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Tuesday 5 October 2010

Mardi 5 octobre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour to stand and represent the people of my riding and the people of Ontario. It's interesting that we're talking about controlled substances. I know that I'm not alone in this because as the caffeine starts coursing through my system and wakes me up, I recognize that we are all addicted to something. Quite frankly, the most common addiction of all is caffeine. Western society would cease as we know it were we not to drink our coffee or tea. Really, what we're talking about is addiction to controlled substances, to those substances that we have deemed illegal.

I want to give a shout-out before I begin to some phenomenal people in my own riding from the Parkdale drug strategy. We started this about four years ago in my riding, soon after I was elected for the first time. We brought together all of the care providers across Parkdale who deal with anybody with mental health and addiction issues. This included wonderful people from St. Joseph's, St. Christopher House, Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre and others. We wanted to institute and put into place in our own riding the phenomenal work that Toronto has done.

I want to herald what Toronto has done on the Toronto drug strategy force. They've looked at prevention, education, harm reduction and then enforcement. We've sought

to actually put into place those four pillars in Parkdale. We've done such things as a five-cent-a-drink campaign, which I know Senator Kirby tried to bring in across Canada. The five-cent-a-drink campaign is a wonderful idea that we put into place—we do it once a year in Parkdale—where five cents of every drink from contributing bars that want to take part goes toward drug rehab and other programs run by those who are members of the Parkdale drug strategy. We've done educational events and, hopefully also, preventative events. We are trying to put into place those four pillars.

I want to commend all the members of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions because one of the hopes that we had in the Parkdale drug strategy, and I know that Toronto had as well with their drug strategy, is that the province step up, because it was quite obvious to us that the province was absent on this issue. This report is a wonderful document. I certainly suggest that people at home take time to read it. Its recommendations, all 23 of them, are all absolutely apropos. It worked as a committee of this House should work; that is, together; not at odds but together to move forward on this most intractable issue.

Now, the sad reality is that in seeing this bill, which is, quite frankly, a good bill—we're going to support it—it's such a tiny step. Why, oh why couldn't this government act on all 23 of these recommendations? A wonderful group that I've also had the pleasure of working with—Tragically OHIP, they were called—a group of parents whose children suffered from mental health and addiction issues and couldn't get help anywhere in the province, most of whom had mortgaged their homes to be able to send their children to provinces where they did have rehabilitation services or to the United States at incredible expense because there was literally nothing here for them—hose parents would love to see these recommendations put into place.

There are some very famous drug addicts. I think of a personal hero, in terms of writing: William Burroughs. I think of Sigmund Freud; William Halsted, the father of modern surgery, who apparently performed most of his surgeries while high on morphine. Keith Richards. We could go on and on. Lindsay Lohan. People with money can find services; that's my point here. What we're talking about is the great and vast majority of people with mental health and addiction issues who, in this province, where we're supposed to enjoy medicare, can't find services.

I know for the folk in Parkdale and in High Park—because addiction doesn't know the difference—for my

folk who would like to get into rehabilitation, there's usually at least a six-to-eight-month wait. Now, a six-to-eight-month wait means for many, quite literally, death. A six-to-eight-month wait to be able to tackle their problem isn't good enough, and when they get into rehabilitation, if they're the lucky ones, usually it's a few weeks that they're looking at. We know from studies that it takes a few months, at least, of residential treatment before you are ready to go out into the world, back to your community, and even then you need follow-up.

0910

By the way, another shout-out to those incredible people who provide the self-help that is the 12-step movement. Certainly, the 12-step movement across North America and around the world has been responsible for saving as many lives, or more, as the invention of penicillin. This was a reaction to the absence of treatment and to the stigma of addiction that's in our communities. Those who are involved in 12-step groups know that, first of all, many, many people need residential treatment. That's simply not there for the vast majority of people who need it.

I think of a very touching story. The last time I was in the emergency ward, for a minor injury, I overheard a young doctor—because you're separated only by a curtain—in one of the next cubicles. I listened to the entire transaction between him and his patient, who are both, of course, anonymous. She was saying that she was in a methadone program but she just couldn't last until the next treatment; that she was in pain. This young doctor prescribed her Percocet—oxys, the poor man's heroin.

