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Thursday 30 September 2010

Jeudi 30 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 30 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 30 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 29, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate on this children's activity tax credit bill, Bill 99. We're going to support this bill. I want to preface my remarks by saying that. We're going to support the bill because our caucus, Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, believes in tax relief for Ontario citizens, Ontario citizens who have been whacked with the triple whammy of taxation by the McGuinty Liberals this year with the implementation of the HST, just for starters.

You have to ask yourself: Why did we get to the point where we're bringing in a children's activity tax credit? Well, it's here, because, you see, they realize now how badly they messed up; how badly they messed up with the implementation of this HST and how much it is hurting families. In fact, my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka informed me that the other day at estimates the Minister of Finance, under questioning, made a statement, and I'll paraphrase. He said, "We knew everything was going to go up after the HST. We knew everything was going to go up with the implementation of the HST." They weren't saying that when they brought the HST in. They were talking about how wonderful it was going to be for Ontario.

You know, families in Ontario, their children engage in activities—and I'm going to use hockey as the example, our national sport, hockey. With all due respect to my friend from Peterborough—and congratulations to

the Peterborough Lakers, who won their 13th Canadian senior lacrosse championship this year; congratulations to the Lakers—but hockey is our national sport, with all apologies to those who claim lacrosse still to be. Most Canadians accept that hockey is our national game and the one that we're the best at. I think it behooves us to do everything we can to ensure that more and more of our children are engaged in that great sport.

Earlier this year, when the HST was implemented, they weren't calling me so much about it. But when it came time to register their kids for minor hockey this fall, whoa, something hit the fan and it didn't smell good. I tell you, I started to get the calls. I started to get the calls from hockey parents. They say, "What are these people trying to do to us?" Do you realize what it has done to minor hockey fees in this province? You see, one of the most costly parts of being engaged in hockey is the cost of ice time. That's all subject to the HST now. And of course there are so many other things. If you are a hockey mom or a hockey dad, you are driving your kids all across hell's half acre most of the time to get them to games and practices. What are you paying HST on? You're paying HST on the gasoline to run that vehicle.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Our gas prices are lower.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, they'd be 8% lower, I say to the member for Essex, if it wasn't for your HST, so don't play that game; it's 8% higher as a result of the HST. So there's 8% additional taxes on gasoline as a result of that measure. That's not an arguable point, so you might as well put that one aside. If you want to defend the HST, you might want to go back to your riding and start talking to your people about it. See how they like it. Was it 83% thought it was a bad idea in a recent Toronto Star article? We can have that debate, but we're not going to have it right now.

People are being harmed immeasurably by this taxation measure brought in by the McGuinty government. They're calling me and they're saying, "What is going on here?" It doesn't matter whether you're a Liberal MPP or a Conservative MPP or a New Democratic—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, it does, really. Really, it does. We think it matters a great deal.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My friend from Welland thinks it does matter. He will understand my thoughts on this shortly. It doesn't matter when you talk to your constituents about whether or not they think the HST was a good thing for them. It's almost universal that they think it was a bad thing. That's what has driven up the cost of those activities. I'm only singling in on hockey, but hockey is

certainly one of the most expensive activities that we have for our kids.

0910

When they start to look at those bills and look at the new charges, the new rates that the minor hockey association in their area is now expecting them to pay, they are saying, "Whoa. Wait a minute." That news somehow got through all the spin doctors and the deflectors and the minions in the Premier's office, and he said, "Oh, oh, people are upset, are they? Well, we're taking all their money. Maybe we'll give them a little bit back." That's kind of like, "We'll take your money and we'll give some back." You know what it's like? But you know, they're not giving it back right away; oh, no. You're going to pay your minor hockey fees in September, perhaps October, and you're going to get maybe up to \$50 back maybe in June, when you get your tax refund back, in the form of a tax credit.

You know what it's like? The Premier says, "Let's give them a little bit of their own money back and maybe they'll get excited about it next June." Next June we're only a few months away from the election—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Simcoe North, I'd ask you to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Member for Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They're going to get some of this money back next year, and without referencing what my friend from Simcoe North had to withdraw, I'll just put that in another way. It's sort of like the thief comes and robs you, okay? And now, next June, he sends you back 10% of what he robbed from you, but he's also expecting that he's going to receive a thank-you card in the mail for being so kind as to give you back 10% of the money that he stole from you in the first place. That's kind of the thought process that the folks in the Premier's office went through: "Oh, people are going to be joyful, overjoyed with glee, when they get this McGuinty tax credit back in June. They're going to be so thankful." My goodness gracious, it just doesn't cut it.

You know the other thing that they said to me? They said, "How can they be doing this to activities?" The Minister of Health Promotion and the Minister of Health and the Premier, they go on ad infinitum about how we have to attack the scourge of childhood obesity in this province. We have to do something to get our children more involved in physical activity. Part of it is diet and part of it is lifestyle, and part of that lifestyle is physical activity, so we need to do everything we can to encourage our children to be involved in physical activity. But some of those physical activities, such as hockey, which is not only a great physical activity but a wonderful character builder for our children—it's wonderful to have them involved in a team sport, relating with other children of their own age and also relating with adults. Hockey is like a fraternity. The families—it's like a club:

Your team, your people, the children, the parents, they become great friends over the course of that season. Like a fraternity, they spend an awful lot of time together. They spend a lot of time going from one place to another, filling the McGuinty Liberals' coffers with HST as they fill their tanks with gas. It's a great character builder and a wonderful thing for children to be involved in.

But what does the government do? It turns around and decides, "Oh, we're going to put HST on those activities." Good Lord, where's the logic? "Let's tax them a little more to put them just a little farther out of reach of our struggling families here in the province of Ontario"—struggling to pay their hydro bills. Eight per cent added to the hydro bills, which went up 75% already under this government.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Up 75% under this government, and now what does the Premier do but say, "Let's whack them with—there must be something left in those pockets. We can't be down to lint and bare threads yet. There's got to be something we can get our hands on. Put your hands into the taxpayers' pockets, put your hands into those families' pockets one more time, because I believe there's something left, so let's get some money off the activities part of it. Let's tax physical activity. Let's tax the very thing that children don't get enough of today to keep them healthy, to improve the health of our society today and thereby improve it dramatically in the future by having us all more healthy and more physically fit. Let's get some more money out of the people's pockets."

Now, as an act of contrition—but it may be too late; you see, the taxpayers of Ontario are not quite as forgiving as the good Lord. This act of contrition—\$50 coming back in the form of a tax credit next year—is a little too little, a little too late. People will not be running to the rooftops and to the highest hill singing the praises of Premier McGuinty for this \$50 tax credit. You're only giving back to them what you stole from them in the first place. That's what's happening.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Here's what happens when you know you've screwed it up. All of a sudden, you start bringing out these little things. You know, when Premier McGuinty talked about the HST and he exempted newspapers and meals under \$4, he said, "That's it. There are no more breaks for the HST. We've got it right." How many times does this guy have to change his mind? How many times does this guy have to flip-flop on something or backtrack on something?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Whatever it takes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Whatever it takes. I say to my friend from Trinity–Spadina that he's right. There is no limit. In fact, they've established a new bar, and it's called the no-limit bar. You are able to reverse yourself and flip-flop as many times as you like in this province under the leadership of Premier McGuinty. That is the standard now. The bar has been set.

So you've got this children's activity tax credit, the northern hydro tax credit and now—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order, order. I'd just ask members to calm down. It's only Thursday morning, for goodness' sake.

The honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult in this chamber sometimes, and as you know yourself, the last thing I like to do is raise my voice. I like to speak in a very low and measured tone. But the folks across the aisle make it very difficult. I can't hear myself sometimes.

So now we've got this, and just the other day—here's the corker for you, Speaker—because they know they're not doing very well at those seniors' seminars, when you have meetings with seniors to find out what's on their minds and what's troubling them—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Probably my friend from Peterborough may have had one. He's saying yes. Do you know what they told them? "You guys are not doing very well, and you're not treating us very well."

Is the Premier going to admit that he has messed it up with the hydro file in Ontario? Is the Premier going to admit that they don't have an energy plan that works? In fact, they don't even have an energy plan. They're going to start working on one, though. It's coming. It's going to come soon, but probably not until after the next election, because we really don't want people to be able to look at it and evaluate it.

0920

At those seniors' seminars, they're getting it. They're getting it in boxcar letters. So members like my friend from Peterborough went to the Premier and said, "You've got to do something." He said, "Well, you know me. We've got to find a way out of this. We don't want to flip-flop completely again, because people are calling us the contortionists of the 21st century. So what can we do? How can we back out of this without doing a complete flip-flop?" And they said, "Well, let's buy off the seniors. We're working on the parents with kids in hockey. Let's see if we can't buy off the seniors a little bit on their hydro bills. That should work."

So we'll shortly be debating, beginning next Monday, the latest bribery attempt on the part of the McGuinty government—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw that terminology, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw, Speaker. It just came out. Sometimes you don't even have to think about it; it just comes out.

Anyway, as I said, we are going to support this bill. It is not that we're against—we're in favour, as I have said so many times. No one who holds political office at any level in the province of Ontario is more committed to tax

relief and fairness for families in this province than our leader, Tim Hudak. So we are going to support this bill because we're not in a position at this time to bring in tax relief legislation on our own. You see, we're not the government. So in spite of our tremendous disappointment in what this government has done and the record of this government, we are forced: We are going to support this bill.

Any relief for families in this province is something we will support, because God knows it's been a tough run under the McGuinty Liberals. It's been a tough run for families under the McGuinty Liberals. So we're going to be backing this bill. We look forward to its implementation. We know it comes into effect the minute it receives royal assent, so it will be in effect for the next taxation year. It will be a minor, minor bright spot in an otherwise woeful experience for the Ontario taxpayer when they have to pay their taxes and examine their return next year.

We accept this. We accept it on behalf of struggling parents as a little bit of a crumb from the master's table as he decides what to do with the rest of the largesse. I wonder: Is there a way we could limit all the McGuinty consultants to just a \$50 tax credit instead of the millions and millions they have been getting under nefarious and questionable consulting contracts in this province, while the poor families who have kids in minor hockey struggle every minute of every day just to raise their children?

The record of this government is clear. The people of Ontario are not being fooled. You folks over there think you've got them. Well, I tell you, you don't. They're going to take your 50 bucks, because they will view it as a small measure of what you have taken from them. Shame on you for what you have done to families in this province with the implementation of that HST. As I said, my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka—at estimates this week, your own finance minister, and I paraphrase because I don't know the exact quote, said, "Yes, yes, we knew that everything was going up in the province of Ontario with implementation of the HST." What a stark admission by the finance minister.

Prices are going up, but I'll tell you what's going down. I tell you folks that you might want to get home to your ridings. You might want to sit down with those families. You might want to find out what's going on, because what is going down is the approval rating of the McGuinty Liberals.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's interesting to look at this bill. Just as an example of how phony this bill is, to get the \$50 you have to spend \$500 on some sports or arts event, and when you spend that \$500 you're going to pay 13% HST on it. That 13% is going to generate \$65 for the government. After you've paid the government that tax of \$65, they're going to give you back 50 bucks. The government is still going to make 15 bucks on you. That's how phony this whole bill is.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I think we've heard quite enough Tory rhetoric. Let's hear from some real people. This is the response in the Guelph Mercury when a reporter went around and interviewed people—not my press releases. This is from Mary Ann Randall of the Royal City Power Skating program.

“Randall said the tax credit comes at a good time for families involved in ice-related activities, since ice rates have gone up both as a result of city rental increases and from the ... HST. She said the tax credit will not only make up for the increases, but will actually make her program somewhat cheaper for participants.

“‘It was really good news for me, because I did have to put my rates up, which I hate to do,’ she said. ‘But now it actually works out cheaper.’”

He goes on to say that many are applauding the tax credit locally.

This is from Cara Collins, director of the Guelph School of Art, at Wyndham Art Supplies. She says, “I think it's a great incentive for parents, especially families on limited income, to make some of that extracurricular programming work for them.”

“The school offers Saturday art classes for children and day camps during the summer months, as well as private lessons.

“Studies in the arts, she added, are often seen as a luxury, while sports tend to take priority for many families. The arts boost self-confidence and enable a child to express themselves creatively, she said. An aptitude in the arts is linked to improved performance in math and sciences, she added.”

Linda Beaupre, artistic director of the Guelph Youth Singers, said: “There are so many parents who are committed to the whole child, putting their children in extra activities—arts and sports.... It would be a fabulous thing if they could get not only the credit, but that vote of confidence from the government.”

That's what real people on the street are saying about this.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to commend the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his comments. They certainly were very thoughtful and thought-provoking.

During the summer—and I think, you know, you can look across and see that this government is on a bit of a scramble. I was pleased to have the member for Nepean–Carleton come to my riding in August. We toured our community, and we met some wonderful people from the Bread of Life Dance Theatre, BOLDT. Sam Crosby-Bouwhuis and Jamie Irwin were the co-owners. We met with a number of parents, and they were incensed that this government is so out of touch. That small dance studio was carrying \$1,500 a month extra rather than passing it along to the parents who are at that studio; \$1,500 a month they carried because of this greedy HST.

It was obvious to me, and it was obvious to the member for Nepean–Carleton when she was in my riding, when we were at that dance studio, that this latest misstep just proved that Dalton McGuinty and this government have two left feet.

I'll tell you, on October 6, 2011, we know that the people of Ontario are going to be looking for a new dance partner because of this government's insensitivity to families. It was pretty amazing for us to see that that day. I was so glad that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talked about the need for this credit but also the missteps that this government has made so far this summer.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to say that I'm very supportive of many of the arguments the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has made, and I will join him in those arguments in just two minutes. I will be attacking the Liberal government from a different perspective, but it's along the same vein. I just wanted to tell you that you're on the right track.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes for his response.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's great; I'm going to be out of here before 9:30. I have a meeting at 9:30, so I won't even be late. What is late is your contrition, on the part of this government. That's late; that's too late.

I appreciate the comments from the member from Guelph, the member for Leeds–Grenville and my friend from Trinity–Spadina, who is always so close to work with me on so many subjects.

Interjection: He makes a great dance partner.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I find him too short to be a good dance partner, but that's just the two of us; we're not compatible that way.

The member for Guelph wanted to talk about some of the third party endorsements of the bill from her constituents in Guelph. Well, she just doesn't get it. They're not going to refuse the tax credit, I say to the member. The folks aren't going to send it back. Any little bit that can be coming their way to help is going to be put to good use.

She talks about how one parent thought that it would basically help defray the additional costs of the activity. That person has to drive their kids, most likely, to those activities. It doesn't make up for the cost of the extra tax on the gasoline that they're going to take to get there and the other HST that is going to be paid as a result of participating in those activities.

So I say to the member for Guelph, if she wants to get out there and campaign on this bill, good luck. Have fun with that. Let me know how it works out. Because the people of the province of Ontario are not being fooled by anything this government does at this point. You have taken the people for granted for too long. A little bit, a few crumbs off the table at the 11th hour because you

recognize what a mess you've made of it, I don't think is going to make up for the damage you've done.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was looking for an opportunity to speak to this bill, because this bill is an admission by the government that they're in trouble. When they introduce these little measures, it means that they are doing the polling and the polling is telling them, "You're in trouble." "What do we do?" They don't know what to do. So they come up with these little measures to try to appease people. The fact of the matter is, people are hurting. They're finding that life is becoming more and more unaffordable, that they have lost good-paying and, yes, in most cases, unionized jobs that gave them a middle-class lifestyle. They are losing a middle-class lifestyle because they are losing middle-class, well-paying jobs. In the last four or five years, we've lost about 380,000 jobs—good-paying jobs.

What we are seeing is some employment, but it's temporary. You have a whole lot of people who are being employed part-time. You have a whole lot of people working in the service sector, where 60% to 70% of Ontarians are working now, and they're making, what, \$8, \$9, \$10, \$11, \$12, \$13, \$14 an hour, living on the fringe, living on the poverty line. And they're working; the majority of people are working and living dangerously on the poverty line. That doesn't mean these people are doing well. So when they come to this country aspiring to be and belong in the middle class, and they find themselves not there, they have to ask themselves, "What's happening? Where are we going?"

When the government introduces a measure such as the HST and calls it, "We are modernizing our tax system," what does it mean? What does that word "modernizing" mean? How modern is it to be whacking a whole lot of people equally badly? How modern is that? We are cutting corporate taxes because that's modernizing our economies. Wonderful, Liberals; you're doing such a great job, giving away billions of dollars that working men and women want corporations to contribute because that's their share of being part of a human society. The government is saying, "No, they don't have to contribute anymore. We're cutting down their contribution."

When we cut down the corporate contribution, who do we turn to? Ordinary Ontarians who have to put their hands in their pockets, get some money out and dole it out to the corporations, because they're doing so badly these days that they need the people living on the fringe to dig in their pockets and help them out. That's modernizing our economy—asking ordinary working men and women to make a greater contribution than ever before because the poor corporations and banks are doing badly and they need the poor working stiff to help them out. That's the so-called modernization of our economy, the Liberal way. I don't get it.

The Premier stands up and says, "We're cutting income taxes so that the well-to-do, those who earn over \$100,000 and more, pay less and less in income taxes"—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: That's so not true.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And you, good lawyer, are going to have a chance to speak in a second.

So 93% of the well-paying folks get a tax break. And the member from Ottawa Centre chuckles with good humour thinking that somehow he has got a better answer than I do on this.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I do.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm waiting for you. I'm waiting for your two-minuter.

Ninety-three percent get an income tax cut. Who subsidizes the majority of people who have good incomes? I consider myself as a person who has got a good income. I shouldn't be getting a tax break. Mr. Naqvi from Ottawa Centre shouldn't be getting a tax break. He doesn't need it. He is a former lawyer. I'm sure he's okay, and he's now well paid as an MPP. He shouldn't get a tax break, but he is; I am. That's called modernizing our tax system.

Then we've got a \$20-billion deficit to boot. The government laughs at it and says, "Yeah, I know. We're giving you a tax break, but we've got a \$20-billion deficit. We've got to do something about this deficit so we're giving you a tax break." Maybe the member from Ottawa Centre is going to chuckle at that, too. Maybe he's going to say, "We're going to give more income taxes as a way of dealing with our deficit so that we can increase it and make everybody happy." I don't know where your chuckles come from when you make those funny arguments, but that's not modernizing our system.

Then they introduced the harmonized sales tax. That's modernizing: "We're going to whack everybody equally across the land. Whether you're making \$30,000 or \$200,000, we're going to whack you with an 8% provincial tax, because we believe that's the way to modernize our economy. If you're earning \$200,000 and he's earning \$30,000, you get whacked equally. But don't worry, we've got some breaks for those of you who make under \$30,000. But if you make \$50,000, you get whacked just as badly as the person making \$500,000." How is that modernizing a system? What kind of Liberals are you? What kind of Liberals have you become? Where is that fine Trudeau in your midst? He no longer exists in your midst. Where is he? Where have the Trudeaus gone? Member from Barrie, you would know him. Where has he gone? Where are the Trudeau-likes in your Liberal ranks? Where are they? They no longer exist.

As you modernize this tax system that whacks more and more people to death, there you come, giving people a children's activity tax credit worth \$50. You hurt them day in and day out, and under the pressure you come up with a little plan to relieve the pain, a \$50 opiate, which is the next bill we're going to be discussing around narcotics. You give them a \$50 opiate, hoping to relieve the pain, except this pain is permanent and there's no plan to manage this chronic pain that people are going to feel for the rest of their lives—no plan. The \$50 you're giving them to relieve the pain is not going to manage it because, you see, it's going to hurt for a long, long time, and \$50 doesn't do it.

0940

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Think about percentages.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I say to you, think about this. Think about this, member from London–Fanshawe: In the school system, these fine Liberals, absent-Trudeau types, are now charging parents an extra tax for a whole lot of different activities that they're a part of. Students are paying higher user fees than ever before in their high schools to buy essential things that the Minister of Education should be paying for. Some \$600 million is raised by parents, yes, through user fees, but mostly through the fundraising that parents do in their schools. And why do they do fundraising? Because the government is not giving enough money to provide for essentials, and when parents find themselves without the essentials that they need, what do they do? They fundraise. And the government, the Premier and the Minister of Education say, "That's okay. Raise money until you drop. We don't care. We think it's good, because as long as you're raising money, I don't have to tax anymore and get whacked as a result of taxing you. But if you're raising it out of your own pocket and you feel good, God bless." So the Premier and the Minister of Education say, "That's okay. Keep raising money as much as you can." In some fields north of here, just about a 10- or 15-minute walk from here, some schools raise money to be able to have AstroTurf—\$400,000 worth of AstroTurf.

You know what? Some of these people set up charities so that they can funnel that money through a charity. We, the government, give them some money back, the feds give them some money back, and they feel good in contributing. The government says, "That's okay." Parents feel that's okay, because they're getting something good for themselves and their children. That's how we raise the extra money: through this indirect tax on parents, and they do it because if they don't do it, they feel their kids are not getting what they need. Some parents do it because if they don't do it, they'll feel criticized by those who are doing it, so they all feel engaged in having to raise money: indirectly taxed because the government of Ontario says, "We don't have any more money to give. We have a provincial deficit of \$20 billion. We have no more money to give. You're on your own. Yes, we used to help you, but we can't anymore, so if you want to raise the \$600 million or more, you can." And under that weight of the \$600 million that parents are raising, the government says, "We've got a \$50 opiate to make you feel good in case you're hurting."

It doesn't solve the problem. Understand this, Liberals without Trudeau, Liberals-in-the-absence-of-Trudeau types: for this \$50, as one Conservative member, the member from Halton, said but a few moments ago, you've got to spend \$500. A whole lot of people don't spend \$500 on some type of sports plan or music plan or whatever other plan. Some people can't afford to spend \$500. So the Liberals without the Trudeau conscience are going to give \$50 to well-to-do parents who are already sending their kids to music lessons or some sports classes because they've got the bucks, and they're going to get a

\$50 tax credit, whereas the people who can't afford to send their kids to those programs get zilch, zéro, zero, nada, niente, zip. So this is a good little opiate for the upper middle classes who spend money to have their kids become geniuses in music, great sports people, maybe in swimming or who knows what. But the majority of people will get zéro, zero, nada, nihil, niente.

