders into this process, but you sat in your place and said nothing. I just can't believe that.

As I said earlier, I was elected in March. I was sworn in here on March 22. I'll tell you something, Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the work that my caucus members do every day. They're great people to help me as a new member in the Legislative Assembly. I can tell you this: On this side of the House we certainly, from what I have known and from what I have talked about with my members, support clean water and the promotion of clean water technology. I think that's a given on this side of the House, but you know what worries us? We worry that there is some form of hidden price tag for whatever reason. We've seen it today with the lack of discussion on that side of the House. We just feel that they're hiding something. Why aren't you standing up and talking about this bill? Why aren't you standing up and talking about how you're going to engage municipalities? I was the one who mentioned AMO, and I

know other members have as well, because they have that municipal experience, yet the members opposite are silent.

As well, they're silent on the fact that we see that this bill actually does little to promote conservation and technology other than those existing regulations and government initiatives that some members have talked about. This would have been a great opportunity for you to talk about how this promotes conservation and technology.

As well, previous speakers have talked about the fact that there's another government agency that's being created in this case, the Water Technology Acceleration Project. Again, the thing that I have to question is this government's record with agencies. This is the same government that wasted \$1 billion with eHealth and had little or nothing to show for it. My colleague the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington talked about the local health integration networks that are unaccountable, unelected and largely anonymous in communities. I can tell you that Tim Hudak and the PC caucus would put money into front-line health care.

This government wants to create a new agency. Look at some of the agencies that they've been dealing with right now. OLG, for example, where you had executives charge meals, booze and gym memberships, and they failed to protect people with their lottery winnings. In the midst of a financial crisis with the Big Three, what did OLG do? They had a contest, giving away Mercedes. This government's record with agencies is dismal. This government was so desperate for money, the Minister of Finance mused about selling off OLG, LCBO and parts of OPG, and even paid consultants to look at that, only to retreat. That's some of this government's record when it comes to existing agencies, let alone creating a new agency. It's really quite shocking.

I know it would be unparliamentary to mention people's absences, so I won't. But I can't believe that we haven't heard more from this government and the minister on what the price tag will be of this legislation, and I just cannot believe that we haven't talked more about the plans that the government has for Bill 72.

Again, they made great fanfare when it came to the 10th anniversary of Walkerton. They make this great announcement, and then nothing—no debate, nothing for months. When Earth Day rolls around and it's the 40th anniversary, they trumpet another act on waste diversion—yet again, nothing. You know when we hear from them? We hear from constituents on July 2 when they walk into Home Hardwares and Canadian Tires and see this eco tax on their bills. And then the government says, "We're going to review it in 90 days." They announced that on July 20, so I look forward to October 20, to all the wonderful decisions that the government has.

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I, again, am very pleased to share my time with the very distinguished and learned member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I'm so happy to speak about this bill, but again, too, I'm here—I've come here to listen to the government tell me how wonderful this bill is. We talk about it in caucus; we don't like it, so there must be somebody that likes it over there. Where are the rural members and our northern members?

This, again, is a big-city bill. Cities have money; they're going to be okay. But you get into our little municipalities, they don't have that kind of money. You guys are forcing it on them. Where are the rural guys? Where are they? Are there any rural members left over in that caucus? Or from the north? What are our northern members doing over there? They're sitting over there on their butts. They won't get up and talk about this. This is terrible.

The Speaker today said that this was a place for debate. Well, how are we going to debate between us and the third party? We're on the same side over here, guys, so you should be telling us why this is so great for our local municipalities. What happened to you guys over there? You can all play with your BlackBerrys and your phones—look at them up there. The BlackBerrys are out—“Oh, I don't want them to see me.” Don't worry, the camera's over here, guys. Nobody will see you over there. But where are you? Where are those northern members? They're always in here saying, “We can't do this for the north”—you're not doing this for the north. And the rural members are not here. Or if they're here, they're not up saying something. They had all kinds of time to debate this bill. Now it's going to run out. I would hope that in committee or wherever you send this bill, you get off your butts and go out there and tell us how wonderful this bill is.