My concern about this bill, if I have one—because all it really does is tell us where the prescription is happening, who's getting the prescription, and what doctors are writing more and what pharmacists are filling more—is that it doesn't take into account what you do with that information. This young doctor wrote her a prescription for Percocet to last her until her next methadone treatment. This was a woman in pain—not the pain of a physical injury, but the pain of addiction, which is also painful. I wonder, when these doctors who deal with patients in pain or patients with addictions are flagged, what are we going to do with this information? I'm a little wary about that.

There's a good reason that enforcement is the fourth pillar of a drug program and a drug strategy, not the first. First is prevention, then education, then harm reduction, and then enforcement. When everything else fails, that's when you get to enforcement. If we rush to enforcement first, all we do is drive the addict somewhere else. As William Burroughs said, "If you are an addict, you will find your drug, if you have to travel a whole world to find it."

The problem is addiction at its core. We have to start with treatment of the addict, not with enforcement on the prescribers and the dispensers, or even police action. That's when everything else fails. Unfortunately, right now most of our money goes to the enforcement end, not

to the prevention end, not to the education end and certainly not to the treatment end.

To conclude, I'd simply say that this is a wonderful document with fabulous recommendations; would that the government would bring them all in. This is a small step. I'm a little bit wary about how it might be used. Is it going to be used to really come down upon our doctors and our pharmacists, or is it going to be used to simply point out the magnitude of the problem so that we can immediately rush to put into place the rehabilitation and the treatment centres we so desperately need in this province? That is the only real answer to the problem of addiction—not simply to know and not simply to enforce.

I thank you for the opportunity. Again, I want to say congratulations to all of those who've been active on the Parkdale drug strategy committee that's still ongoing—and to the wonderful work at city hall in Toronto on the drug issue. My prayers go out to all of those who struggle with addiction and to all of those who struggle with the very few means we give them out there—the doctors, the nurses, the pharmacists, the social workers—to deal with a very large problem.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Parkdale—High Park for the last 10 minutes. I listened to her talk about the strategy in Parkdale. Congratulations on that strategy. I wish that you could provide us with the details. Maybe we can learn more about it.

She spoke about many different things. She spoke about our strategy to control narcotic substances in the province of Ontario. She was focusing on the addiction issue and talking about all the different things that we have and places to treat people. I agree with you. It's an important issue. That's why we have our colleague, the member from Oakville, Kevin Flynn, to chair the mental health addictions strategy across Ontario. You mentioned that he came up with a detailed report.

The whole issue here is that we're talking about how we can control prescriptions, how we can control those substances, not how to treat them in the end. It is a very important step to first go to the doctors and the pharmacies and see how we can control those prescriptions by working together, by respecting them and giving them the chance to work with the Minister of Health in order to control those substances, not allowing them to be prescribed left and right. I hope she agrees with us. I know she doesn't think the bill went far enough, but it's an important and fundamental step toward correcting the direction of our Ministry of Health in order to support and help many different people across the province.

I hope the member continues her support to implement all the suggested strategies—I think she was a member of the committee—by our colleague, the chair of the committee, the member from Oakville.

Again, I'm looking forward to speaking more on this important issue because in the past I had the privilege and honour to introduce a private member's bill about this very important issue.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to make just a few comments on the remarks made by the member from Parkdale–High Park, with which I agree.

Essentially, we are very pleased that the government has chosen to bring this bill forward now. It is important that we move forward and create the database so that we can stop some of the prescription drug abuse that's rampant in many communities across Ontario. She did comment on the work that was done by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I was very privileged to have been a member of that committee. Recommendation number 11 does indicate that we are calling on the government and the Minister of Health to immediately address the issue of prescription drug abuse.

We are happy that this has been brought forward but, of course, there are many other steps that need to be taken. There are 22 other recommendations contained in this report that address the problem of not having the same types of resources across the province for people who are suffering from mental health and addiction problems and also the serious lack of addiction facilities that we have in Ontario, which is to the point of many families, particularly with young people experiencing these problems, having to go to other jurisdictions in order to get treatment, principally in the United States.

She did also mention some of the initiatives like the Nickel-a-Drink campaign. There are others. We do have ways of addressing gambling problems with the monies that we have that are going into casinos and so on, but we don't have any directed funds to help with respect to mental health and addiction problems.