So what does the government do? They feel they've done something great, so they say to the Tories and New Democrats, "Are you going to oppose this bill?"

How do you oppose a little measure? If it gives some people a break, how do you oppose it? If they've been whacked over the head with this HST in perpetuity, where even funeral services get taxed in perpetuity, and then you give them a \$50 break, am I going to say no to that? No.

You have made the lives of people unaffordable, and it's systemic. What you are doing is systemic, systemically bad. Dangling a little piñata of \$50 at this little party is not going to make the pain go away, because the pain is chronic. Unless you manage that pain, unless you have a plan to manage that pain, by not inflicting a whole lot of pain on the majority of Ontarians, you're not going to solve it.

So is this New Democrat going to oppose this? No. It's okay; it's better than nothing. I would prefer, if we want kids to be actively engaged and actively involved, that you put physical education teachers in our school system.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We did, we did. Remember?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no. My good friend Lou Rinaldi from Northumberland–Quinte West says, "We did, we did." Only 35% of the schools in Ontario—you ought to know that, because I've said it before, and it's a fact—only 34% or 35% of the schools have physical education teachers. So when you say, "We did," I don't know what "We did" you did. I don't know what "We did" means, because you did absolutely nothing. If you want kids to be—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Grade 1 kids have never had phys-ed teachers.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Guelph, we used to have physical education teachers.

You used to be a trustee, as I was, and I was a teacher long before you were—possibly; I don't know. But you were a teacher at the post-secondary level, and you ought to know that we used to have physical education teachers, and we don't have them anymore.

If you want kids to be physically active, they need someone to teach them how to become active, when kids are sitting behind computers or their laptops for hours and hours, and then they get very little physical activity in the school except the supposed 20 minutes' physical time where the teachers are supposed to do something with them. We don't know what they're doing. But you can feel good that you have a policy that says, "Oh, we told them to do 20 minutes of jumping up and down." Come on. What are those kids going to do in a classroom full of desks—they're going to jump up and down for 20

minutes? No. I don't believe it's happening, quite frankly. I don't believe it's happening.

They need physical education teachers, member from Barrie, physical ed, so they'll learn how to actually be physical, understand why it's important, why we need to do it, but it has to be done.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Liberal friends, do not despair. Some of you will be re-elected. Don't despair.

But I remember in 1990, when a number of new members said, "Oh, no, I'm going to get elected, no problemo," and they didn't get elected, by the way. Don't despair. Some of you will get re-elected, and you can do all the "Blah, blah, blah"—as you should—and feel good about what you are doing. But many of you will not get re-elected. But do you know what? You have to defend what you're doing, because you've got no other choice. You have to defend yourselves as best you can. You have no choice.

But do you know what? I'm sad that I don't see too many Trudeau Liberals any more in your ranks; there are none. That is a depressing day. Just like the Bill Davis types; I don't see too many of those either, except some of my friends like Ted from Halton. Quite right. But we've lost some of the Red Tories, and we've lost the Trudeau types.

0950

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: And Bob Rae went to the Liberals.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And Bob Rae went to the Liberals, I admit. God bless; that happened. But most of us are well-rooted in an understanding of how we bring about greater justice and fairness to the majority of Ontarians. But when you lose the Trudeaus within the Liberal ranks, you've got nothing left. It's an empty, hollow shell. That makes me feel sad, I've got to admit. It saddens me, right? Because I used to like some of the Trudeau types. I did; I've got to admit it. They're not there anymore. But we've got the member from Ottawa Centre, an up-and-comer.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, following in Trudeau's steps. He's going to speak right after me, just to support my arguments. Yes, siree.

I don't know what to say. Again, it's little measure. It's a little opiate—50 bucks' worth; not much more. The government is in trouble and they know it. Rather than supplying the systemic answers that are needed, in trouble and under tremendous siege, they give a few bucks, hoping that the public will notice. The member from Guelph doesn't realize, when she reads that letter, that a couple of people are going to like it but the majority of people don't even realize. But what they know is that the pain is chronic. What they know is that the people feel the pain, and it's chronic. That, they feel. But this \$50 opiate: Some people are going to get it; the majority are not.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Trinity–Spadina speaking for almost 20 minutes. I listened to his argument. Normally, I like to listen to him. Sometimes he takes a logical approach and makes a logical debate, but this morning I listened to him sending to us and to the people of Ontario conflicting messaging.

The first message is against the 93% of Ontarians who are going to get an individual tax cut. He's against it. And now he's complaining about the children's activity tax credit because it does not benefit all the people of Ontario.

It's important to support families who want to send their kids to do some kind of activity, whether a sport activity or an art activity. It's very important. We're matching the federal government's tax credit, and we went further, even to art activities. We're taking a very important step toward supporting families to be able to afford sending their kids to sport and art activities. If the member doesn't like it, it's very simple. The vote is going to come very soon. He can stop in his place and say, "I don't like it. I'm going to vote against it."

It's very important, when we have issues across the province of Ontario, to address them through different management, different initiatives, like coming forward with an initiative to support families who are sending their kids to do some kind of sport activity, to do some kind of art activity.

We listened to many different arguments from the opposition party and the third party. They criticize us a lot, but I'm not sure what their plans are. I think they have no plan for the people of Ontario, so that's why they're only standing up in their places complaining, attacking left and right, without any vision for the future, without any constructive plan for the people of Ontario.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Certainly the member from Trinity–Spadina made some good points. I've just listened to the member from the London area. I would say to you, if there is a government that has no vision, if there's a party that has no vision, it is certainly this McGuinty government, this Liberal government. We have seen, since they came to power in 2003, a succession of taxes which have hit taxpayers in this province hard. Families are hurting. It began with the health tax when they were first elected. Despite the fact that the Premier said, "I won't raise your taxes," he did introduce a health tax, the largest income tax increase in the history of this province, and many people today don't even know it's there.

Now we have the HST. We also are seeing just incredible hikes in the energy prices, and people have seen hikes in their insurance. People are being hard hit by this government. It's one knock after the other.

This HST, which covers almost everything in the province of Ontario—they're trying, I guess, to tell the public, "We understand and we're going to give you a tax credit on children's activities," whether it be sports or culture or art. But they don't seem to realize that this HST is widespread and it's on many, many products that

people are buying and many, many services. We've heard that it's on gas. You go to any gas pump now and you just take a look at the impact of the HST as a percentage of the gas purchase.

So for this government to now be trying to bribe parents with their own money is totally inappropriate and isn't a vision—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would do so. Thank you. Withdrawn.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to speak after my colleague from Trinity–Spadina. Frankly, I think the point he made was a good point, and that's that many, many people in this province will never see a penny of this money. If they are relatively well off—and well off is getting tough to be—they may be able to recover some.

Frankly, we think that it's a good idea to give people some of their money back. As you're well aware, the HST is set in place to give a very large-scale corporate tax cut. That's the simple reality of what's going on.

But I want to speak to the reality that people face, that in order to get \$50 back, they're going to have to put out \$500. People around this chamber can speak to the reality of people's lives in their ridings and the number of people who have difficulty putting \$100 or \$200 or \$300 up front for something even now.

There was a survey that came out recently saying that 60% of Canadians would be in trouble if they missed just one paycheque. People don't have a lot of spare cash. Large expenditures are ones that they normally finance through debt. Putting up \$300, \$400, \$500—putting up \$1,000—is going to be very tough.

I think that the member from Trinity–Spadina is right: that many, many Ontarians will not in the end be able to take advantage of this particular credit or reimbursement, that people will in fact see from the HST a reduction in their spending power, their standard of living, all to finance a corporate tax cut that does not need to be given—in fact, a corporate tax cut that is going to undermine the standard of living of people in Ontario.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me pleasure this morning to add a few comments for my good friend from across the aisle, who I always enjoy listening to. Sometimes, though, I question some of his dialogue.

If you want to listen to the negative and putting down of Ontarians, you just need to listen to the folks from the opposite side, because it seems to give the impression that this phenomenon of hardship is only happening in Ontario. Well, wake up and look outside the window. The phenomenon we're experiencing in Ontario—times are challenging, but it's right across the world.

When we talk about energy costs, I think everybody would agree. I mean, if you're an immigrant like I am—

even 50 years ago we were paying more for gasoline and hydro in Italy than we're paying now here. I'm not justifying that that's good or bad or in between, but the reality is, that's the reality. We need to look out the window and smell the roses sometimes.

When we do these things like credits to help Ontarians, I think it's very well appreciated. They keep on saying that it's not enough. They keep on talking about the HST. They don't talk about the other tax reforms that benefit Ontarians. They take that right out of the question.

I wonder if the members opposite, when they file their 2010 income tax return, will give back to this province that credit that they're going to get from the provincial portion, because, obviously, to them it means nothing. Or give it to somebody, like the one time they promised they were going to give their raise to somebody, which I don't think they did.

And it's fine to chastise us—we'll take the criticism—but I think you need to talk about reality. And the reality is that we enjoy some of the best education in Ontario, some of the best health care in Ontario, and some of the best living standards anywhere in the world.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Trinity–Spadina has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank those who commented on my remarks.

I want to say that when you have a \$20-billion deficit, you don't just give money away to various sectors. You don't just give it away. This Liberal government, which doesn't have a Trudeau anymore, gives \$2 billion away every year to the corporations—two point something, actually. Why would you do that?

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West says, “Well, it's the way of the world. It's the way it is. It's getting harder and harder for everybody.” But if it's getting harder and harder, and you've got a big deficit of \$20 billion, why do you give \$2.2 billion, I think it is, away to the corporations every year? And there are no strings attached, by the way. You just give it away, and you're saying to the corporations, “Don't worry; we'll pay for it. We'll pay for it through our deficits. Don't worry, the middle class and the working poor”—because they are working but they're poor. “We'll take care of it. We'll put it on our shoulders. We'll subsidize them.”

This is all under the illusion that somehow giving this money away is going to create more and more jobs. We've been giving cuts to corporations for the last 15 or 20 years and we've got more and more unemployment every year. But we keep giving it away because the middle class will pay for them. I don't get that argument. I just don't get it. But that's what the Liberals argue, and it makes no sense to me.

I know they're in trouble. They need to give a \$50 opiate, but I can tell you that it's not going to work. Speaker, it's not going to work.

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

Seeing none, Ms. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will vote on this matter at deferred votes after question period today.

Second reading vote deferred.

NARCOTICS SAFETY
AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ
ET LA SENSIBILISATION
EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 29, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do appreciate the opportunity. I guess I've got 10 minutes to speak to the government's approach to the prescribing and dispensing of prescription drugs. The focus is primarily on the narcotic analgesics, products like OxyContin.

This is Bill 101; I refer to it as narcotics 101. There is a tremendous amount of information available on this subject. It's a subject that, in my view—having spent 20 years with the Addiction Research Foundation, I should let you know that I feel very strongly that there has to be more work done on the information and the education side of this.

In this House, with a majority government, it's relatively easy to pass a law, but this issue is much more complex than that. It involves treatment and it involves education, particularly in our school system, given that the increased consumption, as I understand it, of products like OxyContin is primarily impacting young people.

As you would know, Speaker, I spent a number of years with the Addiction Research Foundation, now known as the Canadian Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. I spent eight years working just a few blocks from here, at 33 Russell Street, the headquarters for that organization at College and Spadina. My great-aunt always referred to Spadina as Spadeena; that was a different era. Things change over the years, and approaches to addiction.

OxyContin is an addictive substance. All narcotic analgesics—all opiates are addictive. That's the bottom

line. These products have been addictive for the 5,000 years of recorded history of people using these substances. There were drug addicts 5,000 years ago. They were addicted to the opium-type drugs, the same kinds of drugs that this legislation today is dealing with. As far as the dispensing and prescribing, we have a very sophisticated system now, through doctors and pharmacists, to get this product out to people, legally and illegally. That's something that's not new as well.

I joined the Addiction Research Foundation in 1974. At that time, one of the primary problems was the misuse of prescription drugs, primarily, at that time, Valium. We referred to it as Prince Valium. It's also known as "mother's little helper." I don't know how successful we were then, but there has been certainly—probably more through education rather than legislation, much of that problem has been somewhat wrestled to the ground.

I'd like to make reference to a report from the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It's titled *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance*. It's a good report. It provides a bit of a snapshot of this troubling trend. It's not just in Toronto; it's across the province. I'll quote one line from the report: "Ontario is in the midst of a public health crisis stemming from the inappropriate prescribing, dispensing and illicit use of opioids."

The language changes over the years. I traditionally use the term "opiates." I've been away from this field for about 15 years, but the fact remains that doctors in our province obviously rely on such medication to help their patients deal with pain, to manage pain; and if properly used, it makes sense. However, we know there's abuse, we know there is misuse and obviously, addiction.

Going back to that report from the college, they indicate that "prescription opioids are more likely to be found on the street than heroin and"—as I said earlier—"have now become a drug of choice" among young people.

There has been a fair bit of talk in this debate about OxyContin. Oxies, or oxy—I don't know what else it's called on the street; OC, for example. It's different from perc; it's different from Percocet. If I had time, I could probably explain some of those differences. But very simply, OxyContin is a pain medication and it's a time-released medication. It was developed in 1995 for people who needed around-the-clock pain relief so that they wouldn't have to constantly be going for another pill.

OxyContin contains oxycodone. This is an opiate drug. It's addictive. It's something you find in morphine. There were tremendous problems with morphine use after the Civil War. It's derived in a way somewhat similar to, obviously, heroin and methadone; they're all derived from opium. So oxycodone is in OxyContin and it's the same opiate that's in Percocet or Endocet, for example.

As far as opiates in general, as I said, they are analgesics, narcotic analgesics. They act as central nervous system depressants. These things can kill you, especially in combination with alcohol or other central nervous system depressants—Valium, for example. Very simply, your breathing slows down, your heart rate slows down—a lack of oxygen—and you pass away.

These opiates can be produced naturally from the opium poppy. I've seen the fields of opium in Turkey, for example. How long has that plant been around? We know people have been using that plant, as I said, for over 5,000 years. Secondly, these opiates can be derived synthetically. Again, the development of morphine, back in the Civil War era—highly addictive; the development of codeine—addictive; and heroin—obviously addictive.

These substances are used not only for pain but are also used recreationally, and obviously used by people who have no choice. They've developed a dependence. They've developed a tolerance. They need more and more of the product, and they've developed an addiction.

Just going back, out of interest, to the opium poppy—my interest, anyway, in this particular plant. There's evidence that it was first cultivated in ancient Mesopotamia. This would be the lower Tigris and Euphrates River valleys, in what is now present-day Iraq. This is the birthplace of agriculture, and the cultivation of opium, along with other products, probably had a lot to do with that.

There is evidence—I don't know who digs up all of this historical data, but in 3400 BC, the Mesopotamians passed on the knowledge of opium to the Assyrians, and the Assyrians passed this on to the Babylonians, probably during time of war, when you had thousands and thousands of young people. Then as now, there was that opportunity to access product like this, somewhat similar to the transfer of narcotic substances—I think of heroin, for example, during the Vietnam War. You think of the opium that's prevalent now in Afghanistan, for example. The Babylonians passed it on to the Egyptians, and the opium trade flourished, with traders like the Phoenicians and Minoans, and then on to Greece, Carthage and Europe. Alexander the Great took opium back to Persia and India.

Fast forward to 1838 and the Opium War—China, 1838—when China ordered all foreign traders to surrender opium. The British won that war in 1841. Importing opium became legal in 1856 after the second Opium War. And I could go on and on.

I think one point I'm making is that this kind of stuff should be talked about in schools. It should be talked about in the curriculum, regardless of the subject, not just in health class. There's a lot more we can do than to just pass a law on this subject.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce Nancy Steele, who is here with us from my riding. She's the grandmother of page Audrey Steele from Sault Ste. Marie.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Joining us today is Robin Smythe, the mother of Henry Dennis, one of our pages here. His dad works in my office as my communications director, and that is Greg Dennis.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would like to introduce Daniel Oleksiuk, who's in the west gallery. He's here from Vancouver and he's interning at the Ontario Securities Commission. Daniel is the son of Keith, who was a long-time friend of mine. He's the guest of Margo Duncan, who is the EA to MPP Paul Miller. Welcome.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'd like to introduce two constituents from my riding. They are both on the board of directors of the Eastern Ontario Health Unit: Todd Lalonde and Marcel Leduc. Todd is also a trustee with the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario. Welcome.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to introduce Kristen Rouse. She is visiting us from Denver, Colorado, and this is her first time at question period. Welcome.

Hon. John Milloy: I want to welcome two members of my staff who are here from the riding today: Shelly Freisen and Jessica Voin, and also Emily Schacht, who is a co-op student in Wilfrid Laurier University's master program and is doing a term in my office. They are joining us here today in the gallery.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I would like to invite all members of the House to a flag-raising ceremony today at noon to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Cypriot Independence Day, followed by a reception in room 228. I hope everybody will join us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Vaughan and page Noor Bakir to welcome her mother, Lina Bakir, to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, on September 22, Premier McGuinty told this assembly that there is a long-term energy plan on the books, it's 20 years long, and it requires that "every three years we revise the plan." But, Minister, the Ontario PC caucus has uncovered the Ontario Power Authority's licence renewal application, and it shows that the OPA wants all references to its three-year requirement removed from its mandate altogether. In short, the OPA wants to weasel out of their responsibility.

Minister, were you aware of the OPA's plan to weasel out of their mandate for a long-term energy plan?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to respond to that question because it gives me a great opportunity to talk to the Leader of the Opposition, members of this House and Ontarians about the very important work that's going on

in this province as we build on the long-term plan that's in place now and we move forward.

I'm looking forward to announcing to Ontarians in December our long-term 20-year plan for energy in the province of Ontario. This plan will ensure that we have a strong, reliable and clean system of energy, not only until the end of the term, not only for the next two or three years, but we're talking 20 years down the road.

Unlike the party opposite, we care about future generations. We're not going to leave future generations with the incredible mess that they left us seven years ago. We're building a strong, reliable and clean energy system, something that every Ontarian can be proud of.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, yesterday the minister was caught with his pants down, not even knowing about the Ontario Energy Board's study of future power prices. Today, it seems like the minister has no clue that his own Ontario Power Authority is trying to weasel out of its mandate to bring forward a long-term energy plan as part of their licence renewal, and judging by the last answer you gave, you have no clue what is happening with your agencies in your ministry.

Meanwhile, while there is no plan for long-term power supply, while the OPA is trying to weasel out of their responsibility, the McGuinty government has gone head-long down a path of expensive energy experiments: your billion-dollar subsidies to Korea-based Samsung, billions spent on defective smart meters, and you've backtracked twice on your microFIT scheme.

Minister, if you don't know these answers, who the heck is running the show over there?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What's important to Ontarians is the fact that Ontario today has a strong, reliable and clean energy system that's the result of good planning done by the McGuinty government over the seven years that we've been in office. It didn't happen by accident. When you look back to the mess that the member opposite left for us—he was sitting in cabinet during that very time when they refused to make the important investments in transmission and distribution, leaving a crumbling system behind, when they refused to build the supply that they needed to build. Supply went down 6% when they were in office; it didn't go up. It went down 6% when they were in office, while demand went up 8%.

Over the last seven years, our plan has brought in 8,000 new megawatts of power, a 20% increase in our system. For the first time in a long time—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yesterday we asked the Premier and the minister 10 times to release the Ontario Energy Board secret report on prices. You either refused to do so or had no clue this was happening.

Now, Minister, I'm asking you for the third time if you had any clue whatsoever that your very own Ontario Power Authority, in its licence renewal application, is trying to weasel out of its responsibility to bring forward a long-term plan for energy.

Yesterday, the minister contradicted his own Premier when he said there isn't a plan; there won't be one until the end of December. The Premier said one is pending. Your own agency is saying they want out of this responsibility. Do we believe the Premier? Do we believe the Minister of Energy? Do we believe somebody else?

Minister, do you have any clue whatsoever what is happening in the Ministry of Energy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What a bunch of made-up nonsense. Let me make it very simple for the Leader of the Opposition, because he seems to have trouble understanding this, and I can understand why. He knows nothing about long-term planning because he sat in a cabinet that never did any. He sat in a cabinet that didn't plan years in advance, that simply kept their fingers crossed and hoped that every morning when they got up and turned the switch on, the power would be there.

I am very much looking forward to moving forward by the end of this year, likely in the month of December, with a long-term energy plan that Ontarians can be proud of, a long-term energy plan that builds on the long-term energy plan we have in place now, that's going to continue to ensure we have enough power for Ontarians to count on to run their homes and businesses, and that's going to continue to ensure we're making the investments we need to have a reliable system of energy. Unlike the party opposite—

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

1040

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the minister: You know, Minister, this is very serious. A lot hangs on your Ontario Power Authority working on a long-term energy plan. It's hard to understand exactly what you say and what the Premier says, because they're so often different, but if I understand it, now you're saying that you'll have that plan by December. What I'm saying to you today is that your own Ontario Power Authority, in its licence renewal application, says they want off the hook. They don't want to have to do this every three years, as the minister says they're responsible for. Either you have no clue this is happening, you don't care, or somebody else is running the show. But it's very serious, Minister, because it's obvious that the Ontario Power Authority does not want to work on their core plan. For the 11th time, will you release the OEB report on energy prices? And for the fourth time, do you even know what the OPA—

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: After question period yesterday, I went back to my office to find this report that the Leader of the Opposition suggested—he spoke as though it was sitting on our very desks here in the Legislature. We've received no such report. The Ontario Energy Board is in the process, as they should be at this time of year, of doing a number of forecasts and getting ready to put forward in mid-October the regulated price plan that comes

forward every six months, that will include with it a price forecast that will be public; it will be announced. That's something that we've been doing since 2006. Unlike the party opposite, we've made our energy system transparent. Unlike the party opposite, these forecasts—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, transparent? Give me a break. We've had to ask you now 12 times to release the OEB secret report on how much higher prices are going. We're asking you now for the fifth time, did you have any clue that the Ontario Power Authority was trying to weasel out of the requirement to do the long-term plan? You have not answered that question; now it's the fifth opportunity.

Minister, here is the bottom line: Ontario families are treading water just to make ends meet. They're afraid to open Dalton McGuinty's hydro bills because the rate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member of previous reminders.