I want to read you something here. This comes from a small rural municipality. Listen to this, because you're going to have to understand this, fellas. You've been here. This letter was sent to John Wilkinson. You'll all know who he is; he's the Minister of the Environment. Behold him. It's about the Water Opportunities Act and Bill 13, the sustainable water and waste water systems act. The council of the township of Georgian Bluffs—this is just outside of Owen Sound, if you wanted to know where it was—at their committee of the whole meeting on Wednesday, September 8, 2010, received a report from the CAO, Bill White, dated August 17, 2010, regarding the Water Opportunities Act and Bill 13. The township of Georgian Bluffs provides the following comments. I want you to listen to this:

“1. Provincial drinking water quality standards through the Safe Drinking Water Act, and Regulation 453/07, source water protection legislation, and other existing inspection and accountability procedures through the Ministry of the Environment sufficiently protect the safety and efficiency of small municipal water systems without the need for new legislation.” That's coming from a small municipality.

“2. If the Water Opportunities Act and ... Bill 13, the sustainable water and waste water systems act are approved and new obligations placed on municipalities

operating small water systems, then sustainable funding and support should be provided to assist in compliance without impacting water users.” That's what they're asking you for. But you guys didn't stand up and tell us anything about this, so we don't know what the heck you're up to over there.

“3. That the province not set up unnecessary regulatory boards or bureaucracies in support of new water legislation, and that the role of the Walkerton Clean Water Centre be explored further with a view to using this existing agency to champion water conservation technology with business and universities.

“Your truly

“Bruce Hoffman

“Township clerk.”

Now, that's what the small, rural municipalities are telling you guys—there's the letter right there—and the ones from the north. When we get letters like this, I think, “Well, I'll be here this afternoon. I'll find out what the rural and northern members over there in the Liberal Party will have to tell us about this bill and how they would respond to this letter.” What did we hear? Nothing, not a thing from you guys over there. You did a couple of two-minute hits and you were mumbling something about that the minister was going to come to your riding and make a big announcement. She came to my riding too, but she forgot to tell me she was coming. So you were lucky on that one. The same minister is going to come down to yours and you know a week ahead of time. For some reason, I didn't get told she was coming. It would have been nice to be there.

But anyway, that's all we heard from you—nothing on this, nothing on this bill, not a damn thing. You people over there have gone to sleep.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I enjoyed the incredibly competent comments of the member for Leeds–Grenville, who is demonstrating himself a worthy successor to Bob Runciman. Of course, while listening to Mr. Clark, I was waiting anxiously for Bill Murdoch of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who brings passion and heartfelt emotion to this debate in his unique style. I find the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to be a delight today, as he has been on each and every occasion that I've listened to him take the floor in this Legislature. By the time he's finished, the government doesn't know whether it's been drilled, punched or bored. He tore a strip off of them today, all right.

He came here from the real Ontario, the hard-working Ontario, the Ontario with a little bit of dirt under the fingernails, not soft hands like a baby's bum, but with calluses on their hands. The communities that he's talking about are hard-working Ontario, a whole lot of them farming Ontario. They grow our beef and other crops.

But the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound spoke effectively on behalf of small-town Ontario. Just as I have concerns about Welland and Thorold and Port

Colborne and their ability, their capacity—and Wainfleet, poor little Wainfleet, a beautiful little rural community. My concerns are underscored by the articulate comments today by the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I can only hope that his successor can muster up the same level of passion, interest, vitality and enthusiasm for the people of her or his riding once they are elected.

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

Mr. Michael A. Brown: As a member who represents probably—well, not probably; I represent more coastline on the Great Lakes than any member in the Legislature, and I also represent quite a number of small communities. As a matter of fact, I represent 37 municipalities in the 86,000 square kilometres that we're proud to call Algoma–Manitoulin. My communities would be happy to support this legislation. They understand—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: No, no. My good friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound chuckles. He knows that people in rural areas expect to have the opportunities to create a better economy that other people have in this province. What this act is about is selling and further developing the technologies that we have in Ontario across the world, to those places in the world that need the kind of technology that we have developed and will develop in a province that values our most valuable resource, I would argue, and that is our water.

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It is true that many of our small communities have, more than maybe the larger centres, problems with financing small systems. That is where, in northern Ontario, when the capital projects rolled out—and we had 12 or 13 of them in my constituency—to improve our water treatment plants, the province of Ontario, through the NOHFC, paid half of the province's share, which made the capital costs of water much more affordable for our small communities.

So I don't share the views of my friends from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Leeds–Grenville.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: We've just heard two more good speeches, some new information and some ideas. All I hear across the way are some two-minute hits. I haven't heard any speeches from the governing Liberals yet on this debate this afternoon.