I think it is incumbent on this government to put not just this one recommendation in place; we need to have all 23 of the recommendations implemented. Certainly, for our part on this side of the House, the Progressive Conservative Party as official opposition, we will be continuing to press the Minister of Health and the McGuinty government to implement all 23 recommendations contained in this report.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague from Parkdale–High Park for emphasizing many of the things that our critic from Nickel Belt mentioned in her speech, and that is that we've got to do much more than just one of the five key strategies that have been recommended by the committee. The only one the government is moving on, member from London–Fanshawe, is the creation of an electronic database that will collect, monitor and analyze information. While all of that is useful, important and agreeable—in the sense that we all agree on this as well—we need to do a little more. We can't just simply criminalize addiction; we've got to be able to deal with addiction. But we have very few treatment facilities in the province, and unless you deal with that, you're simply going to always deal with that individual as a criminal. We're going to put him

away or put him in institutions without ever dealing with the problem itself. That's what we have to do.

I'm going to be speaking in a few moments just to elaborate on some of the very points that my colleague has made, but we need to do what she and the member from Nickel Belt have said, and that is employ all of the five pillars that have been recommended by the committee. If we don't actively engage ourselves in all of the pillars that deal with the narcotics that we are all taking into our system in one form or another, we're going to make the situation worse. While this is a useful little step, we've got to do much more. I thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for her comments.

0920

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

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to join in this conversation this morning, and that seems to be exactly what it is: a conversation about how we deal with the abuse of prescription narcotic drugs. There are good ideas coming forward from all sides of the aisle.

I think it's quite true that we need to do more when it comes to those who are addicted. But then, of course, we should be looking at things that will prevent them from becoming so. That's what this bill is looking forward to.

I have people who come to my office, who come to me and want to know how they can manage their pain without taking drugs and find places and avenues of dealing with pain that might be lifelong without having to turn towards drugs, which is one alternative. But to this particular bill, I think that education could be an important component as well.

Those of us who maybe have had a prescription drug in the past for, let's say, a sore throat or cold or something of that nature, we get this little bottle and it has a little sticker on it that says, "Don't drive a car or drive heavy machinery." I've never driven heavy machinery while on those, nor am I likely to. However, perhaps the warning of these narcotic drugs could be made more clear to patients when they take them. I know, anecdotally, that doctors try to prescribe that and warn people about the drugs that they are taking, but perhaps it would be something that we can all embark on: an education process as to the risks and hazards of prolonged use of these particular drugs.

It is unfortunate that Ontario has the highest level of narcotics use among all of the other provinces on a per capita basis. So this particular legislation is very timely. I suspect it will go to committee, as do most, if not all, of our bills, and we will have a more fulsome discussion at that time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Parkdale–High Park has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you all for your comments.

Wouldn't it have been nice, though—just to echo the words of the member from Whitby–Oshawa—if all 23 of the recommendations had been acted on? At the rate that we're going in this Legislature, with one coming forward

in one session, it'll be another 23 years before we actually have a workable mental health and drug addictions strategy in Ontario. That's very sad. It's a sad commentary on the amount of work that went into this document, which is a phenomenal document, a document that we've needed for a long, long time.

Also, to hearken back to the member from Whitby—Oshawa, she mentioned gambling, which I haven't had time to touch on. But isn't it ironic, at the very least, that here is a government acting in the smallest possible way on the largest possible document here, in some senses, and yet rushing headlong into something that's phenomenally addictive: online gambling.

So, on one side, they're making one tiny little baby step towards amassing data on addiction for controlled substances, and on the other side, they're taking a giant leap into the unknown with online gambling purely, let's face it, for money. It's about money—making money. We know that's wildly addictive.

Just to summarize, I want to say thank you to the committee for coming up with this wonderful work. Also, thank you to the city of Toronto for their four-pronged drug strategy, which we've been working with in Parkdale for four years now, and actually trying to implement on the ground. To the Parkdale drug strategy: hello and thank you for your efforts. And here's hoping that it doesn't take 23 years to see all of the recommendations of this excellent piece of work put into place. People are dying waiting.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured and privileged to stand up in my place and speak about this very important issue, which all of us in this House are concerned about, and we're trying to find a solution to it.

As I mentioned at the beginning when I spoke for two minutes, a long time ago, almost four years ago, I introduced a bill in this House to control the excessive use of OxyContin, which is being prescribed loosely by some doctors, which causes a lot of trouble, a lot of problems, in many different parts of Ontario. Many members spoke about those prescriptions eventually creating an addiction for some people and killing people.