Mr. Tim Hudak: They're afraid to open Premier McGuinty's energy bills because the rates are going up. I guess you must be an optimist, because the OPA has missed deadlines time and time again and now they are trying to weasel out of the core requirement. For the 12th time, please release that secret report and tell us exactly what the OPA is up to.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, yesterday, taking the lead from the member opposite, I went back to my office to see what this big report was that he was referring to. We don't have such a report.

What is going on is the Ontario Energy Board is working very hard right now doing forecasting work. They're doing that so they can make public their forecast in three weeks. That's something we brought in in 2006. That's called transparency. That stands in stark contrast to what you did to our energy partners. That stands in direct contrast to what they did to our energy partners when that member sat in cabinet. They changed the freedom-of-information act to exclude agencies like OLG and Hydro One, so they could hide the retirement fund that they were setting—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, with all due respect, the Ontario Energy Board reports to you. You are the minister in charge. If you couldn't find the report in a desk in your office, then you should have marched down to the OEB, slammed your fist on the desk and said, "Give me that report. Make it public." That's what a PC minister would have done. We would have made that report public. We're tired of you trying to cover up exactly how much prices are going up in the province of Ontario.

Minister, you have not answered now for the sixth time: Why in the world does your Ontario Power Authority, in the application for their licence renewal, try to wiggle off the hook of producing that long-term energy plan?

Minister, families are struggling today to pay Premier McGuinty's hydro bills. Enough is enough. Why won't you come clean?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Research and Innovation, order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Brad, sit down. What's the matter with you?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're welcome, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I read an interesting article last night from former Speaker Warner. He talked about the role of the Speaker. He used an interesting sports analogy, and that was that when we go to a hockey game, the person we do not want to see interfering in the game is the referee. I think when you come to question period, the person you do not want to see interfering in the flow of question period is the Speaker. So I would ask all members to be cognizant of that.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What a bunch of nonsense. The Ontario Energy Board is hard at work today, as they're getting ready to prepare the forecast that will be made public in two or three weeks. I'm not quite sure what the member opposite is trying to get released from there. What I can tell you is this: They're working hard; they're doing forecasts. In about two or three weeks, about mid-October, they'll be releasing publicly a forecast of pricing going forward for the next year, as they do every six months and as they've done since 2006.

That's the way to professionally work—unlike the previous government, which never allowed any of that information to go out. Indeed, under the previous government, they excluded organizations like Hydro One from freedom of information. They were trying to hide the traces of the efforts in the retirement fund they were setting up at Hydro One for their cronies—

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

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Back in the spring, this government released ads in which the Premier bragged that, "Ontario is coming out of this global recession sooner and stronger than anyone expected." My question is, does the government still stand by that assessment?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we have done is lay out a plan to create jobs. When we provided the money to ensure that auto workers in Oshawa, St. Catharines, Windsor and across southwestern Ontario would continue to have jobs, that member and her party voted against it.

We understand the volatility in the economy. I would refer the member to my budget. I would refer her to our updated quarterly reports. I would refer her to all of our public statements that have cautioned that the rate of

growth in the economy is still not what we would like it to be, that there is more work to do.

I can tell you that this party, this Premier, Premier McGuinty, and his government have laid out a plan to get us back to balance, but, most importantly, to get people back to work where we can and when we can.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would refer the finance minister, the Acting Premier, to today's Statistics Canada report, which states very clearly that Canada's economy contracted in July. And the Conference Board of Canada's new report says that Ontarians have the lowest consumer confidence in the whole country. But anyone, actually, who's been listening to Ontarians could have told you that.

Why does the McGuinty government continue to claim that its plan is working when mounting evidence makes it very clear that it's not working at all?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If the member opposite took the time to read the full report, she would know—and I think Ontarians understand—that the challenges in the global economy are indeed affecting Ontario. There are far too many people unemployed. We are deeply concerned about the state of the United States' economy and its impact on our exports. We have to continue to be vigilant.

Here's what we are trying to do to help Ontarians through that. We created Second Career, a retraining program for laid-off auto workers and others. What did that member and her party do? They voted against it. When the auto industry was on its knees, when my community was faced with layoffs and when Hamilton, her community, was faced with layoffs—

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians actually have the lowest consumer confidence rate in the whole country. That's the point. People are feeling squeezed by the McGuinty government's hurting sales tax.

Kim Whitney writes this: "The HST has hit us very hard.... My husband's salary does not go up enough to keep up with the cost of everything."

Statistics Canada and the Conference Board put into numbers what Ontarians like Mrs. Whitney are feeling. If the HST was supposed to kick-start the economy, why is it, instead, kicking people when they're down?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The other day, the member opposite said that she's going to leave the HST in place. She said, "Take it off of energy." I ask her again: Is she advocating eliminating the HST?

Let me provide her with a quote from TD Economics that says, referring to our tax policy, "This shift ... will further be supported by recent policy initiatives to cut the cost of investment," such as the HST and corporate capital tax cuts. "Business investment—and particularly in machinery and equipment—is likely to be a leading

growth area over the remainder of 2010 and into 2011-12." In fact, it's that very policy which will create more jobs.

She may want to raise taxes. She may not want to invest in education or health care or a better electricity system. We're making the decisions to build a stronger economy for our kids and to help the people—

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

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Regardless of the Acting Premier's misstatement of my comments, I have another question. My second one is to the same Acting Premier.

The McGuinty Liberals claimed that the HST was just a bitter pill that would bring economic growth and 600,000 jobs. Instead, we have a contracting economy, higher costs and the lowest consumer confidence in the entire country. Families are worried about jobs still, and they are struggling.

Small businesses are struggling as well. Small businesses want to know why the government that promised so much has instead delivered so little.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They also want to know why, when we cut the small business tax rate by 20%, she voted against it. Why did you vote against the small businesses like DiMarco's in Hamilton? Why did you vote against those businesses on King Street and Main Street in Hamilton—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Stop shouting, Dwight. Stop shouting.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew and the member from Hamilton East, one of the reasons that the honourable member has had to elevate his voice is because of voices from the other side.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: When we eliminated the capital tax on small businesses on Main Street and King Street in Hamilton, why did she vote against it? When we lowered and evened out the business education tax for small businesses in Ontario, that member and her party voted against it. They have no plan, except to raise taxes, cut investments in energy and create more unemployment.

Our plan is about creating jobs, creating opportunities and doing the right thing for a stronger and brighter future for our children—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Small family-owned businesses are especially feeling the squeeze these days. Take Hasan Nahli, owner of Sammy's convenience store in Welland. Hydro alone is now costing his small business \$650 a month. The costs are so unbearable that Mr. Nahli

is about to throw in the towel. He can't afford to stay in business anymore in Ontario, and he's not the only one.

Does this government have a plan to help small business owners like Mr. Nahli, or is this government still pretending that everything is A-okay?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have lowered their taxes. We have lowered their income tax. We have eliminated their capital tax—

Interjection: We have uploaded.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have uploaded, my colleague reminds me. We have uploaded services to the municipalities, which has helped those small businesses cope with property taxes.

There is no doubt that small businesses are challenged, just as our unemployed people are challenged by the situation in the global economy. There is no doubt—

Laughter.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: And the NDP laughs. We think it's a very serious matter. We have laid out a plan with clear objectives, with a clear path to help small business. Every one of those initiatives, that member and her party voted against. They have no idea what to do to help our businesses, and that's why we are going to continue to build a stronger economy for those businesses.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The totality of this government's actions has completely failed. Small business owners need relief. They're sick and tired of being told that everything is okay—yet they see their expenses climbing, their businesses are at risk and their customers are being driven away.

John Cryderman, a small business owner in Chatham, writes this: "Building an economy is all about placing more money into the hands of more people, not taking it away." This government can put money into the people's hands and help our economy today by taking the HST off hydro. Will they do it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We put \$10 billion into the hands of Ontario consumers and small businesses, and that member and her party voted against it. They have voted against every initiative that will help small business.

We acknowledge the enormous challenge that small businesses are facing across this province. I think they know and I think Ontarians understand that glib answers, glib questions from a member who has voted against every initiative aren't going to fix things.

We are in the centre of a global storm that continues on. We have taken steps that we believe will help these businesses, help families through these difficult and challenging times as long as they last, and I think Ontarians understand that. I think they want a government that's straightforward about what they're doing and is doing things to help build a stronger—

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

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. It's no wonder that Canada's worst government is also Canada's least popular. The McGuinty Liberals know how much Ontario families will pay for their hydro bills but are sitting on the OEB report. Yesterday, the Minister of Energy told the media that the OPA plan would be presented in December; today, he says it's now "likely" in December. We have to wonder which it is. Your OPA is so busy writing job postings for hospitality coordinators that they're too busy to write the long-term energy plan. In fact, they want out.

For the 14th time, will you stop promising a plan that may never materialize and release the OEB's bill analysis report today?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I responded to those questions initially in questions from his leader, and I made it very, very clear. The Ontario Energy Board of course is engaged in doing forecasting and analysis, as they're getting ready to release the report of price forecasting that will be released in a matter of weeks.

I couldn't have been more clear. We are looking very, very forward to bringing forward our long-term energy plan, a plan that's going to ensure we have a strong, reliable and clean energy system into the future.

But for the 100th time, I've got to ask that member, where is your plan? You had no plan when you were in office. Your plan is to go back to coal. Your plan is to reduce our investments in transmission. Your plan is not to build the level of supply we're going to need to supply Ontario families—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: The McGuinty Liberals should start giving straight answers so Ontario families don't think they're making up energy policy on the fly.

Instead of the long-term energy plan, here are a few things that your Ontario Power Authority has been up to writing: a \$3-million propaganda campaign; job postings for a hospitality coordinator to order and coordinate catering for small and large meetings; and turning what was once called a virtual and transitional agency into a permanent and bloated bureaucracy.

For the 15th time, will you release the OEB report that you have in hand so that the OPA doesn't have to take time away from its other pressing concerns?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm not sure how I can be clearer to the member opposite about this report, because I've said many times now, we don't have their report. I think the member opposite needs to recognize that there's forecasting going on within the OEB right now because, unlike them, we are planning ahead. Unlike them, we do provide forecasts. Unlike them, we provide them to the public, and we make them transparent so that those involved in the energy sector and Ontarians know where our energy system is going.

1100

But I'm not surprised that the member would want to be dumping all over the OPA, because he doesn't support

any of the things they do. He doesn't support the conservation efforts they've brought forward to save 1,700 megawatts of energy. He doesn't support the efforts they've made to create 50,000 jobs across this province, jobs that your leader wants to kill—

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

PEST CONTROL

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. My question is: Why won't the McGuinty government act on or allocate funds to the bedbug crisis in our province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to start by congratulating the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for holding the summit yesterday. It was an opportunity for people to come together who all have the shared goal of preventing and remediating bedbug infestation.

The results of the summit are something that we are working very, very closely on. We are looking at how we can work collaboratively. There are many ministries that are involved in finding a way forward on this, and we also are working with our community partners, our public health units—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back to the Acting Premier: At the bedbug summit, tenants were mostly shut out. Where was ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now? Where was ACTO, the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, both of whom called for landlord licensing? They need immediate assistance, and they need a plan from this government. So I ask again: Why won't the McGuinty government act on or allocate funds to the bedbug crisis in our province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite would be better informed had she actually stayed at the summit yesterday. My understanding is that she dropped in. There was a lot of very good information that was shared at the summit yesterday. We are working very closely with our partners to find a solution. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and I have contacted our public health units. They are working on the ground to find solutions.

This is a very important issue for people who are affected. No one should have to worry about going to bed at night for fear of being bitten by bedbugs. We are focused on this issue, and we are working to find solutions.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, I'm excited that this government's vision, under the Green Energy Act, combines the cleaner energy we need and want with the massive economic opportunity for our province to become a hub in the

expanding global clean energy market. This is exactly what my constituents in Ottawa Centre asked for in the last election, and they believe strongly that clean energy is an integral part of Ontario's future. This is why I'm proud of having a major company like Samsung committing to help achieve that vision in Ontario.

But I think Ontarians have been confused by the debates surrounding Samsung in Ontario. On Tuesday, the NDP leader, during an interview with 680 CFTR in Ottawa said, "Instead of growing and nurturing our own home-grown companies, the government gave \$7 billion to Samsung."

Minister, I am under the impression that this was the other way around. Could you clarify for the members exactly what the Samsung deal is and is not?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. I want to thank the member for the question and thank him for the stalwart support of the Green Energy Act in his region.

There's a lot to talk about when it comes to the Green Energy Act, but one of the things that's very important is the jobs and investment that come to Ontario through that. To clarify for the member and any other members who have been involved in different views of this, our agreement with Samsung represents a \$7-billion investment by Samsung in the province of Ontario over six years. It represents the creation of 16,000 green energy jobs over that period. It represents four green manufacturing plants. Those 16,000 jobs would not be coming to Ontario, they'd be going to Ohio, if it were not for the leadership of this Premier and this government.

Ontario is open for business, and the Green Energy Act is helping us rebuild this economy and create jobs for people in every—

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: We know that this government's commitment to modernizing and improving our energy system from the dirty and neglected one we inherited has required large and necessary investments. The people of Ontario recognized that the system needed to be fixed and that we needed action now—no more sweeping it under the rug and no more passing the buck.

Minister, you and the Premier have been clear that these critical investments in new generation infrastructure, renewables and conservation will affect the price of electricity in Ontario. But Ontarians are right to be vigilant about the cost of energy as we make this pivotal transition and to what extent that transition will affect their family budgets. They're entitled to the facts in this debate.

Minister, why are we seeing energy costs rise, and are Ontarians getting value for the investments being made in the electricity system we all share?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This indeed is a question on the minds of Ontarians. It's very, very important that we understand that rising energy costs are challenging for Ontario families and businesses. At the same time, Ontario has had to make those investments to ensure that we're moving away from the previous system, which was

full of blackouts, brownouts and dirty coal, to a cleaner system of energy, but just as importantly, a more reliable and stronger system of energy.

We're committed to meeting that higher standard, a standard of strength and reliability, a more modern system, a cleaner system of energy. For example, our \$6-billion investment in enhanced transmission and distribution is a testament to that commitment to ensure that we're providing the reliable energy that Ontario families count on day in and day out. The other side doesn't have that commitment—

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

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Acting Premier. Your lottery scandals have more sequels than the Harry Potter series. The plot of the first OLG scandal involved insider wins, firing the CEO and a promise by the Premier to do better. The plot of the second OLG scandal involved expense abuses, firing the CEO and a promise to do better. The plot of this latest OLG scandal borrows heavily from OLG one, but the early reviews are that the \$12.5-million insider fraud makes it the biggest blockbuster yesterday. Will the movie end with the CEO getting fired and another promise to do better?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for me to comment on a criminal matter that is before the courts, but I will remind the member that this occurred when his party was in power. I will also remind the member—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The member from Peterborough; the member from Renfrew.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean will withdraw the comment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Ombudsman also addressed this case in his very good report that was presented to this House and that we acted on. I believe we have taken appropriate steps. I have great confidence in Paul Godfrey, who is now the chair of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

Unfortunately, these things happen. They happen—

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

Mr. Norm Miller: How can we have any faith when you don't even know that this happened under your watch and you won't acknowledge that it happened under your watch?

The McGuinty Liberals are expanding into Poker Lotto and online gaming, but the news of a \$12.5-million fraud shows they aren't able to manage dealing with live people.

The OLG investigated the ticket for an insider win and handed out the \$12.5 million before the OPP stepped in.

The OLG has been without a CEO since you fired Kelly McDougald.

Deputy Premier, how will you restore the integrity of the OLG so people can have confidence that they won't be cheated?

1110

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have recently appointed an entirely new board and given it a very clear mandate.

I do want to remind the party opposite about what André Marin said on September 14, 2009, with respect to the steps we took on this particular issue. He said, "We are rejoicing that the province has taken this position."

Unfortunately, these situations are challenging. This was a particularly bad episode at OLG. We will continue to work with Mr. Godfrey and the new board as we move to find a new CEO and as we move to give Ontarians still greater confidence in that corporation and the future of the revenues that come from that corporation.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier/finance minister. The minister opposed alternatives to winding up Nortel pensions, claiming other models have failed and would put pension money into more risky investments. Nortel pensioners pleaded for a financial sponsorship model, but the minister refused to listen to them and their experts. He has even refused to consider his own pension expert Dr. Arthurs' recommended Ontario pension agency to grow up, not wind up, Nortel pensions.

Has anything changed the minister's mind about winding up the Nortel pension?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have undertaken again, as a result of meetings with some of the affected individuals, to have another look at this.

First of all, let me acknowledge the very difficult circumstances those people find themselves in. Their first request to this government was to take \$250 million and put it into the PBGF—taxpayers' money—to protect the first \$1,000 of their pension. We did that. It was the right thing and the appropriate thing to do.

In good faith, they've come forward with a proposal which, from the points of view of the various experts we have consulted—and we have consulted a number of them—has some very real challenges. In my view, the answer is not to continue to take the balance of what's left, which can't fund the entire liability, and invest it in riskier assets. There are challenges with that, but we'll continue—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Last week in Ottawa, the Premier reversed the minister's position, saying he would take a fresh look at the Nortel pensioners' proposal. Today, it's September 30. Nortel pensioners will either be put on the

pension recovery road, as the Premier alluded to, or they will be forced down the annuity path to pension windup.

Have the minister and the Premier seen the light and directed the Financial Services Commission of Ontario to hold off any windup of the Nortel pensions?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member's party opposite likes to read from people. Let me read a couple of quotes.

"I am not one of the pensioners who is asking you to hold off on the windup and transfer our guaranteed pensions into some plan which has already failed in the UK. I would choose, and many more would, to leave it in the government's guaranteed fund." That reflects the views of one individual.

Here is a letter from another individual: "I have not been given access to the details of the FSM plan [that] the NRPC are proposing. How many pensioners will be alive to enjoy the upswing in the market, if it comes back? Now, if the OPBGF is not applicable to the FSM model, the economy and market will have to take an overnight leap to make up for the losses."

There are risks associated with the proposal. We have undertaken to look at it again, and we are in the process of doing that. It is the appropriate and proper step to take.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Minister, seniors have made and continue to make outstanding contributions to our communities. At home in Guelph, seniors have organized the regional seniors' games. The Guelph Wellington Seniors Association is the lead organization in one of our aging-at-home programs, called Make Yourself at Home, where they provide peer support and advocacy for seniors who live at home and help them navigate the system.

Here in Ontario, we are blessed with an active, healthy seniors population. We have the most diverse seniors population in Canada, with nearly a third of Ontario seniors having a mother tongue other than English or French.

Tomorrow is October 1, the International Day of Older Persons. Can you outline, Minister, some of the ways in which our government is supporting Ontario seniors?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you to my honourable colleague for that very important question.

Let me say how excited I am to be the Minister Responsible for Seniors. In the short time that I've been in this portfolio, I've had the opportunity to meet some of Ontario's dynamic and active seniors, and I look forward to working with all of our partners to ensure that our government is responding to the needs of Ontario's seniors population.

The member is right: Tomorrow is the International Day of Older Persons. In addition to celebrating this very important day, our government celebrates June each year as Seniors' Month. Earlier this year, we passed the Retirement Homes Act, providing for the first time protection for seniors in retirement homes, and earlier this

week, I joined the Premier to announce our proposed energy and property tax credit for seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Minister, we know that here in Ontario, like many other jurisdictions, our seniors population is growing rapidly. Over the next decade, Ontario will go through a significant demographic shift in its population. We know that next year, the first baby boomer will turn 65. I won't be all that far behind. We know that by 2017, there will be more people over 65 than children under 15.

Minister, Ontario and our seniors need to be ready to take on the new challenges that will arise as Ontario changes. Can you tell us more about steps taken to alleviate pressures that Ontario seniors face, now and on into the future?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thanks again to the member for this important question. Our government has taken many steps to ensure Ontario seniors continue to have the support that they need to lead active and healthy lives. Under our proposed property and energy tax credit, which was announced this week, 740,000 seniors who own or rent their homes could get a maximum credit of \$1,025 annually to help them with their energy and property taxes.

This year, we doubled the maximum Ontario senior homeowners property tax credit to \$500. Ontario seniors are also eligible for our new permanent sales tax credit, which provides payment of up to \$260 for each adult and child and is in addition to the existing GST credit. Our government is working hard to ensure Ontario seniors—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, just this morning I've learned that the future of Wellington House, a long-term-care home in the town of Prescott, has been put in jeopardy. Minister, I'm told the reason your ministry staff won't allow the sale of this facility to go through, to protect the residents, is outstanding fees owed to the ministry by a previous owner. Can you explain to the residents, their families and the community of Prescott why the desire of your ministry to collect an outstanding debt is being considered more important than the care of senior citizens?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, thank you, through you, to the member for the question. I suspect the member opposite knows that I will need to go back to get the background on this issue. I am not familiar with this situation.

What I can tell you, though, is that when it comes to long-term care, this government is focused on the quality of care for patients. We are making remarkable strides when it comes to looking after seniors who are residents in long-term-care homes. I want to take this opportunity to commend the work of the member from Nipissing. She

did groundbreaking work when it comes to improving care for long-term-care patients. We are starting to see the results of that. I'm proud of the work we're doing in long-term care and I look forward to finding an answer for the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Minister, let's face it: It appears the ministry staff are putting unreasonable conditions on the sale of this property to the approved buyer. The buyer has stated his intention not only to continue operating Wellington House as a seniors' care residence, but a desire to put additional money into enhancing the facilities there.

My question to you is: Will you review the stance of your ministry staff to ensure that the sale goes through and this vital care home can keep its doors open?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in my initial response, I have to go and understand what this issue is about. I suspect it might be slightly more complicated than the member opposite is indicating.

But let me tell you, when it comes to long-term care—I want to talk about some of the quality improvements that are happening in long-term care. I was delighted to attend an event earlier this week where I had the opportunity to talk to 1,400 people from the long-term-care sector right across this province. Because of changes they have made related to quality, we are seeing the incidence of pressure ulcers dramatically reduced, the incidence of falls dramatically reduced. We are seeing the levels of depression in residents of long-term care dramatically reduced.

We have added a billion dollars to our long-term-care investment since we came to office, and we are continuing to improve the quality of care in our long-term-care homes.

1120

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Families across Ontario are being squeezed by this government's hydro rate policies and the harmonized sales tax.

Mark and Jo-Ann Johnston from Thunder Bay write, "Our equal billing rate has gone from \$120 a month to \$148 per month."