I appreciate the remarks, member from Leeds–Grenville and, of course, member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. We are receiving input from other stakeholders. I think this fills the gap that we're seeing from no input from the government members.

I was copied a brief from Ecojustice—material they sent into the registry. I also got the package from the Canadian Petroleum Products Institute; it was a submission they made to the Environmental Bill of Rights registry, and they questioned whether this legislation is needed. I just heard it mentioned in the House here: Do you need legislation to foster technology, innovation and

technological development? The Canadian petroleum producers—this was in an earlier submission—provided quite a bit of input. They understand the priority for developing the technology, and, as they say, “We believe existing water regulations and water management initiatives in Ontario could be used to enhance and to achieve the goals of sustainable water resources management.” They feel the existing legislation, existing regulations, are there and could do the job. What they're very concerned about is one more provincial law. They're concerned about duplication. They're concerned about inconsistencies. They're concerned about the kind of fragmentation that we see negatively impacts so many of the smaller communities and the native communities. That's one problem with fragmentation.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, again, to two very good speeches from the member from Leeds–Grenville and from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I want to turn my attention mostly to what the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound had to say because I remember that just before we went away for the summer hiatus he made quite a name for himself around Ontario, calling for a new province of Toronto. He was talking about the great divide between the province outside of Toronto and the province inside of Toronto. I listened to him today as he was speaking about what he has heard in this Legislature—nothing from the government side, but he did hear from New Democrats and he did hear from the Conservatives, and I'm just wondering, perhaps, in his two-minute comment if he would say whether he still believes this is an idea. Maybe we should have one province for New Democrats and Conservatives and perhaps another place for Liberals, because they seem to be in a different province of themselves. They don't seem to want to dialogue in this House. Perhaps he has rethought what he was saying before.

Having said that, I want to commend him as well for bringing up the concerns of small rural municipalities. He quoted one at great length. He had a report from them. Their concerns I do not believe have been adequately thought through, to this stage in time. He is correct in bringing them up, and I would hope that he will, in his two minutes, say something about how he hopes to bring this up in committee.

To close, I am hoping against hope, because we obviously have run out of time today, that some Liberal, in the next day or two, when this gets reordered, will be brave enough to stand up, because it will be their turn next.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Leeds–Grenville—

Mr. Steve Clark: Madam Speaker, I'll refer it to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All right. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I want to thank all the speakers that spoke for the two minutes. We don't have a long time in two minutes; I was going to name them all, but they know who they are. They stood up, and I appreciate what they said. And I really appreciated that somebody from the north woke up over there. Golly, one of them got up and said something. That was really super. I think we should give them a round of applause.

Applause.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: The only thing he said, though—he said he had some 35 small communities and they wouldn't agree with us. Well, how come this community wrote this? I did not write that. That came from a small community, pleading with you guys—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Now I hear another rural member wake up. Holy cow, guys, it's 6 o'clock, time for supper. They woke up. Isn't that something for you guys to wake up at 6 o'clock? Where have you been all day? We've been waiting for you to tell us what's good about this bill, but you won't tell us because there isn't anything good about it.

We don't need another one. We don't need another bill. You already have enough. You say that they will

appreciate this bill because they're going to get some money out of it. Well, golly, guys, you've given all the money away. You've already spent \$20 billion we didn't have. How are you going to give them more money? They can get money out of those other acts.

I certainly appreciated that my friend from Manitoulin Island woke up over there, got going, and maybe you can go to caucus now and say, "Guys, this isn't any good for us in the north. This isn't any good for us in rural Ontario." Maybe you'll go and tell them, because maybe we're going to have to get rid of Toronto yet and have them make their own province. I haven't given up on that because that is where this mentality comes from. All these people who live in the big city don't worry about this, but when you get out in rural Ontario we don't have that money to do this. We have little wee systems, and you don't need a whole bunch more rules for us to live under. You've already got some 500,000 of them now, and we don't need anymore.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1807.

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Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	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, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
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)	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	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
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)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) O'Toole, John (PC) Oraziotti, David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Durham Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Kitchener–Conestoga Elgin–Middlesex–London Scarborough–Agincourt	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP) Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Beaches–East York Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London–Fanshawe Timiskaming–Cochrane Northumberland–Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton–Mississippi Mills Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB) Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Perth–Wellington Simcoe–Grey	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
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Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**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
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Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
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