This issue was important to me. A lady came to my office because she lost her husband and lost her son. She came to my office almost five years ago. She was talking about her husband, who was sick with some kind of disease. He was being ordered to take OxyContin on a regular basis to control his pain. In the end, he killed himself. The same issue, the same disease, happened with her son. He was taking OxyContin for many years and became addicted to it. He was in a lot of pain. He threw himself off the Galleria Mall in London and killed himself.

This issue is important. It's important for all of us to see how we can control narcotic substances. I believe the minister acted on the recommendations of the committee on mental health and addictions, which I think was comprised of members from all three parties, a non-

partisan committee, to study addictions and mental health issues across the province.

You see a lot of people on the streets across Ontario suffering from mental health issues, which nobody can ignore. It's our obligation and duty to put forward a positive solution to deal with this issue.

I had the chance to meet with many different experts in this field in London, and we have been working on it, and I know many parties and many governments before worked hard to find a solution to this very, very severe issue which all of us suffer from in this province. When you talk to the police and to the hospital officials and doctors, they tell you how important this issue is.

So now we are talking about addictions. I have a friend who is a pharmacist. In London, Ontario, he has one methadone clinic to deal with prescriptions from certain doctors to help people withdraw from addictions to narcotic drugs. He came to my office and said, "I know a lot about this issue. I know a lot of doctors who prescribe narcotics left and right without thinking, just to get people out of their office or give them some kind of medication to quiet their pain for a certain time."

But what happens, as everybody knows, as all the experts in this place know and all the experts in Ontario know, and the whole world, is when you're given certain medications, you become addicted, and addictions create a lot of problems, sometimes mental issues, because it becomes excessive and people take it left and right when they feel a little pain. That's why the Minister of Health is coming up with a strategy, first to create a partnership with health care providers.

I was listening to my colleague from Oak Ridges—Markham speaking last week about this very issue. As you know, she's a doctor. She was the medical officer of York region, and she knows about a lot of this stuff.

The most important thing is not to enforce it by force but to create that level of understanding among the health providers, the doctors and nurses who have the ability to prescribe those medications, to see how we can control it. Instead of giving it left and right, we'll know exactly what we're doing, and we'll try as much as possible to deal with it in different ways.

Also, the dispensing fee and dispensing those drugs is important. By creating a database, we'll have control; we'll see which doctor is dispensing a lot or less and why. The excessive dispensing and the excessive prescribing of those medications is not good. As I mentioned at the beginning, it costs us a lot of money and it costs us a lot of lives—a lot of wonderful people who go for treatment and come out addicted to certain drugs.

I think if we find an alternative way to deal with these issues instead of giving medication left and right, especially narcotic substances like OxyContin and Percocet—today, early in the morning when I was watching the news, I listened to very important news coming from a Canadian medical journal, talking about codeine: Codeine is not good for your health; codeine might create addictions; codeine is not good. Every one of us in this House and in the province of Ontario has taken codeine

for certain pain. With the medical journal coming out with this warning today, I think it is our obligation and our duty, as a government, as elected officials, as the Minister of Health, to create a strategy to control those narcotic substances for the sake of the people of Ontario, for the sake of our health in this province, and also to create a safe haven for all of us in this province.

Thank you for allowing me to stand up and speak.

0930

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to respond to the comments on this bill.

I applaud the work of the select committee that worked on the addictions and mental health. I have that excellent report on my desk here. All sides tend to agree on this. One of the recommendations by the select committee which was unanimously adopted is about the addictive painkilling medication. Mostly, you hear about OxyContin.

The pharmacists today have a system when they record prescription drugs, and I think they're going to formalize that process.

Initially, when the government started the eHealth application, one of the goals was to integrate the nine different modules—long-term care, the pharmacists, the hospitals, the CCACs etc.—to link them all together to monitor, to avoid duplication and to create some efficiencies. I know they recognize that they squandered a billion dollars on eHealth when George Smitherman was the minister—I think that's probably cleaned up now—but that money could easily have put that system in place.

So let's not forget to keep our eye on the ball. Watch the Premier; watch the Minister of Health, so that we get this right and don't waste any more money—because this ultimately will save lives. We see that suicide rates are related to these addictive medications. We need to get this right.