Why won't the Acting Premier take the HST off Mr. and Mrs. Johnston's hydro bills and give Thunder Bay families a much-needed break?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontario families also want investments in education and in health care, and they want a plan for a stronger economy in the future.

They want an energy sector that—frankly, it was left in horrible shape over the course of the last 30 years, when none of us came to terms with the reality that the system was not working; it was falling apart.

We're making investments in energy, to build a stronger energy system. We are making changes to our tax system to make it more competitive, to lower income taxes for Ontarians, to lower taxes for businesses, to help

create a stronger culture of job growth in the future. We have provided significant tax relief.

I'm very proud of our northern Ontario energy credit, which affects Thunder Bay, and I'm very proud of our northern industrial electricity price, which will help that part of the province—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What Ontario families are telling me is that they want a government that gives them a break.

Roger Tibbs, a pensioner in Thunder Bay, says, "I am finding it hard to make ends meet with all the price hikes."

Jim Filograna writes, "We did not need this HST forced upon us at this time to make our lives even more difficult."

The NDP's plan to take the HST off hydro just makes sense. Why won't the Acting Premier give Thunder Bay families a break and take the HST off people's hydro bills?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think those same people want to know if that member and her party will eliminate the HST. They've refused to say it.

I do want to put on the record something that was part of RBC's report in September. Let me quote from that report:

"Very strong job creation recently is expected to keep Ontario consumers going to the shopping malls and car dealerships...."

"We expect a more moderate yet still robust pace in 2011...."

As the Premier said in the House the other day, it is important to help people in the short term, but it is important to help build a stronger economy by a more efficient tax system and a better energy system.

We're prepared to make the tough decisions and work with Ontarians to manage it.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, we all know that water is one of the most precious resources we have for our well-being, our economic prosperity and our high standard of living.

Constituents in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans want to know about the quality of water coming out of our taps. The chief drinking water inspector's report is the answer. I understand the most recent report was released yesterday. Minister, can you please tell this House the results of this report? Have Ontario municipal water systems improved their standards again this year?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question.

I have good news to share with the House and I'm sure all will want to hear it: Ontario's municipal drinking water is indeed the safest in North America and among

the safest in the entire world. The most recent chief drinking water inspector's annual report confirms that.

In the last five years, we have significantly transformed our approach to protecting Ontario's drinking water with our comprehensive source-to-tap strategy. And here's some very good news: 99.8% of the drinking water tests from municipal drinking water systems met Ontario's strict drinking water standards.

We are making further progress: The number of systems testing 100% every time has improved by some 16%, to almost 50% of all systems. More than 600,000 samples were tested last year from 700 municipal residential—

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: Minister, my constituents and, I'm sure, all Ontarians will be relieved to know that their drinking water is safer than it has ever been. I'm sure that the hard work of your staff will make sure that all Ontario water systems reach 100% compliance.

The people in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans are also concerned about the safety of the drinking water at their children's schools, their families' summer campsites and the hospitals caring for their loved ones. They want to make sure that the drinking water coming out of their taps is just as safe as it is in their own homes. Is the McGuinty government serious about making the water in those places just as safe as the water in their own homes?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the supplemental because we have learned some very hard lessons in this province, and I want to let people know that safe, clean drinking water doesn't just stop at your front door. Non-municipal residential systems in designated facilities like hospitals and schools are also subject to testing now, and more than 99% of those samples are also meeting our rigorous standards.

We're also working with our sister Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and with local public units to conduct risk assessments on small water systems. We have 19 committees working on protecting our drinking water from source to tap and back to source right across this province, and we are working with our schools and day nurseries as part of our lead action plan to make sure that their drinking water is also free of this very dangerous toxin—

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last week, I asked the minister when this government would follow through on their promise to release the long-awaited affordable housing strategy. The minister's empty response greatly upset the housing industry and the agencies, but, most of all, it upset the 142,000 Ontarians on the waiting list.

I would ask the minister again: Please tell Ontarians when you are releasing this promised report.

Interjections.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want everyone to be quiet, please, because I'm listening for the clang of thunder, the bolt of lightning to come down because this is the second affordable housing question the Harris-Hudak government has asked since 2003—two questions on affordable housing.

The sincerity on that side cannot be matched by the sincerity on this side. You see, the difference is, we're committed to an affordable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. I'm finding it very difficult to hear the minister answer the question, and that difficulty is because of the noise coming from the government side.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I couldn't hear it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Community Safety.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development, for a second time.

Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me continue. When the Harris-Hudak government was in place, they cancelled 17,000 units. We're about building units; they're about cancelling units.

We will continue to ensure that our long-term affordable—

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I can assure the minister that this isn't the last time the Hudak government is going to be asking questions about affordable housing.

The minister had told us about the consultations that he has held and that he's very, very—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford.

Please continue.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Mr. Speaker, I think you're having a hard time hearing answers because there aren't any.

I understand that the minister is very, very, very, very committed, but what he refuses to tell us is when this report will be released. The government is clearly stalling.

My question is straight to the point and it doesn't require lingering answers. Will the long-awaited affordable housing strategy be released this fall? Yes or no?

1130

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We're ensuring that the long-term affordable housing strategy is a strategy that works for Ontarians. We're not going to be like you. We're not going to be like the previous Harris-Hudak government, which said that they should get out of affordable housing. At least, that's what the minister at the time said.

We're about ensuring that we put a plan in place that works, that is long-term, that builds units, not about cancelling units, not about destroying 17,000 units, not about keeping people out of homes. We are about building affordable homes, we are about ensuring that there is a housing strategy in place that works.

Yes, we will be releasing that strategy. We will ensure that that strategy works for the people of Ontario, not like the Harris-Hudak—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order. Member from Oxford. Minister. Order.

New question?

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Peter Kormos: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In 2004, the Haines report concluded, "The lack of a fish inspection program in Ontario constitutes a risk to the public." Justice Haines called upon the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to implement a mandatory fish inspection program. This provincial government even received \$40 million from the federal government to cover the costs of this and other food safety initiatives.

Why, five years later, does this ministry still not have a fish inspection program or a single fish plant inspector to protect Ontarians who eat that fish?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Certainly, I'm very pleased to rise and speak specifically to meat safety. What I want to talk about today is that our priority is, number one—

Interjections.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: The question is addressed to the Minister of Ag, so that meat falls within. That's why I really want to speak to it, because I know how important it is for people—they know, they understand, they want to buy Ontario product, and they buy Ontario product because our priority is number one.

We know that we have our meat inspectors out on the ground. We have 160 more meat inspectors—107 full-time, 63 part-time. The Haines report brought forward recommendations. We're implementing those recommendations. Ontario products—

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: Meat comes from animals that walk. Fish swim.

Smoked fish and raw fish are at a particularly high risk of contamination, and there are numerous reports of false labelling of fish used for sushi. Meat plants are inspected monthly, yet the 90 fish plants in Ontario aren't inspected

at all. They're only audited once a year by a Ministry of Natural Resources official, who has no power to impose corrective actions or close down contaminated plants.

Over five years have passed since the Haines report. How many more years are going to have to pass before this government finally protects the health and safety of Ontarians by putting in place a strong and effective fish inspection program?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to answer the question, and the question was addressed to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Within my jurisdiction falls the responsibility of meat inspection. I answered the question last week and this week.

What we know is that with the implementation of the Haines report, 150 meat inspectors are working hard. We have tougher standards and we have more inspectors. People want to buy Ontario products. We have gone in to help the local abattoirs, for an additional \$1.5 million. We have provided up to \$26 million in order to meet the tough standards. Food processing in Ontario has very rigorous standards, and I'm very pleased to respond to that question as the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. I've been getting a lot of phone calls at my office from constituents who have worked many years in the manufacturing sector, where the economic recovery has been slower to take hold. They're concerned about talk that the federal PC government will withdraw employment insurance stimulus funding prematurely; that they're going to stick to some arbitrary deadlines without considering the economic realities faced by Ontarians, especially in the manufacturing sector. Minister, what is our government doing in light of the federal government's actions, which will punish so many Ontario workers?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I want to thank the member for the timely question. Indeed, the federal government is starting to walk away from its funding obligations, impeding the progress of Ontario families as we deal with this difficult worldwide recession. For example, the federal government ended two programs on September 11. The enhancements provided extended benefits to those Ontarians who are looking for work. These stimulus measures provided five weeks of additional employment insurance benefits for all workers and an extra 20 weeks of benefits for long-tenured workers. This means that those long-term workers will no longer be able to receive, on average, over \$7,000 in support as they work toward supporting their families and discovering new careers. Some 42% of Canada's long-tenured workers live in Ontario. That is a huge hindrance to Ontario families as we try to come out of this difficult time—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, you've quite rightly made the point that the federal Conservative government

is not living up to its funding obligations and is short-changing Ontario workers. I understand as well that at the end of March next year, the two-year enhancements to our labour market training agreements will end. This is going to cut \$623 million in federal investments in training for Ontario workers. Minister, what is our government using this funding for? Will we continue to support Ontario workers who want to participate in the new economy?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member for this very important question and just comment a bit on what some of the \$623 million is used for in terms of helping Ontarians. The funding that the federal government is going to cut is right now used to provide 61,000 learners with literacy and basic skills training. It's helping 120,000 apprentices with their studies and encouraging 17,000 immigrants to integrate into Ontario's job market. By ending this funding, some 16,000 Ontarians could lose opportunities to develop labour market skills, which are crucial in this current economic climate.

Despite the federal government's decision to withdraw this funding, our government remains committed to ensuring that Ontarians are able to retrain and retool so that our province can remain competitive. I remind members that in this year's budget—

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

I would just say to the government House leader that I thank her for her comments, but I'm quite comfortable in this chair and will make my decisions accordingly.

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order, Speaker: The OLG scandal dates from a ticket sold in December 2003, redeemed in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is not a point of order.

Ms. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 99. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Elliott, Christine	Murray, Glen R.
Arnott, Ted	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bailey, Robert	Gerretsen, John	Prue, Michael
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Ramal, Khalil
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Ruprecht, Tony
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Brownell, Jim	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Smith, Monique
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Sousa, Charles
Chudleigh, Ted	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sterling, Norman W.
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Tabuns, Peter
Colle, Mike	MacLeod, Lisa	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craiton, Kim	Mangat, Amrit	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Wilson, Jim
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Witmer, Elizabeth
DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakabuski, John
Duguid, Brad	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John	
Dunlop, Garfield	Mitchell, Carol	

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

The ayes are 67; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

DEFERRED VOTES

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 99. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORMAN ATKINS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On behalf of Tim Hudak and Ontario Progressive Conservatives, I am saddened to speak of our good friend Senator Norm Atkins's passing.

It is well known that Senator Atkins was one of the architects of the Big Blue Machine who saw so many Progressive Conservative governments elected here at Queen's Park and throughout Canada. He helped get legends like Bill Davis and Brian Mulroney elected, and in my humble opinion, Senator Atkins was a legend himself.

I first met Senator Atkins as a young staffer on Parliament Hill. He was close friends with Senator Mike Forrester, a family friend. My first impressions of Senator Atkins were lasting. He was a kind-hearted gentleman who always greeted you with a smile and he always

looked you in the eye. He was a nice man, especially for politics. He had a knack for making even the most junior political operatives among us feel that our contributions were important, and I can tell you that first-hand. I know that for sure.

Senator Atkins's friends will tell you he was the happy warrior. He was always positive, with a great sense of camaraderie and teamwork. He made politics fun, and his trademark was, "Let's get the job done while having some fun." That's why he could rally people to the cause. That would be, of course, the Progressive Conservative cause, to which he was loyal until the end.

Indeed, Senator Atkins leaves behind an impressive political legacy. He also leaves behind loved ones, and on behalf of Tim Hudak, the Progressive Conservative caucus and Progressive Conservatives everywhere, I want to send my condolences to them.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton has a long, proud history of producing steel for all of Canada. Again yesterday, workers at US Steel in Hamilton were told that the company would be idling the Hamilton blast furnace, putting uncertainty into the lives of many working families in Hamilton for the second time in two years. This raises many questions about where steel will now be produced for the Canadian market.

US Steel was allowed to take over Stelco's special pension regulation, which permitted them to take 10 years to pay off their pension liability. It appears that US Steel is using the same tactics as they used at Lake Erie Works, where, by locking out workers for a year, they forced concessions on pension plans, benefits etc.

Once again, US Steel is crying poverty to position themselves to attack Local 1005 and its hourly workers. In August, US Steel refused to pay pensioners and pensioners' widows the cost-of-living increase to their pensions. This is a blatant attack on the most vulnerable pensioners, who have no vote when it comes to negotiations.

It's time US Steel did the morally right thing for the families who have dedicated their entire working lives to Stelco and this company. Reinstate the pensioners' indexing immediately and stop playing games to force concessions from the members of Local 1005.

BOX GROVE LIONS CLUB

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Today I'd like to recognize the Box Grove Lions Club in Markham, which was chartered recently as a part of the Lions Clubs International. This club has 67 charter members, which is one of the largest charter memberships of any new Lions Club in the area, and is also one of the few new charter clubs headed by a charter woman president, Lion Neelam Sharma.

The Box Grove Lions Club charter theme is "Building Healthy Communities." As beacons of hope, the club has adopted Markham Stouffville Hospital's mental health program as their charity of choice for the next few years.

On September 19, I had the pleasure of attending the Box Grove Lions Club's charter gala and had the opportunity to meet many of the club's members, which is largely comprised of members of the South Asian community. Some of the Lions I met were past zone chair Lion Gobind Sharma, Dr. Shivani Sharma, Deepika Khurana, Kavita Mehta, Poonam Dhingra, Chaitana Sharma, Sapna Mehta, Sam Joshi and Sanjeev Khurana.

I am certain the Box Grove Lions Club will serve the community of Oak Ridges–Markham well and that their efforts in raising funds for mental health will make a real difference in many families' lives.

Congratulations to all in making this happen.

PLANT CLOSURE

Mr. Toby Barrett: The J.M. Smucker Co. will close its Dunnville vegetable processing and Delhi tank farm for cucumbers by the end of 2011—more Obama Buy America policy driving Ontario investment and jobs south and a huge blow for both Haldimand and Norfolk counties.

Some 150 employees will be out of work and this does not include numerous farmers who will be affected. Sadly, this is Dunnville's final industry in the downtown core, and townfolk are reeling from this economic blow that has come out of the blue.

Haldimand county, as you know, has been suffering for the past four years under this government's mismanagement of the Caledonia land dispute, and in Delhi, this government has continued to ignore the devastation of the tobacco industry, reneging on a promise to provide an exit package to growers. You may remember the former ag minister's words, that this government would be "an active participant in a federally led process to address this issue."

Therefore, it's high time this government step up to the plate and offer incentive to maintain jobs both in Dunnville and Delhi and, at minimum, Ontario's Premier must pick up the phone and put in a call to Smucker.

With every challenge comes an opportunity, and my hope is that a willing buyer or two will see these facilities as an opportunity. But this government has to show some leadership and commence a close working relationship with Smucker and other interested stakeholders.

SWIM FOR MENTAL HEALTH FUNDRAISER

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to take a moment to recognize the incredible efforts of a constituent of mine. Long-time Oakville resident Frank Zamuner recently hosted the second annual Swim for Mental Health at Brookdale Pool to raise money for the purchase of essential equipment for the mental health program at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, and to raise awareness about mental health illnesses and to eliminate the stigma attached to them.

Mental health issues are very personal to Frank, but he's quoted as saying the following: "There's nothing to be afraid of, there's nothing to be ashamed of."

In 2005, while recovering from surgery, he discovered it was difficult to reduce his active lifestyle and eventually that led to a depression. While seeking help himself, Frank found there's a great need for psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health medical equipment and decided he was going to address this by turning his swimming into a fundraiser.

For five days in August, Frank swam 110 lengths every day and, with the help of 30 other swimmers, a total of 3,500 lengths were completed. In two years, he's raised more than \$35,000, with great support from Oakville residents and local companies such as Goodale Miller, BMO Nesbitt Burns, Swiss Chalet and the Tent Renters.

Frank, I would like to congratulate you on your swim, on your fundraising efforts and as well for raising awareness about mental health illnesses in our community and the need to eliminate stigma.

SOUTH MARCH HIGHLANDS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I rise today to inform the Legislature of the efforts being made in Kanata to protect the South March Highlands. This 895-hectare piece of land is located along the north edge of Kanata and is part of the Canadian Shield uplands. It is more than a billion years old and is home to more than 654 species, including 18 that are at risk of going extinct.

The area was described in a 1997 report commissioned by the region as "one of the most significant areas in" the region "for maintaining biodiversity and ecological functions and support a variety of landscape features found nowhere else in the" world.

1310

Thirty hectares of this pristine land is slated for imminent development, much to the dismay of many of my constituents. This area is locally known as the Beaver Pond area, and I have heard from many constituents who are passionate about saving this area.

I am pleased that currently the city of Ottawa is negotiating with the developer who owns this land, with a view to either purchasing or expropriating this land. I encourage those parties to continue their negotiation, but urge them to come to a successful conclusion soon so that we will not lose this environmental gem to development.

SENIORS' TAX CREDIT

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Our government is dedicated to helping Ontario's seniors maintain their quality of life. One of our latest initiatives designed to make life a little bit easier is the Ontario energy and property tax credit.

We are proposing enhanced relief for 740,000 seniors through an annual credit of up to \$1,025 to help with energy costs and property taxes. Our proposal also seeks

to increase the amount seniors can earn and still be eligible for this credit.

This enhanced credit would be on top of the Ontario sales tax credit of \$260 for qualifying seniors and families. This enhanced credit would also further complement our government's doubling of the seniors' property tax grant to \$500. The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues opposed both of those measures to help Ontario seniors, but with Bill 109, we are giving them a chance to change their ways and vote to help seniors in this province.

CANADA-PAKISTAN TRADE EXPOSITION

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I appreciate this opportunity to announce before this chamber, as well as to Ontarians broadly, that there will be an international single-country Canada-to-Pakistan trade exposition which will be taking place October 28 to October 31, 2010, not coincidentally within my riding of Etobicoke North, at the Toronto Congress Centre.

This particular trade exposition is being organized by the government of Pakistan and the government of Ontario. Contributing is the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry and a trade arm of the government of Pakistan known as TDAP, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan.

It will be a remarkable opportunity. It'll be another venue of Universal Promotions, led ably by Mr. Amir Shamsi, under the guidance of His Excellency Mr. Khan, consul general of Pakistan to Ontario.

A number of different vendors will be coming, with reference to: onyx; marble; carpets and rugs; rice; rock salt; jewellery; gold; leather; textile goods—garments and cloths of all descriptions; medical, surgical and dental instruments; handicrafts; sporting goods; software and more.

Reverse opportunities for Canadian firms will be in the sectors of energy, power, water, rebuilding and reconstruction, housing and, of course, medical knowledge transfer.

I think the 300,000-strong Pakistani Canadians who live in the province of Ontario will be very gratified if we contribute and help the country of Pakistan in its hour of need with the economic prosperity initiatives.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On October 1, 61 years ago, an important event took place in the history of mankind: the founding of the People's Republic of China. The people's government passed a resolution on the national day of the People's Republic of China, on December 2, 1949, and declared that October 1 is the National Day.

This National Day is celebrated throughout mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau with a variety of government-organized festivities, including fireworks and concerts. Public places such as Tiananmen Square in Bei-

jing are decorated in a festive theme. Portraits of revered leaders such as Sun Yat-sen are publicly displayed.

Tomorrow, October 1, we in Canada, as well, will show our deep respect for the people of China by raising its national colours right here in front of the Legislature at noon, 12 o'clock, in the presence of Mr. Ligang Chen, consul general; Meifang Zhang, deputy consul; Mr. Ping Tan, president of the National Congress of Chinese Canadians; Mr. Hughes Eng, vice-chairman of the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto, and many other distinguished Chinese Canadians.

We are also mindful of the contributions that Chinese Canadians have made right here in the development of Canada and the many sacrifices that they endured. Some monuments right here in Toronto speak to that fact, such as the monument to the Chinese railroad workers.

When I visited China, I was surprised to find that every Chinese schoolchild knew about Canadian physician Norman Bethune, who ultimately sacrificed his life in the service of others in the time of civil war.

May the cordial relationship between the People's Republic of China and Canada prosper and grow in the years to come. Congratulations to all those who celebrate it.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition that was signed by hundreds, if not thousands, of people from the great riding of Oxford and the neighbouring riding of Perth-Wellington. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance of Stratford, Ontario, in their Vision 2013 report to the South West LHIN, is planning to reduce the operating hours of St. Marys Memorial Hospital emergency department from 24/7 to 16/7 and reduce the number of acute care beds and also move rehabilitative beds from St. Marys Memorial Hospital to Seaforth general hospital, which would force residents of St. Marys and surrounding areas to travel 51 kilometres or more to receive rehabilitative care;

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

"Save our hospital: We, the undersigned, urge our leaders not to accept the recommendations in the Vision 2013 report and not to reduce our emergency room hours of operation and not to reduce our acute care beds."

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

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition is from hundreds of people in the 905 area.

"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 ... 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 we, 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 couldn't agree more, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to give it to Brandon to be delivered to the desk.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

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

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

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

1320

SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS

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

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities to build solar-powered generation facilities without any local say or local approval; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government transferred decision-making power from elected municipal governments to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats, who are accountable to no one; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has removed any kind of appeal process for municipalities or for people living in close proximity to these projects; and

“Whereas Tim Hudak, Jim Wilson and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party have committed to restoring local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcome, wanted and at prices Ontarians can afford;

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

“That the McGuinty government restore local decision-making powers for renewable energy projects and immediately stop forcing new solar developments on municipalities that have not approved and whose citizens do not want them in their community.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

G20 SUMMIT

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition that’s certified by the Clerk, pursuant to standing order 39(c). It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

“Whereas Ontarians have serious concerns about the events leading up to and during the G20 summit;

“Whereas more than \$1 billion of taxpayer money was spent on the G20, yet a full accounting of these costs has not been provided to the public;

“Whereas there are critical questions about whether the fundamental rights and freedoms of Ontarians were compromised during the G20;

“Whereas the government willingly withheld information about laws that directly affected the freedom and liberties of Ontarians;

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

“That the McGuinty government immediately call a public inquiry examining all events leading up to and during the G20 summit.”