We're onside with this. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has made it very clear that we want to move forward quickly with this but we don't want to waste any more money.

The member from London–Fanshawe knows full well, because I believe his wife is a physician, and as such she would know and be able to advise him on these subjects, if it's the right thing to do—which we support.

I'm anxious to hear our next speaker, Mr. Miller, who will be speaking on this bill.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to my colleague the member from London–Fanshawe, who described very well the depth of the problem, how widespread the problem is, and why it's necessary to do this.

I want to comment on this issue of the narcotics strategy. There are five elements to the narcotics strategy, one of which is the tracking, which is what we are addressing in the legislation. The reason this bill only addresses the tracking is because that's the only component of the strategy for which legislation is required.

The Ministry of Health currently collects information about prescriptions and dispensing related to the Ontario drug benefit, but it only has the legal authority to use that information for billing. This bill gives them the authority to use that same information for the purpose of tracking inappropriate use of prescription narcotics. In addition, it gives the Ministry of Health the authority to collect the same information for patients who are not on the Ontario drug benefit; that is, for whom the government is not paying the bill.

So the purpose of the bill is to give the government the legal authority to do what it has to do. It has nothing to do with the authority to write software. The rest of the strategy, which includes working with pharmacists, working with doctors, working with patients, expanding the capacity to treat addictions—none of those things require legislation. That's why they're not in the bill.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I always enjoy the remarks from my good friend the member from London–Fanshawe because he certainly brings a wealth of experience to this issue. It has been noted that his wife is a physician working in London, Ontario.

Seeing the negative impact of the misuse of narcotic drugs such as OxyContin and Percocet, and having the opportunity to be a member of the select committee on mental health services in the province of Ontario indeed was an eye-opener for me personally, along with my colleagues who had the opportunity to serve on that committee and hear representations from people from every part of the province, from Cochrane to Kenora, to Cornwall, to Peterborough, to Petrolia.

These people came forward to share very personal stories, and I must commend those individuals who came forward to share those personal stories because it indeed is a very difficult thing to do, particularly when a family member—a son or daughter or other loved one—committed suicide because of the misuse and overuse of narcotics, Percocet and OxyContin.

I think this bill is a real opportunity to build on the good work of the select committee.

By and large, I think we should have the opportunity to have more select committees in this Legislature as an opportunity for members to come together in unison to look in depth at a particular problem in the province of Ontario and come up with a number of recommendations. I think the last select committee was one on alternative fuels, many years ago. It indeed also had very good recommendations for the policy-makers to look at.

I think the select committee is a very important mechanism that we need to use more often in this Legislature.

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

The member from London–Fanshawe has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank the members from Durham, Guelph and Peterborough for their comments.

I know it's important for all of us, from both sides of the House, to be talking about the importance of this strategy to control narcotic substances from being prescribed loosely in the province of Ontario, through doctors or pharmacies.

I also want to tell the member from Durham: Yes, my wife is a medical doctor. When I get a headache, I always try to take Advil. She goes crazy and nuts. She tells me, "No, no, don't take it. Try as much as possible to deal with it without Advil or Tylenol. Just go relax and don't"—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Go relax? Does it work?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Well, it works. When I go sleep a little bit and come back again, it's a lot better than taking drugs. It's very important. You try as much as possible to avoid taking those drugs, because drugs are not good in general.

As I mentioned earlier, and my colleague from Guelph and the member from Peterborough mentioned, those narcotic drugs that are being prescribed and taken for a certain time might cause suicide. Many people kill themselves as a result of that, when they get addicted and they cannot find those narcotic drugs.

I had mentioned my friend the pharmacist who's always telling me that some people are taking those narcotic drugs, not because they want them but to sell them in the street. So it's overprescribing and dispensing of those narcotic substances. They're not good all the time, and they're not being used in the right direction most of the time.

That's why the minister is coming out with a strategy to create the database to monitor those dispensing. I think it's a very important step toward controlling our drug habits in the province of Ontario and the dispensing of those drugs.

The only way we can control it and be successful is when we work in partnership with the pharmacists, with the doctors, because those are the people on the front line who are dealing with patients in order to have success for this strategy.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak for a few minutes to Bill 101. I know it's winding down and will likely wrap up this morning. I just wanted to comment briefly about Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances.

"The act seeks to improve the health and safety of Ontarians by permitting the monitoring, analyzing and reporting of information, including personal information, related to the prescribing and dispensing of monitored drugs in order to:

"(1) Contribute to and promote appropriate prescribing and dispensing practices for monitored drugs in order to support access to monitored drugs for medically appropriate treatment, including treatment for pain;

"(b) identify and reduce the abuse, misuse and diversion of monitored drugs; and

"(c) reduce the risk of addiction and death resulting from the abuse or misuse of monitored drugs."

0940

It's obvious that all three parties support this. As we know, this bill has come in part from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, on which, from our side of the House, the member from Whitby–Oshawa and the member from Dufferin–Caledon played an important role. In fact, that committee got started, I believe, from a resolution put forward by the member from Whitby–Oshawa, and from that resolution, the House decided to form the select committee. I think they should be commended for the good work they have done. I agree with the past speaker that the Legislature should make more use of select committees. I know I was involved with the Select Committee on Alternative Fuel Sources, and a number of the recommendations from that committee have been adopted.

This bill has really come from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, on which members of all sides of the House participated. Recommendation 11 from that report is, "The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers."

We've certainly seen a huge rise in the problem of people being addicted to painkillers like OxyContin. In fact, there's a report prepared by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario called Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance, and it says, "There has been a steep and unprecedented increase in the number of individuals seeking treatment for oxycodone addiction since controlled-release (long-acting) oxycodone products became available in 1995. The number of admissions at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Medical Withdrawal Management Service seeking treatment for opioid detoxification related to controlled-release oxycodone went from 3.8% of opioid admissions in 2000 to 55.4% in 2004." That's just a huge increase.

The report also noted that "CAMH found that among Ontario high school students, one fifth reported using opioids or at least one prescription drug without a doctor's prescription in 2009, compared to only 12% of students surveyed who reported smoking cigarettes."

The report contains statistics concerning fatalities. "Deaths due to oxycodone rose from 35 in 2002 to 119 in 2006," an increase of 240%. So we're seeing a huge increase in the province. In communities across Ontario, the trafficking of prescription narcotics by both individuals and organized crime groups has resulted in a doubling of prescription drug arrests in Toronto between 2005 and 2008 and a significant increase in pharmacy robberies and thefts of prescription narcotics. The problem with the abuse of prescription narcotics is particularly acute in many First Nations communities, especially in more remote locations where an OxyContin tablet that may sell on the streets of Toronto for \$45 costs several hundred dollars.

The cost of these drugs within our health care system is rapidly increasing. In 2009-10, the Ministry of Health

and Long-Term Care spent \$156 million on narcotics for Ontario drug benefit program recipients—for 3.9 million prescriptions. This equates to an average of six prescriptions per person, at an annual cost of \$260 per person.

It's obvious from the college of physicians' report that there is a big problem out there. I think it's good to see the factual information, but I think we all see it in our communities, and it affects all communities across Ontario, whether they're small rural communities I spent a lot of time at hockey rinks with three of our children who played hockey. I spent 15 years, just virtually every weekend, in hockey rinks, and you meet a lot of families over that time frame and get to know their kids. I know of at least one family whose daughter became addicted to OxyContin. It's just tragic the way that addiction rips apart a family and an otherwise very nice person; a very nice girl becomes somebody that she isn't because of this terrible addiction. It rips the fabric of a family apart. It rips the fabric of a community apart.

I'm happy to see that the government is taking an initial step, sort of step one of many, to at least know what's going on out there so that people can't shop around at different pharmacies to fill their drug addiction and so that there's some sort of knowledge among doctors that other doctors are prescribing this same drug. This is basic knowledge we need.

Obviously, it's important that the government implement this in a way that works and that is cost-effective, because they do have a bad track record. It's about electronic health records, and we know that they've spent an awful lot of money on eHealth without much to show for it. The \$1-billion figure is tossed around. Obviously, as the opposition, we'll be watching the way they implement this legislation.