RECYCLING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. 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 (as illustrated in the letter attached). 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, 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’ve been at the school and I support this wholeheartedly. I will sign it and give it to Thomas to bring to the table.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here another petition that was presented to me by Susan DeRoo in Otterville, in the great riding of Oxford. Obviously, these petitions keep coming even though the events of the day may have changed.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal; and

“Whereas now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

“—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

“—increase wait times and line-ups for patients;

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

“—reduce critical patient 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 pharmacies.”

I affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

RECYCLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm going to join with my colleague from Oakville in reading this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. 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 ... 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 ... 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 petition "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval...;

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

"... to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and ... to pass ... such a program" into law "as described...."

I'd like to acknowledge Carol Grant of tenth Line for having collected these signatures. I'll send the petition down with page Henry.

TAXATION

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

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

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

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I agree with that petition, and I will sign it. I'd like to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseh for sending it to me.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed by a great number of people, primarily from the city of Woodstock and Oxford county.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I affix my signature. I totally agree with it. It was as recently as yesterday that I got caught in that bind where they put an 8% tax on haircuts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further petitions? There appearing to be no further petitions, orders of the day.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO CALEDONIA ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE RELATIVE À LA SITUATION EXISTANT À CALEDONIA

Mr. Chudleigh moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about the provincial role in the ongoing dispute on the Douglas Creek Estates property in Caledonia / Projet de loi 73, Loi prévoyant une enquête publique pour découvrir la vérité sur le rôle de la Province dans le conflit en cours sur la propriété Douglas Creek Estates à Caledonia.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: For close to half a decade, the residents of Caledonia and Six Nations have lived under the shadow of a land claims dispute. The response of the McGuinty government has been negligible. The impact on residents of Caledonia and Six Nations has been significant.

In 1784, the Haldimand Tract was granted to the Six Nations in recognition of the support they provided to the British crown during the American Revolution. Over the next 211 years, the majority of that land was transferred or sold. Today, the Six Nations claim that large areas were in fact stolen from them, and that the land was

transferred illegally or sold without adequate compensation.

It is in this context that 29 land claims have been filed by the Six Nations, including a claim against the Douglas Creek Estates property, which is part of the Plank Road/Port Dover claim. To date, this claim and 27 of the 29 filed land claims remain outstanding.

In 1992, Henco Industries purchased Douglas Creek Estates and in 2005 announced their intention to develop the land, despite being advised of the ongoing dispute. In response, a small group of Six Nations protestors moved onto the site in 2006.

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Over the year, violent protests between the Six Nations and residents of Caledonia ensued. The emergency response team of the OPP was required to address serious threats of violence and clashes between the different groups of protestors. Suddenly, a peaceful community was transformed into a dangerous conflict zone, with flag wars, violent protests, vandalism, blockades and a citizen mafia. It didn't feel like Ontario, it didn't feel like Caledonia, but sadly, it was.

In the years that followed, conflicts continued and lawsuits were commenced. In 2006, a class action lawsuit against the province was filed. In February 2010, Justice Crane certified the class proceedings in which, amongst other things, the plaintiffs are claiming damages against the province for nuisance, negligence and breach of statutory duty, all in consequence of the occupation by native protestors of the former Douglas Creek Estates and the events thereafter.

In 2007, David Brown and Dana Chatwell launched a \$7-million lawsuit against the OPP and the Ontario government. After violent protests in 2006, the couple returned to their Argyle Street home to find their treasured belongings destroyed. They claimed that they were under siege, trapped between the occupied land and the barricades put in place by the Six Nations protestors. To make matters worse, the government was accused of orchestrating a trial by ambush after two boxes filled with OPP reports and notes were delivered to the couple's lawyers days before their trial began, leaving little time for reviewing them. In 2008, Ms. Chatwell collapsed and was taken by ambulance to a hospital with a suspected heart attack. At trial, Mr. Brown was forced to leave the courtroom to vomit. For years, this couple and their son had clearly suffered as a result of the ongoing dispute in Caledonia. They were only one family amongst many.

However, even when the government finally reached a confidential out-of-court settlement with this family in 2009, consolation for Caledonia families was scarce. The facts of their experiences were buried, along with the amount of the settlement. Questions remained unanswered and a resolution a distant possibility.

I introduced Bill 73 with the hope that the McGuinty government was finally ready to address the serious ongoing concerns in Caledonia. Under the bill, a commission would inquire into and report on the conduct of the government in respect of its legal obligations, policy

decisions and directions and influence exerted on public bodies as it relates to the dispute in Caledonia. It will also make recommendations in the hope of improving the government's response to that dispute and other future disputes, if and when they occur. Areas that the commission will examine include the trade of illegal cigarettes, administration of justice, policing, community safety and security, and the dispute's effect on Haldimand county, Brant county and the city of Brantford.

Before speaking about a few of these things, I'd like to address the response by the McGuinty government over the past half-decade. The PC caucus has consistently called upon the Premier to live up to these responsibilities. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs recognizes that, although many of the Six Nations grievances fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government, Ontario has played an important role by encouraging an environment where peaceful and productive negotiations can take place. However, more often than not, the McGuinty government simply responded to PC questions by pointing to the federal government in Ottawa. This response has been unacceptable and has completely ignored the serious concerns in Caledonia. Bill 73 will examine the provincial response to this dispute and will make recommendations to ensure that future disputes are not left to simmer at the expense of the parties living through them.

For example, the commission will look at the response of the Ministry of Revenue. The minister is responsible for promoting "the integrity of the province's self-assessing tax system by encouraging compliance through taxpayer education and customer service, while discouraging non-compliance through enforcement activities." However, in 2008 the Auditor General noted this government's continued failure to address illegal cigarettes. The auditor noted that his previous recommendations had not been implemented by the McGuinty government. He also recognized that the Premier's tobacco tax rate increase had raised the incentive to evade taxes. He concluded, "As a result, it remains our view that the ministry's current policies, procedures and information technology systems are still inadequate."

At a time when this government is raising taxes, creating eco fees and implementing the HST, they are ignoring illegal cigarettes, which, the auditor noted, created in 2007 a tax gap of about half a billion dollars. The McGuinty government has ignored the illegal smoke shop operating on provincial land on Argyle Street in Caledonia. The McGuinty government has tried to address legal cigarettes, but has, for the most part, ignored illegal cigarettes. The McGuinty government increased the tobacco tax rate and then doubled the tax on cigarettes when they introduced the HST, pushing people further towards contraband tobacco.

The consequences? Today, nearly 50% of the cigarettes smoked in Ontario are illegal. An analysis of cigarette butts by the Ontario Convenience Stores Association in 2007 at schools in Brantford showed that approximately 35% of the cigarettes were contraband. At one school, about 46% were contraband. We have seen an

increase in the availability of illegal cigarettes for youth, an increase in funding for organized crime, and an increase in the likelihood that people will experience the serious health consequences of smoking.

Another consequence has been economic. In 2009 the sale of contraband tobacco saw convenience store operators lose \$2.5 billion in sales. Closures were often heavily influenced by contraband tobacco sales. Under Bill 73, a commission will help to ensure the Minister of Revenue takes responsibility for his or her duties in the ongoing land dispute so that the health, security and economic risks associated with contraband tobacco are diminished and Ontario laws are enforced.

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should be committed to ensuring that Ontario's communities are supported and protected by law enforcement and public safety systems that are safe, secure, effective, efficient and accountable. That is what the website says. As of 2009, policing costs alone accounted for close to \$46 million in Caledonia, yet illegal smoke shops and violence continue unaddressed.

The police have done a commendable job, keeping relative peace in Caledonia. I know my colleague the member from Simcoe North will speak about this further. However, where it has been the minister's responsibility to lead, allegations that illegal activities have been overlooked and charges bypassed abound. The rule of law has not been consistently upheld for close to half a decade in Caledonia, and the precedent it has created in the province of Ontario is problematic. A commission can examine the minister's response, his influence on the administration of justice in Caledonia and the safety of Caledonia streets.

The Attorney General is the chief law officer, but he's also a cabinet minister. In the former role, he or she must act in the public interest, and in the latter, he or she must act as a representative of the ministry and the cabinet. The current Attorney General is also Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and has to represent the interests of aboriginal groups across the province. As we have often said on this side of the House, the law must not only be done but it must be seen to be done. There have been questions about a potential conflict of interest in lawsuits resulting from the dispute in Caledonia. A commission may help to address these concerns and restore faith in our system of justice.

The rule of law must be enforced and applied equally to all so that our system remains fair and our communities remain safe. There are parties responsible for the resolution of the dispute in Caledonia. However, from the McGuinty government we have only heard blame. Any time this government can point fingers elsewhere, they do, but there has been no responsibility taken for the impacts their complacency and disregard have had on the people involved in this dispute. The result? Close to half a decade later, there has been no resolution for the Six Nations or for the people of Caledonia. There has been violence, economic hardship and growing animosity, but there has been no closure and no ability to move forward.

The McGuinty government has become incapable of handling the needs of the people, who, regretfully, must suffer the consequences. My colleague the member for Haldimand–Norfolk introduced a similar piece of legislation last year, which the McGuinty government rejected. I hope this year they will finally take a new path towards resolution, towards building on best practices. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs notes, "Ontario is committed to making sure land claim negotiations address the interests and concerns of people who use, live or work on lands within the claim area." I hope the McGuinty government will show itself to be equally committed to resolving ongoing disputes, including the dispute on the Douglas Creek Estates property and the parties involved. It is only in addressing the issues, not by leaving them to simmer, that together we can move forward peacefully, prosperously and with respect for each other.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: A most interesting bill and proposal. I was looking forward to the debate on it and I am, quite frankly, excitedly looking forward to how the government responds.

I read the bill very carefully, and I want to say this: This is the most incredible screw-up that any government could ever be a party to. The fact that now in 2010, four years later, this dispute rages on, and in view of the incredible resources that the government has to bring to this dispute, is mind-boggling.

I think people should be very careful, because native land claims are not going to disappear. They're not going to go away. They're not going to go away in Caledonia, they're not going to go away along that whole stretch along the river there, along the Grand River, and they're not going to go away in other parts of Ontario. This government's failure, its catatonic response to this crisis, does not bode well for the future, in view of this government's Bill 191, its Far North Act, and how that legislation, forced upon First Nations people in northern Ontario, is provoking understandably militant responses.

I find incredibly curious the question of the acquisition of this particular land by the developer—the Douglas Creek Estates property, as it's been called. I suppose real estate lawyers in the Grand River area as well as other areas are going to be far more cautious when they're clearing title to a piece of property for a potential owner. When the author of this bill says that it was known at the time of acquisition of this property that the land was the subject matter of a dispute around ownership, one would have thought that the developer would have been far more cautious before simply moving the bulldozers in and claiming title. That's why, when I look at section 6, what are proposed as the terms of reference for what will be, for all intents and purposes, a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act, there's no consideration of what diligence, due or otherwise, was performed by the developer who acquired this property. It seems to me that the government should be very clear in warning potential

property purchasers that when one purchases or purports to purchase a property that is the subject matter or has the capacity to be the subject matter—and this certainly did. This isn't news. This wasn't a surprise. This wasn't a shock. This didn't come out of the blue. Discussions about the legitimate ownership of that land—not just the Douglas Creek Estates land, but huge swaths of land along the Grand River—are longtime and notorious. It seems to me that this government should be a little more active—a lot more active—in explaining to people that no, caveat emptor. You perform some due diligence, and if you buy a piece of land or you think you're buying a piece of land that has dubious ownership in terms of the vendor, then be forewarned: You may be buying something that the vendor has no right to sell, in which case you haven't bought it.

I don't want the developer or his or her lawyer to write me a nasty letter—I could care less if I get a nasty letter—but I'm not sure that the developer displayed the sensitivity and the responsiveness that would have been critical to reducing the intensity of the dispute that has flowed.

I agree, these are the sorts of things that an inquiry, if it were included in the terms of reference, could consider. But I don't see that in the author's section 6, which effectively is the terms of reference. Oh, and don't give me stuff about 6(1)(f): “any other matters that the commission considers relevant.” Commissions are loath to write their own terms of reference.

I suspect the government, in the speaking notes that it's delivered to its backbenchers who are going to be responding to this proposal today, is going to talk—maybe it's going to talk about the huge cost of public inquiries.

It's been a tough haul, getting public inquiries out of this Liberal government. There have been a few issues which cried out for a thorough public inquiry. I acknowledge that they're expensive. Justice can be expensive sometimes. Fairness can be expensive sometimes. The maintenance and furthering of people's rights can be expensive sometimes. Well, democracy can be expensive sometimes. But to fail to inquire in a full and broad way can bring costs that we don't even dare imagine, that at this moment we can't even contemplate.

As I say, this government, the McGuinty government, is courting more serious land disputes with First Nations communities. Bill 191, the Far North Act, guaranteed that.

I regret that, while New Democrats support the concept of an inquiry into the full phenomenon at Caledonia, because of the limited terms of reference in the bill, we can't support this particular bill.

The trade of illegal cigarettes is an interesting inclusion. I'm not sure how much that has to do with the land dispute, although I know that New Democrats are as concerned as anybody about the marketing of illegal cigarettes and the impact especially on young people who buy those cigarettes. But we're fearful that the inclusion of the trade of illegal cigarettes in the terms of reference here somehow reveals a not-so-subtle secondary agenda, and it's an agenda that we have no interest in joining.

The inquiry should be about this government's failure to have mediated a resolution. Oh, they paraded in their high-priced, what do you call them, publicity-seeking celebrity mediators. I think David Peterson was one of them. Good God, David Peterson? He's on the board of Rogers Communications Inc., which runs Rogers cable television. He can't run a bloody cable television company. How is he expected to mediate a serious dispute like this? The people of Ontario sent him packing with his tail between his legs in 1990.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, no, it was silly. You saw that parade of so-called mediators. These people were of that celebrity mediator ilk. The fact is, I know that there are some very capable mediators here in this province of Ontario whom I've spoken with over the course of the last several years who would have loved to participate in a mediation of this dispute—capable people, people who have been involved in international mediations; people who have been involved in huge disputes and complex ones, public disputes.

The Chiefs of Ontario wrote a letter. I recall it clearly because Howard Hampton and I brought it to the attention of this Premier and this government frequently. The Chiefs of Ontario said, “Please, province of Ontario, create a forum, a venue, in which land disputes like Caledonia's land dispute can be resolved”—not necessarily a trial court. Look, that's part of the problem. The courts are slow, expensive and ponderous. If we have to rely upon the courts and the civil process to address this dispute, it will be happening, it will be ongoing after we're long gone. I regret that the terms of reference don't necessarily include that.

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Furthermore, I'm hard pressed to believe, really believe, that there has been no contact between the government and the leadership of the OPP, in particular, as it was, Julian Fantino, during the course of this dispute. I can't for the life of me believe, in view of the sensitivity of this matter and the political implications for a government—witness the last government, the government prior to this one—that there hasn't been direction through not-inappropriate channels, deputy ministers and ADMs, about the government's interest in this matter.

The government is walking a tightrope where it wants to be neither fish nor fowl. It wants to trade off legitimate aboriginal First Nations interests for electoral interests. It seems to me that if the government had taken a clear stand in support of First Nations communities around legitimate land claims, that would have gone a long way to ending this dispute a long time ago.

Public inquiry, yes, and a public inquiry about a whole lot of things that aren't even contemplated by this legislation; a public inquiry not to attack and undermine native, First Nations, aboriginal land claims, but a public inquiry that is designed to create a system, a structure, a process whereby these land claims disputes can be resolved effectively, efficiently, inexpensively—as inexpensively as possible—and peaceably. The McGuinty government

has failed to provide that in this regard, and they have to be held accountable for the crisis that's ongoing in Caledonia.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is sort of a strange debate. I listened very carefully to the member for Halton as he talked about his own bill, or at least introduced his own bill, and then talked about everything except his bill. Then I heard perhaps one of the great orators in our chamber at the moment, the member from Welland, who is capable of slicing and dicing just about anybody on almost anything, and he too talked about everything except what was in the bill.

Now, the member for Halton, in his introduction, read all the talking points that very clearly were written for him by the PC caucus, so this clearly means that—I don't think this is a serious bill, but I think this is just an excuse to repeat all of the usual Conservative complaints.

Rather than talk about his own bill, the member for Halton spent most of his time talking about cigarettes and the HST, but that's not what the bill is about. So let's talk about what the bill is about.

This bill includes a bizarre clause, and let me read it exactly: that, the calling of this so-called public inquiry "shall ensure that it does not interfere with any ongoing legal proceedings relating to these matters." So he wants to call a public inquiry over something that hasn't been resolved and assumes that a public inquiry won't interfere with a matter that hasn't been resolved. Hmm, I wonder why we're going to be voting against this bill.

Undoubtedly, a public inquiry is going to interfere with any ongoing legal proceedings of which, presumably, the province is a party. Bizarre. Even if done, how can this but provide for a less than satisfactory inquiry? It would be limited in scope to matters that are not currently subject to ongoing legal proceedings, which will likely frustrate just about everybody involved in it. Following me in the next rotation, a truly eminent lawyer who is a member here, the member for Willowdale, is going to take this apart in further detail.

If you call a public inquiry over something that hasn't been resolved but is still in process, then obviously you are going to either encourage or inflame radical elements on either side. So I then question the motivation: Why is this being brought up at this point? As well, if you're going to call a public inquiry, which forces sides to entrench themselves into whatever positions they may occupy now or feel that it might be expedient to occupy during a public inquiry, surely you anticipate that you're going to jeopardize any reasonable chance that you might have of a successfully negotiated solution by focusing attention and resources away from the problem and onto the media circus. Hmm, I don't think so.

If the member for Halton says, to use his words, "Law must not only be done but be seen to be done," I find it odd that in 1999 he voted against holding just such an inquiry into the Ipperwash shooting of a First Nations man, Dudley George.

Let's look at some of the other salient points on this. Responsibility for First Nations affairs rests very clearly and unambiguously with one level of government, and it's the federal government. And at the heart of this matter is a 200-year-old land claim. Ontario has urged the federal government to rekindle the negotiation process. In fact, the last negotiation was held on October 9, 2009, almost one year ago.

If the member for Halton and his Conservative Party truly want to see this issue resolved—and it's a serious issue, about serious matters, that has affected a lot of honest people—why haven't they started talking to their cousins in Ottawa, who are the party in power and who can start the process to resolve this?

Ontario has worked, and will continue to work, with all parties to find an acceptable resolution to these matters. For example, the province is supportive of the Brant county-Six Nations green energy accord and the recently signed memorandum of understanding between Six Nations and Samsung. These agreements are going to play an important role in the future economic development for Six Nations and for Brant county.

Someone who has played a real hidden leadership role here, someone who has brought people together, worked hard, spent his time, paid his dues, listened to the sides, and has consistently been someone who has been part of the solution and not part of the problem is the local MPP, the member for Brant. He's a local leader that the PC caucus should have listened to and talked to before bringing forth this poorly drafted bill that even they didn't want to talk about.

The member for Brant regularly talks with local business owners. He's the guy who has his name on the ballot in the local community. He's the guy who talks to the leaders from Brantford, Brant county and the Six Nations. He has even organized a summit so they can all talk together.

I have to say that I'm surprised and disappointed at the quality of the bill and, given its low quality, not surprised that the member from Halton didn't even talk about his own bill.

The member for Willowdale will add more details to this. I won't support this bill.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to make a few comments on Bill 73, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about the provincial role in the ongoing dispute on the Douglas Creek Estates property in Caledonia.

As I see the bill, and I'm going to read the explanatory note, "The bill requires the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish a commission to inquire into and report on the provincial role in the ongoing dispute on the Douglas Creek Estates property in Caledonia and to make recommendations. The commission has the powers of a commission under a public inquiry. Once the inquiry begins, the commission must make an interim report in six months and a final report in 12 months."

Why I think it would be wise for the House to support this legislation is that we've learned a lot from some of our other public inquiries. We've implemented a number of the recommendations as a result of the Walkerton tragedy and Justice Dennis O'Connor's report. We've also made recommendations on the Ipperwash Inquiry that this government, the Liberal government of Ontario, came forward with. It certainly wasn't a federal inquiry; it was a provincial inquiry the last time I checked, and I'm surprised that the previous speaker would say it was strictly a federal responsibility. Then we have inquiries, of course, that we've done just in the last few years, like the Goudge inquiry on the role of the chief coroner. As we know, in a number these cases the recommendations have not even been completely fulfilled at this point, and we've still got some serious concerns about the Goudge inquiry.

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I think the member from Welland made a very, very important point, and that's something that can really blow up in our faces right now. There are a number of outstanding land claims across the province of Ontario, and I don't think we've really made a lot of friends in the First Nations community with the passing of the Far North Act and the fact that we've removed the committee hearings and forced this bill through the House. As you know, there's an outcry across northern Ontario and with First Nations across the province on how that was handled. I think it's almost a recipe for more disruptions and barricades in future years.

When you look at the government's role, I think you have to look at how we can improve upon what already happened there. We know that the federal government and the provincial government, from what my understanding is, haven't met for a year and a half, and this is from the original blockades that were set up in 2006. It's a year and a half since the lawyers have gotten together on this. It has disrupted the whole community. It's still a blemish on the community. I think that we have a role, as politicians, to come forward with some recommendations on how we can handle future land claim disputes and how we can handle future disruptions and blockades that may require provincial intervention.

I want to talk for a moment about the OPP. I've been the critic for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the last seven years, and I've watched how former Minister Kwinter, Minister Bartolucci and now Minister Bradley, along with Bentley and Bryant, have tried to handle the Caledonia issue. Of course, how they tried to handle it was that they stayed way from it. No one ever went to it. The Premier stayed as far away from Caledonia as he could, left them to defend themselves and left the Ontario Provincial Police as what they call the meat in the sandwich.

I give full respect to the Ontario Provincial Police that no one died in these incidents because, in so many cases, there were fist fights and rock throwing and people could have caused a lot of damage and problems. I think the Ontario Provincial Police should be applauded for the

fine work they've done in saving lives in this particular case. But at the same time, it cost the Ontario Provincial Police a tremendous amount of money out of their budget, money that could have been well spent in highway traffic control, on human trafficking, and on guns and gangs. You just name all of the different sections of the Ontario Provincial Police and money had to be taken away from those areas in order to prop up the officers in Caledonia. At one time, I believe there was something like 300 officers in the Caledonia area at something like 124 per shift, trying to keep peace and watch the concerns.