As I say, it's step one of many. There are 23 recommendations from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. This is number 11, but one recommendation from the committee's report. So we look forward to the government following up with further steps to further control this problem that does rip the fabric and the heart out of communities and families across this province.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. I thank you for the opportunity to have a brief moment to make comments on Bill 101.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I was listening intently—until my phone rang—to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I did realize that he was reporting on our leader Tim Hudak's advice to caucus on this bill, and I commend him for that because we see this as an appropriate reaction to a chronic situation, as the member has said, that has caused deaths and suicides.

Each of us as members, in our ridings and in our riding offices—Madam Speaker, you would be the same, I'm sure—hear from families on occasion who are affected by this, either directly or indirectly. They have

children or friends who could be overcome by these addictive substances. This is a serious, serious problem.

I can tell you that, in my own riding, there was some talk of a physician who himself became addicted to this situation. Out of complete compassion—I believe his motives were compassionate—he was helping people who had either work-related injuries or other accidents where these pain medications, like OxyContin, were prescribed.

Now, here's the issue: I think, in their code of ethics and behaviour, they need the monitoring as well, because on compassionate grounds, they are doing the best they can for their patients. I think that's laudable. But when you look at the statistics of the increases that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka spoke of, it's evident that there is some abuse in the system. As such, it warrants the actions recommended by the select committee. Indeed, I commend the Premier for taking a lead role, I might say, in moving this forward.

Our concern is, is it far enough and will it be properly implemented? That's a fair question. I would expect that there should be some hearings, especially with First Nations, and other users of the system. Let's make sure we get this right, not like the—

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you for the opportunity to add a few comments to the bill that is being debated today.

As my colleague from across the way, from Peterborough, said, and my other colleague from Guelph, I've had the opportunity also to serve on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I have to say that it was an eye-opening experience, travelling the province and hearing from deputant after deputant after deputant on the issue of OxyContin being overused throughout the province. I think all the speakers around have clearly stated that it is a problem, and the government is making this particular move to try to control that problem.

But let me tell you, I had a family member just recently who had been ill, and in going to the hospital emergency, they actually prescribed OxyContin and other painkillers in an open prescription with open repeats. So our medical community needs to be educated about this problem and we need to work with them very closely. I think this bill is going to do that job for us, along with the Ontario Medical Association. I'm hoping that we will definitely be able to curb the abuse of this particular narcotic.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Any further comments? The member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Yes, Etobicoke North, and proudly.

It's a privilege and responsibility to speak not only as a parliamentarian but also as a physician. The issue of narcotic prescription, as well as overuse and dependence, is of course something that we as physicians have known

about for quite some time. It's an issue that comes up in medical school. It probably does not receive the adequate amount of training that we should actually receive in order to better serve the public, so I look forward to the unfolding of this particular legislation and all the various initiatives so that prescribers themselves will appropriately prescribe and deal with and manage patients who are in chronic pain situations. Of course, these are scenarios that come to us on a very, very regular basis: post-surgical, post-accident, cancer etc. But nevertheless, in order to avoid dependence and ultimately abusive situations, I think it's certainly in the public interest.

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

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: It was a privilege to have the opportunity to speak. I thank the member from Durham for adding some comments, and the members from Scarborough–Rouge River and Etobicoke North as well.

The member from Scarborough–Rouge River mentioned that he was a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I'd certainly like to commend him for the work that he did, along with the other committee members.

Certainly we recognize that prescription drug abuse in Ontario is an urgent problem and a growing problem; there's no question that it needs to be addressed. This legislation is just the first step in a multi-faceted problem.

We agree with the underlying principles of the bill. We will be asking for full committee hearings, including, as in the report I cited in my comments, committee hearings in northern Ontario and in aboriginal communities where I think the problem is much worse. I think we need to hear from all those communities that are affected by this problem because it does do great damage to families and great damage to communities. It's a problem that needs to be addressed, and we look forward to this first step being taken and then input at committee and further steps being taken in the future to address this very serious problem we have in our communities.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is a pleasure to speak to this bill because I wanted to emphasize a couple of things that my friend from Parkdale–High Park mentioned, including our critic from Nickel Belt. I want to say that I, too, like the member from Parkdale–High Park, am pleased with the report that was produced by the participation of all three political parties. It's significant, because we don't always do this, but when we do, it means that all three political parties are ready to do something about it. And if that is true, we can be bold; the government can be bold. If all three political parties agree and 21 recommendations came out of this report, that means that the government could have taken the time to do this right and implement all 21 recommendations. It still can, of course. But the government proceeded to implement but one recommendation.