I think a number of the questions can be answered here with an inquiry. I know we've asked for this in the past. Obviously we wouldn't expect the government to support an inquiry because this has been a blemish on the Liberal government that's probably bigger than some of their HST and hydro blunders. However, as we move forward, I think the member from Halton has some great ideas here, some great comments, and I would expect that this House should support the thoughts he has around a public inquiry and support Bill 73.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to join in this debate. I've got about six minutes and I want to make five points with respect to problems with this private member's bill introduced by Mr. Chudleigh, and I say in no particular order because they're all problems or flaws that, in my view, strike right to the heart of the usefulness or the motive of this legislation.

First of all, there are various legal proceedings that are in various stages of legal process throughout the province. It is a well-known and a well-accepted point of procedure that this Legislature collectively, individual members of this Legislature, or indeed anyone with public or private responsibilities, not interfere with legal proceedings that are working their way through. That's to protect the independence of the deciders of the issues in those proceedings.

Picture what's being asked here. There are various legal proceedings out there that are working their way through the system. They're governed by a set of rules, procedures, processes and so on. Then the Legislature steps in and orders an inquiry, which operates under another set of rules. So people who are involved in either the proceedings contemplated by this private member's bill or in the other legal proceedings that are proceeding at another level are caught in a conflict. They've got two sets of rules to follow. The two sets of rules may or may not be in conflict.

The better procedure has always been to start these matters of public inquiry after the events have concluded—if there's to be an inquiry. Then it takes a review of everything that has gone on before it.

The second point is, the terms of reference proposed are so broad as to be unworkable. Let me just work through the terms of reference.

Section 6, duties: Within 60 days of the commission being set up, the commission should start its inquiry. This is what it should look into:

“(a) the trade of illegal cigarettes;

“(b) the administration of justice”—I mean, that is such a wide, comprehensive, broad topic. Where on earth would you start on something like that?

“(c) policing”—again, just a general reference to policing. What does that mean as a term of reference?

“(d) community safety and security;

“(e) the dispute’s effect in Haldimand county, Brant county and the city of Brantford”—what do they mean by “effect”? It’s just so broad as to be unworkable.

Then, as if they’ve thrown all of those things into the hopper and they’re going to ask some commissioner to sort out just what the legislation expects that commissioner to do, they throw in this catch-all:

“(f) any other matters that the commission considers relevant.”

Now we are way, way off into the outer reaches of the universe on this, such that if the commission were set up, it would be hard, if not impossible, for it to contemplate what it’s supposed to be doing and it would be hard, if not impossible, to contemplate an end date. It is too comprehensive, so as to be a meaningless direction.

The third flaw is the federal government. The federal government has a huge role to play in this, along with the other players. When you look at section 1 of the bill, it specifically says “inquire into the provincial role” and “provincial role” means the conduct of the government of Ontario....” But nowhere in the bill is it contemplated to review the role of the federal government. Aboriginal affairs, the negotiation of these treaties going back some 200 years, has always been a federal responsibility. At a minimum, they’ve got to bring in the federal government on this.

Then, just to add insult to injury, back when we had the Ipperwash situation here in Ontario and there was discussion about a public inquiry, on December 9, nine members, all of whom are still members of the official opposition today, opposed an inquiry into the Ipperwash dealings; and again on June 5, 2003, 12 members, all of whom are still current members of the PC caucus opposite who have brought forth this legislation. So I have to ask myself; what changed their thinking on this? Well, what has changed their thinking is, this is just an exercise in stirring up the political pot, in stirring up the folks over in that part of the province, in stirring up the aboriginal groups. Just creating mischief: That’s what this bill is designed—

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

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Mr. Toby Barrett: On behalf of people in Haldimand–Norfolk and Caledonia and, if I may, Brantford as well, I rise today to ask Premier McGuinty for help. It has come to this. It has been four and a half years. We need help.

They say that the only hydro bill that has not gone up in Ontario is the free electricity that is being supplied to the militants that still occupy that subdivision. If anyone here hasn’t been down to Caledonia lately, I can tell you

that the barricades are still up, in spite of the David Peterson negotiations so many years ago, and they have been up for four and a half years now. I was there last night. I can attest to that.

So it has been four and a half years: four and a half years of weeds, broken street lights, a burnt-out tractor-trailer, a toppled hydro tower—these things are still there. The tractor-trailer is at the entrance to the subdivision. No police patrols on Douglas Creek Estates—to their credit, the OPP, as I understand, now do patrol Sixth Line, and the families that live along that road are very thankful for that.

The warrior flag flies on that part of Caledonia’s main street, not the Canadian flag, as we all know. Again, I was down there last night. After four and a half years, there are still no wires on the new power towers that march into Caledonia from Niagara. Recognizing that discretion is the better part of valour, the security cars now sit behind the fence at the Caledonia transfer station. Both Caledonia’s portion of provincial Highway 6 and Argyle Street, as we have heard, are graced by illegal smoke shacks located on crown land and located on Hydro One land. I give Six Nations credit: They are dealing with some of these smoke shacks that are on their property located along provincial Highway 6.

These are some reasons that I continue to feel that this warrants a public inquiry. Thank God Christie Blatchford’s book on Caledonia is coming out October 26. That is going to be the inquiry; that will be out of your hands. Four and a half years ago—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: They can bad-mouth her. They can demonize Christie Blatchford then.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Garfield. Here’s another example: Hundreds of us, including dozens of police, watched an excavator dig a trench across Caledonia’s Argyle Street—right behind my car, actually. That’s the former provincial Highway 6. Yet no one lifted a finger.

Dozens of militants were photographed—I’ve got the photograph on my desk—lifting a van over a bridge guardrail on a Haldimand county road and dropping this van on provincial Highway 6, down below. No one has ever been arrested. I sent everyone in this House a photograph of that happening. No one has been arrested.

A railway bridge and a transformer station were torched, as we know. Highways and railways were blockaded, as we know. Police vehicles have been carjacked and subdivisions halted and occupied up and down the river, especially in Brantford, all seemingly without your government’s permission.

These are but visual symbols of the chaos and the intimidation that has been permitted. Some feel that the present stalemate over what has been deemed an invalid land claim is preferable to what went on before. However, bigger issues are at stake. I know that the member for Welland made reference to some of these things. Tolerance of criminal activity, including the illegal tobacco trade, has bred a mistrust, a loss of confidence in police, courts and government. I’m the area MPP; I’ve

received four and a half years of letters, emails, phone calls, and thousands of names on a petition calling for an inquiry into policing.

Caledonia has raised serious questions about this government's adherence to the rule of law. In a free and democratic society, we have one law for all. We in the opposition have said many times that no one is beneath the law, no one is above the law, and no one is beyond the law. The way in which we interpret and enforce our laws is fundamental to our democratic way of life. We do have government for a reason: at minimum, to ensure justice, to ensure the rule of law and the democratic process. The credibility of this government is lost, and government policy is doomed to fail, when the law and democratic processes are sabotaged.

When democratic processes are sabotaged, the result, as you would know, is invariably not good. When lawlessness is witnessed and permitted, it gets worse. People should be arrested when they break the law, regardless of who they are.

For these and other reasons, we in Ontario's opposition have now three times called for a public inquiry. We did it first in June 2006 after the OPP raid; second, with a private member's bill I put forward, the Truth about Caledonia Act; and presently with Attorney General critic Ted Chudleigh's Public Inquiry into Caledonia Act. All proposals were designed to discover the truth about the provincial role in this ongoing dispute at Douglas Creek Estates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Halton has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I find it passing strange that the Liberals criticize the drafting of the bill. This bill is based on the inquiry into the Ipperwash affair. If there's a problem in the drafting, it's based on the Liberal drafting, so I find it strange that they criticize the drafting when in fact it was basically their bill.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, they flip-flopped on it.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: They flip-flopped on it. They backtracked, which is, unfortunately, very typical of this government.

The people of Caledonia, both the First Nations and the residents of Caledonia, deserve better. They deserve better than this. They live in Ontario. They used to live in what was a safe and prosperous community.

The Chartwell-Brown suit—they were only one couple of many, many couples. There are approximately 7,000 people who live in Caledonia. Brantford has been affected. Haldimand county has been affected. There are probably 75,000 people or so who live in that area who are affected by this dispute. It's happening in Ontario, and they deserve better.

The class-action suit that is proceeding through the legal channels is also going to have a huge impact on the results of Caledonia and could influence the way this government has to react.

Businesses have suffered, home values have gone down and people's rights have been abrogated. Fairness

has not been what the people of Caledonia and the First Nations of Caledonia have experienced from the government's actions in this case.

It's time for fairness to predominate. It's time for the government to take action in this area. Please support this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Chudleigh's bill in about 100 minutes.

WORLD WATER DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE L'EAU

Mr. Kular moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario / Projet de loi 105, Loi proclamant la Journée mondiale de l'eau en Ontario.

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

Mr. Kuldip Kular: Water makes up to 75% of the human body. We can survive for four weeks without food but not more than three days without water. Water helps to control the balance of each and every one of our cells. Very simply, no one can survive without water.

Water levels all over the world are declining every day. In the next 15 years, the world will lose a significant percentage of our accessible water. Water will become the gold standard in the future, and we will trade it like gold.

The UN estimates that one billion people throughout the world lack access to clean water. As much as 50% of the world's population will live in water-scarce areas by 2025, and over the next 20 years, demand for water around the world will exceed the current supply by 40%. Countries with an abundance of water will be rich. However, people living in countries without much water will have a hard time surviving. Water deserves our respect; without it we will die.

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Bill 105 is An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario. Each year on March 22, the United Nations, governments and non-government organizations celebrate World Water Day and a specific theme. Next year, World Water Day will be a vehicle to explore issues about water management, especially in urban and industrialized societies such as ours. It will create a dialogue between governments, municipalities, stakeholders and individuals about the overuse of water. In Ontario, World Water Day could be an opportunity to explore not only global water issues, but also the issues that impact us right here in Ontario.

Since Confederation, the management of water has largely been a provincial responsibility, and this responsibility was meant to be managed for the common good. I believe it's important that our province do everything it can to promote awareness about water issues as they

impact Ontarians. Our society must be aware of water issues in Ontario in order to protect human health and the natural environment, now and in the future.

According to United Nations stats, only 2.5% of our world's total water supply is fresh water. Of that 2.5%, around 30% is hidden from our sight; that means it's underground. The vast majority, roughly 70%, is stored in snow and ice, and the remainder is held in the atmosphere. Despite these stats, just 1% of the world's total fresh water supply is accessible. This 1% must supply over six billion human lives and their activities. Millions of Ontarians rely upon fresh water every day. They use fresh water in agriculture, commercial fishing, power generation, trade, industry, tourism, transportation and at home.

Historically, the first residents of Ontario, the aboriginals, used our lakes, rivers and streams to live and travel. Later on, immigrants from Europe and other parts of the world settled around waterways to farm, trade and build Ontario's first industries. Eventually, Ontario tapped some of these waterways to produce hydroelectricity, which even today accounts for 22% of power generation in this province. This hydroelectricity transformed Ontario into an industrial society and is one of the catalysts to our modern success.

Our reliance on water must be responsibly managed. We learned this through the tragic Walkerton incident, when thousands of Ontarians became ill with water-borne bacteria through the overuse and contamination of the local water source.

To be frank, our reliance on water has not changed since historic times. In fact, it's estimated that Canadians use twice as much water as people in Germany or in the United Kingdom. What we know today about the limits of fresh water should change the way Ontarians think about this resource. We now know that 20% of accessible fresh water in the world is found right here in this province. Given the water shortages experienced in many parts of the world, affecting hundreds of millions of people, that places Ontario in an enviable light. To be frank, many Ontarians, given our busy urban lifestyles, forget that water is required to grow the food we bring to our dinner tables; that water is required to power our lights, our televisions and our computers; and that ships bring from foreign ports the many goods we buy to improve our lifestyles.

As the world's population grows, and as Ontario's population grows, we must look to the future of fresh water and how we manage it. This year's theme, urban water management, is directly relevant to Ontario. It challenges us to be more aware of how we use our water and what we can do to conserve it. It's true that more time, energy and money are required to restore water quality than to conserve it. Fortunately, Ontario has been hard at work, at many levels, to do just this.

Already, Ontario is home to more than 22,000 people employed in the clean water technologies sector. Ontarians are leaders in our green economy, the economy we need to grow in order to protect the natural health and

prosperity of our society. We also need to grow this sector in order to tap into the \$400-billion world market for clean water technologies—of which Ontario can have a good share. That's why we have introduced the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, to help Ontario break into the global market for clean water technologies, because we want to export Ontario's technologies and not our water resources.

We have passed the Lake Simcoe Protection Act to revitalize communities along the shores of this lake and to restore the natural environment. We passed the Water Resources Act in 2007 to ban the bulk export of water from the Great Lakes. We have passed the cosmetic pesticides ban to prevent harmful chemicals from leeching into our soil and our groundwater. We are also investing in our water infrastructure to ensure that we lose less water through aging pipes and water mains as it is brought from pumping stations to our homes and businesses.

Ontarians deserve to hear of these things, and celebrating World Water Day would be an appropriate time. Importantly, Bill 105, if passed, would also help to create a greater awareness among Ontarians of water issues in our province as we continue to urbanize and industrialize. We want the future we strive for and deserve. World Water Day would help to mould the message for educators and public officials for greater conservation in our way of life at home, at school and at work, on our farms, in our factories and institutions, helping people to understand how they can make a difference in their lives and for the common good.

We must create a culture of conservation. This is not an unattainable goal but rather a great opportunity. While we have far to go, the journey has begun. The journey is an investment of time, energy and resources in our future and in the future of our children. It means avoiding costly efforts to restore the more than 250,000 lakes, countless rivers and streams of our beautiful province. It can also mean protecting human life from tragedies, such as Walkerton.

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We can do this if Ontarians understand the challenge at hand. I believe Bill 105, in proclaiming World Water Day in Ontario, can help us achieve the level of awareness we need to keep Ontario the best place in which to live, work and raise a family and to restore its prosperity.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's an honour to speak on this bill, which is, of course, An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario.

I want to thank my colleague the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for agreeing to share his time with me. I also want to congratulate my colleague the honourable member from Haldimand-Norfolk for the excellent leadership he has been showing on the environmental file. My colleague, I know, is going to make some very salient points regarding this bill, and I just want to take a

very few minutes to provide some additional commentary to what I know will be his very constructive remarks.

I'd like to begin by just reminding and putting on the record the fact that our PC caucus has always shown an outstanding commitment to the protection of our natural environment. It's always been a priority. In fact, if you take a look at all of the accomplishments, you might say that we have a legacy of progressive and prudent environmental policy.

Specifically with regard to water safety, I was pleased to have been appointed Minister of the Environment when the O'Connor report was released, and pleased to have been in a position to embark upon a plan to ensure that every single one of those recommendations would be implemented.

Also, we hear a lot about coal and we hear about the fact that the government continues to push back the date for the closing of the coal plants. I believe now it's maybe 2014, but I think it's important to remember that it was our party that did sign the regulation—in fact, I was Minister of the Environment—to close the Lakeview coal plant. As you know, that coal plant is now closed and the rest of the coal plants that the government has promised to close—although they are saying it's going to be 2014; they had to push it back from 2007. I would suggest to you that having formulated the plan for the closure of the Lakeview coal plant and signing the regulation, it would be difficult to do, because the government hasn't shown yet that they have a plan and it takes a long time to close a coal plant. Again, we certainly have a record as being the only government to sign a regulation to close a coal plant.

I'd also like to remind the House that it was our government that put forward the sustainable water and sewage act eight years before the member from Don Valley East did. We also introduced the Safe Drinking Water Act.

I think it's clear that for the Progressive Conservative Party in the province of Ontario, clean water and water conservation have always been priorities. Moreover, our party was solely responsible for Ontario's Living Legacy initiative. As you know, this conservation strategy resulted in the single largest expansion of parks and protected areas in the history of this province.

That brings me to this bill. Obviously, this bill will help to raise the awareness, and I trust that, at the same time, it will act as a reminder to the government to address some of the issues that were raised by the Environmental Commissioner in his recent report, where he pointed out that hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who live along the shores of our lakes and rivers have problems and that there are some issues that need to be addressed.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour to rise in this House and really speak for my constituents and those others in Ontario who count on our voices here in the opposition.

Of course we're going to support this bill. It's motherhood and apple pie. Who wouldn't support World Water Day? Hey, it even sounds nice. I commend the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for bringing it forward. Hopefully it will increase awareness.

Part of the awareness that we in the New Democratic Party hope it increases is awareness of how little the McGuinty government has done on this file. In fact, you need go no further than the Environmental Commissioner himself. He's no wild-eyed Marxist, I'm sure. He's pretty liberal, either with a big L or a small L, and he's come out with an incredibly damning report about this government's inaction on the water file.

You've heard the member from Kitchener–Waterloo talk about their lack of action on coal-fired plants. That is a tragedy whose effects are felt across Canada, not just in Ontario. First of all, they promised to close them in 2007. Now it's 2014, conveniently after the next election. Meanwhile, we rush headlong into expensive nuclear energy, whose cost overruns I know Ontarians are feeling right now on their hydro bills as a pinch—not to mention with the added HST.

This summer I had some time to explore the rivers and the waters of southern Ontario—we were at a couple of friends' cottages, very close to the lake, very close to Lake Ontario—and experience what the water quality in this province is like. I have to say here, in terms of Lake Ontario, the city of Toronto has been doing what it can with very little resource and with very little help from the McGuinty government here at Queen's Park. Some of our beaches are cleaner, in a sense, than they've been in a long time, but the water itself—let me give you a personal story about the quality of the water itself, not only in Lake Ontario but in our lakes in southern Ontario, many of which are used by cottagers for swimming and recreation; where children swim, for heaven's sake.

I have a beloved dog. Some of you who know me know that. Her name is Victoria. She's a bull terrier. She doesn't fit under the government's definition of pit bull only because probably Don Cherry owns one too—might, I mean. Hopefully they won't take her away now. Anyway, Victoria loves to swim. She should be a retriever, but she's not; she's a bull terrier. She loves to swim. So she swam in Lake Ontario, as she does routinely, this summer. She swam in a number of other lakes that will go unmentioned, in cottage country. And guess what happened to Victoria? She's a short-haired dog. She developed a rash. I asked other cottagers, "What is it called?" "River rash," they said. "All the dogs get it that swim in this lake or that lake." Certainly all the dogs get it that swim in Lake Ontario for any length of time. What is a river rash? Well, it's very painful and itchy welts that develop all over the dog. I took her to the veterinarian, and they said it was an allergic reaction, to pollutants in the water, no doubt. They prescribed Benadryl—who knew? Benadryl cures dogs as well as people. Surely, it worked. I thought, "Good grief, this is a dog. Think of the children who are swimming here." Would I let my children swim there? I don't know. After this experience this summer, I'm not so sure.

Let's hear what Gord Miller says about the condition of water under the McGuinty government's watch in Ontario. He said there are two major areas of failure, and the first is municipal waste water discharges that are adding to the pollution of the Great Lakes. Municipal waste water systems are worsening, he warned in his 2009-10 annual report. He said it was mainly due to rapidly growing population, but he also points out that we could be doing way more than we do. The Ontario sides of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario have been found to be poor and deteriorating, like my dog experienced.

He said that, contrasted with Ontario, the Americans on the other side of the border have been able to accomplish remarkable cleanups of their lakes and rivers by strengthening their Clean Water Act and setting clear standards for municipal waste water. Not here though, says Mr. Miller, Environmental Commissioner. Here, water quality is deteriorating at the same time as the burgeoning population growth, and this is due to the increased effluent loadings.

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He calls for action. He says that the Ministry of the Environment and the McGuinty government seem to be stuck in neutral. He says it could slow down, if it had the political will, or even stop the steadily worsening pollution loads by phasing in tighter effluent limits. He says these effluent guidelines have not been changed in decades, and this government has done nothing to change that, particularly, he points out, for Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.

He does point out that one municipality is doing a better-than-average job. That was Guelph, so it would be remiss of me not to mention that. But he says that, by and large, the Ministry of the Environment is MIA—missing in action.

The second point he makes is the failure to monitor and act on old landfills, which puts our groundwater at risk. Our groundwater—it doesn't get more basic than that. He says that the Ministry of the Environment "has lost track of hundreds of aging landfills that threaten Ontario's water and air quality." He says, in the same report, "Without proper protective measures and monitoring, aging landfills can pose a serious risk to the environment. Pollutants can enter ground and surface waters; decomposition produces noxious odours and greenhouse gases ... aging landfills are not adequately inventoried or regularly inspected, and their approvals are not being updated by the province," by the McGuinty government.

He goes on to point out, and people will know, that there are 2,449 landfills in Ontario but only 1%, or 21 landfills, are subject to the more stringent 1998 requirements of the Environmental Protection Act. The ministry only inspects 11% of landfill sites annually. The low inspection rate, he points out, increases the likelihood that contaminated water is seeping from older landfills undetected. More than 1,000 historic landfills, he goes on to say, are estimated to have closed before the ministry itself was created. These old dumps, therefore, are subject to even less scrutiny, if any, by the Ministry of the Environment.

This is frightening stuff. This is scary stuff. This affects the water in our province. So my hope is that on World Water Day—if this bill is passed and goes into law at some point—we reflect on how bad, how absolutely remiss the McGuinty government has been in protecting this incredibly valuable, necessary, important resource right here.

The bill before us, just to get back to it—private member's Bill 105, the World Water Day Act, from the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton—is a noble effort with noble intent but clearly without the backing of his very own government or his own cabinet because they're asleep at the switch on this file. They're not doing anything to recognize that water is a valuable asset. In fact, they're disregarding it, according to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. This is his report. By the way, those who are watching at home, who care about their environment, who care about water quality, should order this. They should look it up and they should read his recommendations and his scathing critique of the Ministry of the Environment and what they haven't done and what they should be doing. It's there; it's black and white. This is your government, I'm afraid, member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, and their sorry inaction on this file.

I hope that part of the intent of the member when he brought forward this bill was to wake up his own cabinet and to say, "Come on, guys and women. Do something. Do something, Environment Minister." Do something about the quality of water because your own Environmental Commissioner of Ontario says you're doing a terrible job. Tell them, please, that my dog got a rash; I'll send the vet bills. Tell them we're concerned about the state of health of our children and our grandchildren and ourselves when we swim in the lakes. Tell them that municipalities need their help, because they certainly don't have the resources to do the job. They count on this government stepping up and doing something.

Like so much under McGuinty's watch, this has been an issue that has gone unwatched. It's something, as the member eloquently pointed out, we cannot do without, not even for a few hours. Please, if anything, I would love to hear—it's sad, really, that we won't hear from the Minister of the Environment, but hopefully we'll hear from someone from the government's side who will tell us what their reaction is to the Environmental Commissioner's report, what they intend to do about it and how they intend to protect the good citizens of Ontario and their water supply, because they're not doing it right now. We're talking groundwater here. We're talking the very substance of life in this province. We should be very frightened. We should be frightened indeed, after reading that report, and we should be called to action. If it takes a World Water Day to wake up this government, maybe that is what we need.

Certainly we'll be voting for this bill. Why not? As I said at the outset, this is a no-brainer. It's motherhood; it's apple pie. But I hope the intent of it is to wake up his own cabinet to answer the charges of neglect that came

out of Mr. Miller's eloquent and well-researched report and do something so that we could all drink water with safety, we could all swim in our lakes and not come out with "river rashes," that we could all count on the groundwater, the very stuff of life, being clean and pure not only for us but for future generations.

Wake up, Ministry of the Environment, Minister of the Environment. "Wake up," I hope the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton is saying. Wake up and do your job. The people of Ontario are counting on you.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon. I think the piece of legislation being brought forward by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton is, as usual, a very practical bill, one that I think is worthy of the support of all members of this House. Despite the previous comments, I think the issue of world water goes far beyond partisan politics. If you look back over the history of this province, our knowledge of the degradation that we've all inflicted on the environment has received more attention and more appreciation.

I can go back to the early 1990s, during the reign of the NDP. I don't think you could swim in Lake Ontario then. I don't think the quality of water in this province was any better then. I don't think anything was being done about the rapid urbanization. The increase in effluent was the same.

I was on council, dealing with that government. We were saying that our towns and our cities were under pressure.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Are you talking about Bob Rae, who's a Liberal?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think I may have hit a nerve over there.

The rapid urbanization. We went to the government, as a council. I was on the council of the region of Halton, the town of Oakville. We told them we needed some assistance. Absolutely no assistance was forthcoming.

Those of you who have ever travelled in the Third World will know that when you come back to a place like Ontario, you tend to look at water a little differently. When you look at a dripping tap, for example, you don't let that tap drip, because of the value that is placed on water in other jurisdictions in this world.

I think that we've all had a part in abusing the Great Lakes in the past. It's a watershed that is the envy of the world. We have such a large percentage of the world's fresh water that we take it for granted. We use a much higher proportion of that on a personal basis than most, if not all, other countries in the rest of the modern world.

If you take a look at a country like South Africa, for example, which is starting to move ahead, which is coming out of the days of apartheid, which is starting to educate its population, the World Trade Organization will tell you one thing is going to hold that country back, and that's the lack of fresh water, a lack of clean water.

A lot of that technology and a lot of that knowledge resides right here in the province of Ontario, so the Water Opportunities Act, I think, is a way for the province of Ontario to share its expertise with the rest of the world, and this bill, in essence, really celebrates that. I think it's a way of telling us that the health of the natural environment throughout the world—not just in Ontario, not just in Oakville, but throughout the world—is something that everybody understands and appreciates. It drives home the message that water is one of the elements of life. If you have no water, you have no life on this planet. It's that simple.

I think that the bill that's come forward is a well-thought-out bill. It's a very positive bill. It allows the world to celebrate on March 22 the fact that it has started to pay attention to the degradation of the one of the most precious resources on this planet and helps us really focus our attention on that.

I think it's a bill that's worthy of support. I don't believe it's apple pie. I don't think it's a no-brainer. I think it's one of the best private members' bills and one of the most practical private members' bills that I've seen in this House in some time.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Obviously, the availability of water and the protection of water as one of Ontario's most important resources—it is a priority for the PC caucus, and I echo the sentiments of the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, a former Minister of the Environment. There's no question, clean water is essential. It's essential to our health, to the success of our way of life, and to the success and the thriving and prosperity that we hope to see return to Ontario.

Water is an element that is so basic, so essential to individuals, to business, to industry and to our environment, that it does require our protection; it does require our promotion—and one reason was given earlier: Our former government committed to enacting all of the recommendations of Justice O'Connor's Walkerton inquiry.

The issue, environmentalism, is so important, and it's so important to focus and to get results. In 1970, I was teaching environmental science. That was the year that Earth Day was implemented. That's a day that over the decades has kind of maintained its brand; it has maintained its success, its implementation around the world. I am concerned when we in this Legislature—and I've only been here 15 years, but I have seen a plethora of designated days and environmental days. I know the member opposite, very recently, also introduced a motion for Zero Waste Day. We get so many of these days that I'm concerned it waters down the message, if you will, and takes away from some of the really compelling public relations and promotional events like Earth Day.

I also echo sentiments—I think the member for Parkdale-High Park made mention of Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller's very recent report. Again, if this government were to truly understand the importance

of water, why do we see an Environmental Commissioner's report indicating "poor" and "deteriorating" conditions near shore areas and along the beaches of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie down in my neck of the woods, parts of Lake Huron? I know the member for Parkdale—High Park made reference to her dog, Victoria, swimming in a lake and getting a rash from—that was Evangeline Lake, did you say? That's a beautiful name for a lake up, I understand, near Georgian Bay. My concern, as with Lake Ontario: If you can't swim in it, and if your dog can't swim in it, why are we drinking it? Sometimes I really do question that, but that's for somebody with a bit more wisdom than I to understand why we do that.

It seems like yesterday when Earth Day came out in 1970, and with respect to this proposal, it does seem like yesterday—I guess it was last February—that we were debating the points of declaring another environmental day put forward by the member. World Water Day is brought to you by this member who created Zero Waste Day. It's the same member and the same caucus who have brought forward Climate Change Awareness Day, Greenbelt Day—there really is quite a list.

Specifically, as we know, we're being asked to designate March 22 as World Water Day, obviously to recognize the vital importance and the increasing demands on not only Ontario's water but on global water supplies. I think there was mention made of the tremendous increase in population not only in Toronto—we hear about that—but in so much of the world. It goes without saying that these are the kinds of points that—we can all agree on these issues.

However, as I mentioned in this House several months ago, in the last session alone—I mean, how far does this go? We debated Peace Officers' Memorial Day; Tom Longboat Day; Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day; Greenbelt Day, as I mentioned; Students Against Impaired and Distracted Driving Day. I hope that doesn't take away from the good work that has been accomplished by the anti-drinking and driving movement since the mid 1980s. We debated Stop Human Trafficking Day—these are all very important—St. John Ambulance Day, Mental Health Awareness Day—I think that was the last session. In this session, there's a whole slew of designated days and weeks to debate.

Once again, I don't mean to downplay the importance or the reasons behind this; I just question this as a tactic. I'm just concerned, almost from a communications perspective. There are only so many days in the year, obviously. There are only so many weeks—52, by last count. I am concerned that we're just a little too much of a good thing, and I do wonder when this government might start looking at what it has done to the economy. I hope these kinds of days aren't a diversion or an attempt by government members to garner some green headlines rather than answering some questions being raised by people in Ontario, questions that are being left behind by a government that's addicted to spending.

I get an awful lot more questions being raised with respect to the HST, eco fees—now there's something.

You've taken the word "eco," and you've almost made "sustainability"—you've left a sour taste in people's mouths by taking these words and kind of twisting them around and kind of botching the rollout. In the long run, it really does not help the environmental movement.

I think we'll continue to devote countless hours to debating these names and celebrating these calendar days, but I'm just really concerned about what kind of impact we're really having as we continue to roll these out.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: It's a privilege and honour, of course, for me to support my fellow physician parliamentary colleague Dr. Kular as he brings forth Bill 105, An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario.

La première Journée mondiale de l'eau a été célébrée en 1993 suivant une résolution adoptée par les Nations Unies en 1992. La journée est célébrée maintenant par les gouvernements à travers le monde entier le 22 mars de chaque année.

La Journée mondiale de l'eau en 2011 cherche à attirer l'attention sur cette question : la croissance rapide de la population urbaine, l'industrialisation et le changement climatique. La Journée mondiale de l'eau abonde dans le même sens que notre gouvernement pour conserver nos ressources d'eau potable et de maintenir sa qualité.

Of course, as a parliamentarian as well as physician, I'm very well aware of the necessity for daily access to clean, potable and healthful, I would say, water. We as doctors are very attuned to things like hydration. We are constantly recommending that people hydrate themselves, and I remind all of us that it's something on the order of six to eight glasses a day. Of course, it can vary with activity and sweating and weather and all the rest of it. But we're very attuned to regulating things like electrolyte balance, sodium and potassium chloride, and of course maintaining water in the right place, meaning within the arterial system and not shifting, as we say, into the third space; say, in the lungs. So, we are well aware of the body balance that's required for water.

1500

I would commend my physician colleague for attempting to bring forward a more system-wide, province-wide, nationwide idea with regard to balancing our water and, in particular, by bringing attention, focus and media scrutiny not only to what the government is up to in its various initiatives but also, of course, a celebration of the fact that Canada is extraordinarily blessed.

I happened to have been part of a reception with the former President of India just two days ago, and he reminded us all collectively that something in the order of about two billion of people across the planet as of today do not have ready and easy access to fresh drinking water.

A number of mentions were made about the government's particular strategy, and I think it's very important for us all to recognize, and particularly members of the NDP, who do have obviously a legitimate environmental interest, that something in the order of 99.8% of the

drinking water tests from municipal drinking water systems in Ontario have actually met our water standards, more than 600 samples were actually tested from 700 sites across Ontario, and all 52 laboratories that are licensed to perform drinking water standards were in fact inspected. There are something like 19 committees in many different arms of not only the Ministry of the Environment but also throughout the cascade of the bureaucracy here at Queen's Park regulating this particular issue.

Ultimately, it's about a government that is very concerned about the protection, enhancement and maintenance of our fresh water resources. So I can only support my colleague Dr. Kular, the MPP from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, who is, of course, bringing forward Bill 105 to recognize World Water Day.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It certainly gives me a great deal of pleasure to support our colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton in introducing Bill 105. It's also a great pleasure to be joining two of my physician colleagues in this House in support of this particular measure.

In my role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, I've had the pleasure of meeting with a number of stakeholders as we've been moving forward with our Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, and some of the things that I've learned in that process have been extremely instructive and I think point to the need for having the public's awareness drawn to the importance of water.

Ontarians use 260 litres of water per day for residential use, and this is about double the amount they use in many countries of the European Union. One needs to ask oneself, why on earth are we using drinking water, potable water, to flush our toilets? Many different examples of things that, in other jurisdictions, where water conservation is extremely important because of the scarcity of water in those areas, people have taken measures to educate themselves in terms of the need of using potable water—there are things like rain barrels being used to collect water from rooftops to be used for purposes other than drinking.

So, in declaring World Water Day in this way through Bill 105, we're essentially making a culture shift. We're asking Ontarians to think long and hard about the importance of water, a very precious resource. Even here, where we have always taken for granted an abundance of clean water, we are straining our supplies.

Even though we're surrounded by the Great Lakes, the four largest lakes on the planet, they replenish only at a rate of about 1% per year, and they are certainly a very fragile ecosystem. So we need and can do so much more in this regard.

In the time I spent with various stakeholders, certainly Ontario technology is there to help us conserve water. Ontario businesses are exporting their technology to many places in the world where water is scarce. There certainly are business opportunities as well.

Some municipalities certainly have taken a lead in the water conservation concept, and the region of York is no exception. They began, in 1998, the Water for Tomorrow program. This allowed the regional municipality of York to engage citizens in water conservation, particularly around their gardening and how much water you really need to water your lawn; and again, using drinking water. It helped many, many people adjust what they were doing in terms of watering their lawns, even going to the extent of advising on plants that required far less water. There was also a wonderful festival in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham at Bruce's Mill, where children from schools across the region would come to learn about the importance of water and the need to conserve. As we all know, children will often drive their parents to think far more about some of these important events.

I'm delighted to support World Water Day. I think it's a good step forward. It certainly will showcase our efforts in terms of conservation as a government, and for all citizens to do their part as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Kular, the honourable member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I want to start by thanking my honourable colleagues from Oak Ridges–Markham, Oakville, Etobicoke North, Parkdale–High Park, Kitchener–Waterloo and Haldimand–Norfolk for speaking on this bill and in this bill's support.

This bill would help improve public awareness of water issues by focusing our attention on a particular day, along with everyone else's in the world, on how much each of our lives is connected to each other's and to the environment. For our efforts to be truly successful, we need more Ontarians to understand how they use water and how their lives are impacted by water.

Protecting our water resources by using less and by keeping them clean benefits public health, the natural environment and our economy. Therefore we, as a legislative body, have a particular duty for the common good. That's why I urge all members on both sides of the House to support this non-partisan bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time allocated for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on it in about 50 minutes.

MICHELLE KROHN ACT
(MODIFIED DRIVER'S LICENCE), 2010
LOI MICHELLE KROHN DE 2010 SUR
LES PERMIS DE CONDUIRE MODIFIÉS

Mr. Ramal moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional modified driver's licence / Projet de loi 97, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin de créer un permis de conduire modifié facultatif.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up again to speak on the very same issue that I had the chance and privilege to speak about almost a year ago, which is to create an optional driver's licence.

I introduced it the first time in November 2009. I had the privilege and honour to debate it on December 3, 2009, and it was passed back then but, due to prorogation of the House, died on the order paper. I thought it's very important for myself and for many people across the province of Ontario to reintroduce it, and hopefully this time it will get the chance, see the light, and will be implemented and benefit many, many people across this province.

1510

I spoke about the history behind introducing this bill. I repeat: It was a lady named Michelle Krohn, who I had the privilege and honour to invite last year to be here with her daughter and many others who came from London, Ontario, from CARP and from many different organizations to witness the debate about this very important issue. Today, I believe, she is watching us from her house. I want to dedicate this bill to her.

I wanted to call it—it's a highway traffic act, actually—the Michelle Krohn Highway Traffic Act, because this woman, this individual, worked very hard. She lobbied many people. She called a lot of MPPs in the past to convince them to sponsor and pass it. That lady worked hard in her lifetime. She's now in her senior years, and she wants to have the chance to drive and to commute, to go buy her groceries, to visit her family—which happens to be in a small town next to London—without any problem, without being dependent on other people to drive her back and forth.

A restricted or optional driver's licence is not unique in Canada. Many other provinces already have those options. I will mention a few of them: Quebec, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador and many other jurisdictions in Canada. They had a similar idea, to create an optional driver's licence for people who, for some reason, cannot drive at regular times or cannot go on 400-series highways.

This bill would allow people to commute without any fear, to have a certain time for them to drive in the daytime, not at night, and inside cities and small towns.

As you know, Ontario is a huge province. Even though the majority of people live in the cities, a lot of people live in the countryside, where transit does not exist. Persons living in those areas cannot depend on transit service to give them the chance to go to the grocery store or to see a doctor. Therefore, it's important to have the ability to drive. They can go to the grocery store. They can visit their family. They can buy whatever they want from the mall or see their doctors.

As I mentioned to you, in Newfoundland and Labrador, they have restrictions, a custom-designed driver's licence to meet the needs of people. They have a speed zone, daytime-only and a geographical region; also some special equipment and a special size of car, and many different modifications to allow people to drive and look after themselves.

In the past, when I introduced this bill, I had the privilege and honour to debate it in the House. I know the member opposite of the Conservative Party from Newmarket–Aurora, stood in his place and said, "I will support it fully, but we have some reservations." I was speaking to him yesterday. He was happy, because I listened to his concerns; also, we eliminated the age factor in the bill. Now this bill will involve everyone: seniors, young people, females, males. Any person who cannot drive, for different reasons, will be able to have a restricted driver's licence and have the ability to commute, to visit, to do whatever they want on a daily basis.

I remember that back then the member from Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Klees, said the age 65 factor wouldn't be good, because it discriminates against people. So in Bill 97, we eliminated the age factor. Also, I listened to the member of the third party from Timmins–James Bay, Mr. Bisson. He mentioned the same thing.

So, today, I'm looking forward to support from all the members of this House. We've eliminated those factors. We've opened it up for everyone. We've opened it up for all the people of the province of Ontario, even though I believe the majority of people who will benefit from this bill are people who have the age factor: the seniors.

I had the chance and the privilege last Sunday to attend a silver anniversary for Over 55 (London). It's a group that deals with seniors, to help seniors to maintain jobs, to find jobs, and also to be able to remain active in the community. Because as you know, the stereotype, when a person is over 55—the employment demand is not so high for them. That's why they created this group: in order to maintain their ability, to maintain their connections and to have the ability to find a job and to maintain the job they have.

I think that the optional driver's licence would help them a lot. Because you know what? For some reason, especially in the countryside, especially in the small, rural areas, if you don't have a car, you cannot drive and you cannot maintain a job, so you cannot have a job. If you don't have a car, you cannot go to the grocery store. If you don't have a car, you cannot see the doctor any time you want. You will be restricted, and your movement will be restricted. So I think that creating this option for many people will give them freedom and the chance to be mobile, to be able to depend on themselves, to be able to do whatever they want on a daily basis. I think it's an important initiative to allow our population to continue to be mobile and to depend on themselves, especially if they have the mental capacity and the physical capacity to do so.

I was talking to a few people the other day, and they are in a well condition. They can see very well, physically they are strong, but for some reason they don't like to drive on the highway, especially the 401. I know that many of us use Highway 401 on a regular basis, and many people are afraid when they go on the 400 highways, because they see lots of trucks, lots of cars, lots of traffic. If you are not a good driver, you have the fear

from other people around you. So why not give a chance to those people who don't want to drive on the highways like the 400-series highways to be able to drive within the cities and within the towns, with certain conditions? Also, some people don't like to drive in the wintertime because there's lots of snow falling on the ground, and it creates slippery conditions; some people are scared to drive. We have to give them that chance.

As I mentioned also, some people with diabetes and some kinds of vision issues don't like to drive at nighttime. They should have the option to drive during the daytime if they don't want to drive at nighttime. It's good for them, and it's good for other people driving on the road. It's safe for the people who drive under certain conditions and also good for other people who are driving on a regular basis. They don't want to be hit or have accidents with the people who are not comfortable to drive in certain conditions or at a certain time of day or on certain highways.

I spoke with CARP, I spoke with the Minister of Transportation, I spoke with Over 55 and many different seniors groups in the province of Ontario, and many people believe they should have the freedom and the ability to choose where they can drive, when they can drive, and certain conditions.

I'm looking forward this time, after modifying the bill, to getting support from both sides of the House. As I mentioned and will repeat again, the member from the Conservative Party spoke in support, but they have some kind of reservation in terms of age limit, and the member from the NDP raised the same concern. This time, we went back and we did more research, we talked to more people and we got advice from all the people concerned about this issue. We came out with a new version, and hopefully this new version will help everyone and give them the chance to support it.

Before I finish, I want to continue to thank Michelle Krohn for her advocacy and for her hard work to convince many seniors' groups to support this bill. I wish she'd had the chance to come and listen to our debate today, because I believe she'll be happy. She worked for a long, long time with many different people in the city of London and in the province of Ontario to see such a bill exist, to give her the chance again to be able to drive, to be able to commute, to be able to visit her daughter and her friends, and to be able to go to the grocery store and to see her doctor without depending on other people.

So many people in this province feel pride, and feel that they want to maintain their freedom, and freedom these days, especially in the small towns and cities, cannot be achieved without the ability to drive from point A to point B. Those people still believe that they are strong enough to do the work by themselves without being dependents, but they want that extra push to give them the chance to do so.

1520

At the present time, according to the Highway Traffic Act, you obtain a driver's licence for a certain time and then after that you have to enter the test to do the

highway. If you fail on the highway, you lose the first G test. I think it's not fair for some people who choose not to drive on the highway.

Hopefully, if we pass this bill, and hopefully, when this bill goes to committee, it will be supported by both sides of the House and also by the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Speaker, I will thank you very much and also thank all the people and all the members of this House, whatever the speakers support or speak against. Hopefully we can move forward to see some kind of implementation and some kind of progress to help our communities, our people and especially our seniors in this province.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm so pleased to be able to speak to Bill 97, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional modified driver's licence, presented by the member for London–Fanshawe. He talked about the fact that this bill had been previously introduced. As was mentioned, it was presented. In fact, second reading debate took place in December 2009. At the time the bill was called Bill 221, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional conditional driver's licence for seniors, and I think that was the point that the member for London–Fanshawe talked about.

He talked about this word. He mentioned the fact that the Legislature prorogued and this bill died on the order paper. You know, when I first started as a staffer here and I would use that word, no one would know what I was talking about, but now everybody knows. When someone uses the word that Parliament or the Legislature prorogues, everyone knows because of what happened with our federal colleagues. But you know, this is a good thing. The fact that the Legislature prorogued was a good thing here. Although this bill died, it allowed the member for London–Fanshawe to take into consideration some of the comments that were made by the opposition parties, and I commend Mr. Ramal for doing that.

He mentioned the member for Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Klees, who is himself our transportation critic and also a former Minister of Transportation. I know he would have loved to be here, and I'm glad that both of you did have the opportunity to chat yesterday. I certainly admire Mr. Klees. He's my mother-in-law's MPP. Freda Roberts, my mother-in-law, lives up in Newmarket. Freda's a big fan of Mr. Klees, and she wouldn't want me to speak badly of him. I think she's proud that I can speak on his behalf today, to some degree, when he thanks you for mentioning him earlier and the fact that this bill was changed because there were some issues with Bill 221, the fact that it was an age-specific condition. I think you mentioned Mr. Bisson as well, who spoke about the discriminatory nature. So I'm glad that this bill is back here today for second reading, and I'm glad that I can speak in favour of this bill's introduction for second reading.

I've spoken to a number of constituents, and one of the issues that the member for London–Fanshawe talked

about was 400-series highways. I can remember speaking to one of my Leeds–Grenville constituents, and she had great anxiety because she had to go through her driver’s test and had to go on the 401. She hadn’t driven that highway for a number of years, and she called the constituency office expressing concern: Was there a way that we could get that section exempt from her driver’s licence? In fact, I found out later that she hired a driving instructor because it was that much of an anxiety for her, the fact that she had not—that wasn’t in her comfort zone. She had used her car in recent years to do exactly what the member for London–Fanshawe talked about: It was a vehicle for her to get her groceries, to go to doctor’s appointments or to church or to visit her family, and a 400-series highway just wasn’t in the cards. She used a county road or a city or township road. It just wasn’t in her repertoire to bomb out on the 401 and take an appointment.

That constituent and the one you spoke of, who was the drive for this bill—I think it’s very important that we provide that flexibility. As well, I think back to when Bill 221 was introduced and the issue of night vision, the fact that it wasn’t just a problem that people over 65 had. The bill or the legislation should be flexible so that it would deal with that. I think the member for London–Fanshawe has addressed that.

The one thing that I think was discussed back in December 2009, on the previous bill, and I think bears mention today—from my perspective, we, as MPPs, have a number of our constituents call us when their licence has been pulled by a medical doctor, whether it be for a seizure or an accident or some other medical condition. That whole process that we deal with as MPPs and our constituency staff deal with is a tremendous cause of anxiety for our constituents. It’s a rather long and cumbersome process. Many of them feel that it causes far too much disruption because by the time that the actual suspension is given, the medical doctor who has pulled the licence has given the medical clearance to get it back. It’s a real difficulty. I’ve dealt with hundreds of these cases over the years at the Leeds–Grenville constituency office level.

I hope that parties are going to support this today and that it moves forward past second reading; that there are some hearings that the Minister of Transportation looks at, not just with this bill but that whole medical process because, from my perspective, we deal with this on a weekly basis and it does need to be looked at by all.

From my perspective, I’m very pleased to support this legislation because, again, it takes away the age-specific reference that the previous bill had. Obviously, my colleagues and I support providing mobility to Ontarians. We appreciate the clauses the member for London–Fanshawe has added to this bill to be flexible in different cases for reasons not to drive, whether it be the 400-series highways or other additions that the modified licence would have.

I believe that it would be wise for us to look at other areas. I know that we just had the Canada 55+ Games in

my community of Leeds–Grenville. We had people from all over Canada attend. It’s funny, that when 55-plus folks get together—and these athletes spent a lot of time together; there was a lot of social interaction. It wasn’t just competing in their particular sport. There was a lot of social time, a lot of downtime when they could interact. It’s amazing the discussions that the groups have regarding driving in provinces. I spent some time in the athletes’ village when they hosted the Canada 55+ Games in August. There was a lot of discussion about different legislation and what different provinces do for drivers. As well, being a border community, we have our seniors compare what takes place in New York state with what takes place in Ontario.

There’s a lot of variation that takes place and I’m glad the member for London–Fanshawe mentioned that other provinces provide this optional modified driver’s licence. As we have the discussion this afternoon, I’m hoping, as does the member for London–Fanshawe, that we will get some support and we’ll be able to move forward. I am pleased that he and the member for Newmarket–Aurora spoke yesterday about it because I know he was very pleased with some of the things that were talked about last December, some of the issues. Some of his concerns were accommodated, that we have some flexibility in today’s legislation.

1530

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I’m pleased to rise in support of our colleague from London–Fanshawe’s Bill 97. Certainly we’ve heard some good support from our colleagues from the PC Party.

I was able to find a reference which also very much supports this in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. The findings are that, in fact, drivers with restricted licences have lower traffic violation rates than those without restrictions and that at-fault crash rates decreased after the introduction of restricted or conditional licensing.

As has been mentioned, there is experience now with many other provinces, and there’s an accommodation. We are all going to age. We are all going to, at some point, find our faculties gradually diminishing.

I’m particularly interested in this topic because my own father, who was mentally in excellent shape at the age of 86, went to renew his driver’s licence. He passed his written test with flying colours—I think with 100%, he told us—and all of a sudden we realized that this meant that he was going to be driving for another two years, to the age of 88. My son was living with him at the time, and he took me aside and he said, “Mom, do you realize that grandpa visits his friends in Scarborough in the evening very regularly using the 401?” My son was extremely concerned because he could see that my father’s eyesight at night wasn’t really what it should be. He was worried about his reaction time, so the thought of him speeding along the 401 was of concern.

I decided actually to phone the family doctor and suggest that she perhaps have a chat with my father about

some very sensible limitations on his driving—in fact, specifically suggesting, “Do not drive at night. Do not drive on the 401 series.” Well, my father somehow interpreted that she was going to say that he needed to take a highway driving test, and he got very nervous and very, very upset. He really just, as our colleague from Leeds–Grenville said, went into a state of complete shock and paralysis, and he decided he should stop driving completely, which meant that he had a very difficult situation.

He was living on his own—well, with my son being there part time, but basically he was responsible for his shopping. What he decided to do, when he decided he shouldn't drive at all, was start walking. He decided to go along the icy sidewalks all the way to all the shops—the LCBO was one his stopping-off spots as well—and he fell. He fell on the ice. Luckily, there were no broken bones but, again, then he became extremely nervous, even about going out and doing the shopping. It was a really sad situation.

If there had been a restricted-licence situation, I think he could have been very easily accommodated. He could have continued to drive to the stores. He would have felt independent, and we would have been quite confident that he was well able—he had lived in that neighbourhood for 40 years. He could find his way to the shops very, very easily and very safely, and it would have preserved his dignity. It was a very sad time for him.

I commend the member again for bringing this forward. I think it will be very important for seniors to see this legislation passed.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's always a privilege and an honour to rise in the House and contribute to the debate at hand, and my remarks will be in support of the bill.

As the mover, Mr. Ramal, mentioned at the beginning, this is the second time that he has introduced this particular bill. Indeed, it would be very nice to see the bill travelling with a committee and getting more input on the issue from various stakeholders.

The bill itself does not call for either seniors or anybody else to get this special modified licence; I think this applies to anyone with restrictions to their driver's licence. The intent of the bill is especially to assist those who have had some difficulties in getting what we would call a standard licence. As the mover of the bill was saying, this would go a long way in helping those people, and especially seniors, to move around, get out of the house, do some chores, shop and be a bit more mobile.

It doesn't take a brain to say that if you abandon yourself, if you let yourself go, you tend to become more irascible, more lonely; you perhaps get sick more easily, and of course, then there are consequences as well. I think the bill has very good merit, not only to move forward, but to give attention and say yes, I think we should allow those people who may be older or have whatever condition, but who are in a condition where they may drive locally in the neighbourhood, to go and

buy the newspaper or milk, or just go for a ride in the daytime. We are not talking highway driving. We are not talking evening hours. We are talking daytime, on local roads.

I can tell you that I have seniors in my area who, every morning, five days a week, jump into the car—three or four of them—and they drive all the way to the mall up at Jane and Rutherford, Vaughan Mills, solely to go and walk around inside the mall four or five times. Doing that is very healthful. It brings them together, they socialize, they get some good exercise, they stop, they get a coffee, and then they chitchat. They talk about politics or whatever, and then they go home. It's wonderful to see them socializing two or three hours a day, four or five days a week. Then they can go home, and in the meantime, they may drive by the milk store and do some other chores as well.

So I think it has very good merit and saying that, there are conditions attached to it. As a matter of fact, the bill calls for identification stickers or some other way so they know that this is a licence with a condition.

I would say to the House, let's move it along. Let's approve second reading, and let's give the mover of the motion the opportunity to see the bill go to various communities and hear the various stakeholders.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have no problem supporting the bill. I think it makes some reasonable sense to take this bill on to committee and look at it in a proactive way. But I have to tell you, there are some cases floating around the province right now—I just had a case in my riding this week—about some of the problems we have in the licensing system.

It's easy to bring new laws and new rules and new private members' bills forward, but if we can't fix the system we've got, then we've got a problem adding new legislation to it. I want to explain what it is.

A gentleman called me who has been working with my constituency office in Orillia over the last two or three weeks. This gentleman has a job opportunity for a young lady who has been on social assistance in the past, a single mom with three little kids. She didn't realize that her licence had been suspended because her former boyfriend had a bunch of charges and he hadn't paid them. They took her licence away, so as a result of that, she was driving around for a year without knowing and even was pulled over one time in a RIDE program for a check, and the police didn't check her; they just asked her about it. They checked her licence, but didn't realize that it had been suspended. Now, when she goes back to get her licence, she finds out that she's going to have to start with a G1 and G2. It will be over a year before she can have a driver's licence, and she's been driving all along; everything's perfectly fine with her driving.

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She has no criminal convictions or anything like that. It was her former boyfriend who caused the problems. She talked to the MTO; she talked to the minister's

office. They said, “Nope, those are the rules. That’s the way it’s going to be.” As a result of that, this young lady cannot get a driver’s licence, will not be able to have this job and will be back on social assistance. That’s what I call a problem. I’m trying to reach people in the MTO—and if anybody would call my office, I would really appreciate it, because, I can tell you, these types of things are unacceptable. This should be fixed. This should be from the minister’s office or from the director level at some point, so that people who are worthy of driving, who have not had any problems in the past, shouldn’t have to go through this long process to get their licence back, when it has been suspended, when they have not really done anything wrong. It’s the red tape and the bureaucracy that are causing this to be a problem.

I know I give this specific story, but what I’m saying it for is that it’s nice to pass this new legislation, but let’s fix the system we currently have before we add a lot of other details and complex legislation to it.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I wish to speak to this bill, but first I wish to commend the member from London–Fanshawe for bringing this forward again. I wish he didn’t have to.

I want to start by saying that this is another example where Ontario can do better on private members’ bills. If one was a member of the House of Commons in Ottawa and brought forward a private member’s bill, and if that bill were not dealt with within the session and if the Parliament prorogued, those bills, every single one of them, would be protected. They don’t die on the order paper; they don’t have to be reintroduced. What dies on the order paper in Ottawa are government bills, because the government and the government alone has the authority to prorogue or not prorogue, and they have to determine whether or not they want to reintroduce their bills, and have every opportunity to do so should they prorogue Parliament. The private members’ bills are protected so that they continue to go through the system and, if they’re successful, can become law. I would suggest that we, as a Legislature, need to look at that ourselves. We need in the future to have the foresight to protect private members’ bills so that they don’t have to be introduced and reintroduced and reintroduced again.

I go back to last week. There were three private members’ bills that were up for debate. One was on its fourth go-round, one was on its third go-round and the third one was on its third go-round as well. That was a total of 10 times that members were standing up, trying to get a private member’s bill through. In each and every one of those three cases, as in this, it passed easily in the House and ought to have gone to committee. I am suggesting that if we can protect those private members’ bills during the life of a Parliament and if government, particularly the government party, can see fit to allow them to proceed through the committee process, to see whether or not there’s community support, to see whether there’s government support, to see whether there’s

bureaucratic support, then perhaps maybe some of them can find their way into the force of law, because all too often, private members’ bills are good for this House in terms of the debate and the bringing out of new ideas, but they never reach that final level of becoming law. I believe this bill should.

I’m standing here in support of this bill, the same as my colleague Mr. Bisson, who spoke on the last occasion, stood in support of this bill. He had some concerns. The member has addressed those concerns, but I’m equally sure that those concerns would have been addressed in committee in any event. I’m positive that by listening to what were perceived to be some of the shortfalls, the committee would have made the necessary amendments. But I commend my friend for having the foresight and looking ahead for today, seeing what those were and making them himself.

I do look at the bill and I do look at people who would benefit from this bill. It has been said already but I think it bears some repetition to say that people who live in small-town, rural and isolated Ontario don’t have the same opportunities nor do they have the same problems as a driver would have in urbanized Canada, particularly those who live in the GTA, around this area, or in Ottawa, London or the larger cities.

I’m saying that because if you have an opportunity, as I do, to drive around Ontario—and I’m sure all members have driven around Ontario—you can tell the fundamental difference between driving in downtown Toronto at any hour of the day and driving on a rural road in Essex county, just to pick that one out of the hat. You can tell the fundamental difference in terms of the number of cars. You can tell the speed at which people drive. You can tell that in rural and small-town Ontario, on country roads, people obey all of the speed limits and all of the signs that you’re not going to see here in this city. You won’t see people racing to get through lights, cutting people off to change lanes and a thousand other things that are everyday happenstance if you drive in this great city.

I would be very nervous of having people who are not used to driving in urban Ontario suddenly coming here with a driver’s licence and trying it out. Whether they were 20, 40, 60, 80 or 100 years old, I would be very nervous of them coming here for the first time and trying to drive in this city or on the 400-series highways around this city. Once you get outside of Toronto, once you get to the west past Milton or to the east past Bowmanville, driving on the 401 is not that difficult. I don’t find it any more difficult driving on the 401 or the 404 once you get north of about Richmond Hill than driving on any other road. But I will tell you, and I think it bears saying, that if you’re going to drive where the traffic is congested, where it goes from eight lanes down to four, where you’ve got collector lanes cutting in, where you’ve got commuting traffic of 100,000 cars in an hour zooming along and changing lanes and trying to jockey to get ahead of the next guy, it is very dangerous, and people ought not to drive there unless they feel safe.

You also have the problem in rural Ontario that there is a real paucity of opportunity to take public transit or even taxis. My wife and I have a summer home in a little town called Amherstburg; there is one taxi. There is one. If you need to go up to Windsor to catch the train or something and if you can get the guy, then good luck to you. You usually have to phone a day in advance to make such a long trip, which is some 30 kilometres. You just can't go out on to the street and hail one. If you did, you'd be standing there for days until he might be driving by. There are no buses, there are no streetcars and of course there's no subway, and if people want to get around, they have virtually no opportunity other than to drive their cars.

I like this bill. I like this bill because it will give people in small-town, rural Ontario the opportunity to keep their licence and to drive on roads on which they feel comfortable and are capable of driving on. It can be restrictive, and I believe it should be restrictive. I believe that this is nothing different than someone going out and getting a G1 or G2 licence. We restrict in the first couple of years what they can do. We restrict zero alcohol no matter what your age. We restrict that you can't drive on the 400-series highways. We restrict that you can't drive after dark if you're of a certain age. We restrict all kinds of things when someone gets a new licence, and I think we should restrict things when someone starts to get older or less capable of driving; we need to restrict that as well. So the member is absolutely right in coming forward with this.

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I remembered my own father, who died a couple of years ago, as the honourable doctor here talked about her father—88 years old. My father died with all his wits about him, every single one of them. He drove until the day he collapsed and had to be taken to the hospital. I had to go get the car. He was still driving. But I felt comfortable, because he knew his own limitations. He knew that he drove from the little tiny community of Cardiff—population about 200—where he and my mother lived, to the bustling metropolis of Bancroft—population, I think, about 800 or 900—that had two supermarkets, a doctor, a dentist and some banks.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It was probably a little bit more than that.

Mr. Michael Prue: Sorry, I said 800; about 2,800.

That's where the community life was. That's where you had to go at least once a week to do the necessities of life. In his last four or five years of life, those were the only places. He drove to exactly the same places every single week: to the bank, to the dentist, to the doctor, to the supermarkets and back to Cardiff.

When he had to go to hospitals in faraway Peterborough—he'd have to go down there once in a while—he would hire someone to drive him.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That's the big city.

Mr. Michael Prue: That was the big city. It was country roads, but he no longer felt safe. He would always leave first thing in the morning to make sure he

could get back before it got too dark, because he did have trouble seeing at night. He was not regulated, but I don't see anything that would have been wrong with him being regulated.

Now, he lived in fear, every two years, that he wasn't going to get his licence, because he vowed, and his vow came absolutely true, that he was going to live in his house till he died, and that is the reality. He lived his dream. That's what happened. To take away his licence would have caused him undue hardship.

This is a good thing. The province needs to get on with this. I ask my colleagues opposite, Liberals all, to do something about this, to help your colleague from London-Fanshawe push his private member's bill through.

I said the same thing to the member from Niagara Falls last week, who had brought his bill forward four separate times only to see nothing happen with it. You have a caucus. You have the strength in numbers. You have to stand up for your rights. You have to tell cabinet, and in particular the Premier, that you want some of your bills to go through and you have to get agreement on those bills.

I know that we in the New Democratic Party, through our House leader—and I'm sure the Conservatives through their House leader as well—are more than willing to negotiate to let all of this happen, but it needs some impetus on the government side to help push these through.

We have good ideas in this place. All members in this place have good ideas. It's up to you to make them happen, and it's not good enough for the member for London-Fanshawe to come forward again with a good idea and see it simply die.

The people of Ontario, particularly older people, are relying on us to do what is right. We have that opportunity. The member from London-Fanshawe has given us that opportunity. Please don't let him down.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and pay tribute to the member from London-Fanshawe, who I think has introduced a bill that has some logical beauty to it. We all know that the human condition will make our skills improve with age, and it makes sense that, as we grow a little older, those skills will begin to diminish.

We've been able to get entry into the ability to drive down to a point where we've now got a graduated driving system, where as your skills and experience improve, you're allowed to do more and more things. For a G1, for example, you can't drive on 400-series highways, you can't drive at night, you can't drive with other teenagers in the car—a few restrictions that allow you to get used to driving an automobile—and eventually you move to a full licence.

Now, as our life expectancy has soared as a society—we've seen the ending of mandatory retirement in Ontario—people in the province of Ontario are simply living longer and living more actively, and part of that

activity is the ability to continue to be mobile, to do things outside their home and to live independently.

I think the approach that is being brought forward by the member from London–Fanshawe really exemplifies how a private member’s bill should be dealt with. It was brought forward once. Suggestions were made by the opposition parties as to how the bill could be improved. He went back, he made those improvements and he brought it forward again.

So certainly I think it makes a lot of sense that this bill receive the support of all members of the House and that the amendments be made to the Highway Traffic Act after it has been through the committee system, because it’s just going to promote a greater means of transportation for all our citizens, and for those for whom, in a sense, we’ve been dealing with an “all or nothing.” Either you can drive or you can’t; either you lose your licence or you keep your licence. What this bill is suggesting is that as your skills may be diminished but not gone entirely, there should be allowances made within the system that allow a licence to be granted, for example, where you aren’t allowed to drive on the highways but you are allowed to drive within town. You are allowed to drive to the grocery store, to the doctor’s, to wherever you need to go, rather than have that licence taken away from you because you weren’t capable of passing the criteria that have been established for driving on the 400 series of highways.

It makes sense if you look at some of the other jurisdictions in the country that have implemented similar bills to this. You look at Quebec, Manitoba, and Newfoundland and Labrador, and they’ve all got special licences that restrict drivers to daytime only. So certainly there’s an example of where this actually has been put into place and is working well. I can see no reason from any of the debate that I’ve heard this afternoon, from either the government side or the opposition side, why the suggestions being put forward by the member from London–Fanshawe wouldn’t work to the advantage of all Ontarians when it comes to their ability to drive, when it comes to their ability to remain mobile in their own communities in the way that seniors are still allowed to do in other provinces throughout Confederation.

It really takes the ageism factor out. It’s a skills-based, ability-based system. I think that most people in this House would agree that that is the fair way to go.

I would urge all members to support this bill and I once again express my admiration for the member for London–Fanshawe for bringing forward a very sensible bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for London–Fanshawe has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank all the people who spoke in support of this bill.

Thanks to the member from Leeds–Grenville for when he mentioned about changing the age factor, because as I mentioned, I listened to the opposite side, and if we can

make a change, I have an open mind on many different issues.

I also want to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, who mentioned her father’s story. Your father’s story is still repeating itself across the province of Ontario on a daily basis. I have a lot of seniors come to my office and complain about this issue. They don’t want to go on Highway 401, they don’t want to go on the 400-series highways, but they want to have the driver’s licence to go to the grocery store and to their doctor.

Also, to the member from York West, I have a lot of seniors get together on a regular basis to go to the mall, to have a coffee, to socialize, to walk, because it’s important for them to keep that companionship going. Without a driver’s licence, they cannot commute. They cannot do anything.

To the member from Simcoe North, I know we have a lot of obstacles in our system, but as a matter of fact, this one here will help a lot of people be able to commute and be able to do the work by themselves.

To the member from Oakville, I thank you for your talk and support.

To the member from Beaches–East York, you’re right. Many people, especially in a rural area, in a small community, cannot commute because they don’t have the transit system. Without a car, without driving, they cannot do anything. To phone a taxi—in some areas they have no taxis. There’s maybe one taxi for the whole town, so they have to wait sometimes a day or two to be able to go see a doctor, to go to the mall for shopping or to look after themselves.

So I think it’s very important for all of us, for all the people of this province, to have the ability to have the optional restricted driver’s licence—if they wish to drive on the highway, they can; if they don’t, they don’t—instead of combining all levels of drivers in one driver’s licence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members’ public business has now expired.

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO CALEDONIA ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L’ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE RELATIVE À LA SITUATION EXISTANT À CALEDONIA

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We’ll first deal with ballot item number 34, standing in the name of Mr. Chudleigh.

Mr. Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 73, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about the provincial role in the ongoing dispute on the Douglas Creek Estates property in Caledonia.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll vote on the item after we do the next two ballot items.

WORLD WATER DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE L'EAU

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The next ballot item is ballot item number 35.

Mr. Kular has moved second reading of Bill 105, An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Kular.

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I think the bill should be referred to general government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): So ordered. The bill will be referred to the general government committee.

MICHELLE KROHN ACT (MODIFIED DRIVER'S LICENCE), 2010

LOI MICHELLE KROHN DE 2010 SUR LES PERMIS DE CONDUIRE MODIFIÉS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The final ballot item today is ballot item number 36.

Mr. Ramal has moved second reading of Bill 97, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional modified driver's licence.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Ramal.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed. The bill will be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. So ordered.

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

The division bells rang from 1601 to 1606.

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO CALEDONIA ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE RELATIVE À LA SITUATION EXISTANT À CALEDONIA

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 73.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted

Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield

Hardeman, Ernie

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Jaczek, Helena

Kular, Kuldip
Mangat, Amrit
McNeely, Phil
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony

Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 5; the nays are 22.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business have now been completed.

Orders of the day? Minister without portfolio.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Phillips has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1609.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, 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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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
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David Zimmer
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Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
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Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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