Mr. Jeff Leal: So far.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And that's okay, member from Peterborough; of course that's okay. I worry that, because we are going to be in an election next year, not much is going to happen over the next year. And after this session, I can guarantee that not much will happen in the next session—guaranteed, member from Peterborough. Mark my words. That's why I worry. When the member from Peterborough says, "It's true; it's one strategy at this time," suggesting that there will be more, I'm worried that there may not be much more in this regard for the who-knows-when future.

Given that we had an opportunity to do a little more, the government takes the picayune step and pats itself on the back, which is fine, but we could do so much more. That's really the point, isn't it? I understand, when you've got political opposition—I do—and if you've got Tories and New Democrats opposing you, then moving, as you often do, at a snail's pace would be the appropriate response. But when you move at a snail's pace and you've got all three political parties on board, I don't get it. I just don't understand it. You move at a snail's pace even when you have support from the other two political parties. How do you explain that *modus Liberal operandi*? How do you explain it? I can't explain it. I just don't get it.

I know the member from Guelph says the same thing, that this is the one bill that deals with this issue. I understand. The other issues don't require a bill, she commented, or could, but it would be done at another time, I'm assuming. So the argument I make is that when we have an opportunity to do much more, we should seize it, as opposed to just letting things slip out of your hands, as is so typical of what you guys do on a regular basis. It's a bit saddening.

Here is the background: On August 27, 2010, the Minister of Health announced a narcotics strategy. Member from London–Fanshawe, here's the strategy. *Numero uno*: The creation of an electronic database that would collect, monitor and analyze information related to prescription narcotics and controlled substances. That's number one. There are four others, and you only implemented the one out of the five pillars that the minister said is part of a narcotics strategy. The other four recommendations that I'm going to read will have to wait for another day: work with health sector physicians and nurse practitioners to raise awareness about appropriate prescribing; work with health sector pharmacists to raise awareness about appropriate dispensing; engage in patient education to address excessive use and misuse of prescription narcotics; and focus on addiction treatment and services.

The problem is that because the issue is so big, we've got to do a little more. When I look at some of the stats, it's horrifying. CAMH—this institution is in my riding—has done a study of 12- to 17-year-olds and found that 20% of these young men and women—12- to 17-year-olds—use opiates. This is crazy and frightening. The study also shows that only 12% of students reported

smoking cigarettes in 2007. So 20% use opiates of one form or another and 12% smoke, which means young men and women are probably addicted to drugs more so than they are addicted to smoking. This is scary stuff.

So how are we dealing with this? Okay; the first strategy is to have an electronic database. It's an important tool; we understand. But when you read on, and you know that Ontario has the highest use of opiates in Canada and you say, "What are we doing about it?" and you know that we've got 150 service providers for addiction services, but in spite of those 150 service providers, Ontarians are not getting the assessment, the treatment and the services that they need to deal with this addiction, you know you've got a problem. There are 150 service providers for addiction services, and we're not getting the assessment, the treatment and the services they need to deal with this addiction.

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This legislation aims to reduce the supply of illicit narcotics, but we can't simply cut off the supply and think of nothing to help cure the addiction. This is where the main problem stems from. Unless we deal with why it happens, and unless we treat the problem—monitoring this issue is good, having the electronic database is fine, and, yeah, they recognize as Liberals that this is a good first step, but, my God, we've got to do something quick and fast, and this strategy is something that we have to engage in right away. So I say, why wait? And when is the rest of the strategy coming? When is the government going to implement the other 21 recommendations that the other two political parties agreed to? We've got to move fast.

I remember a friend of mine, Dr. Allodi, who did a study in the late 1960s and early 1970s that talked about the high number of women who were working at home—that was their job, as homemakers, at the time—and were addicted to Valium. That was the prescription that was prescribed on a regular basis for so many women who were on the outskirts of Toronto and/or beyond. They were alone at home and suffering with so many problems and suffering all alone, addicted to Valium prescribed by doctors on a regular basis. What did we do about that? And what are we doing about that today?

They introduce one part of the strategy, and all I can hope for is that we deal with the bigger strategy of addiction and the bigger strategy of chronic pain. We've got about two to three million people that suffer from chronic pain, and there is no chronic pain management strategy across the province. While there are some specialists in some parts of the province doing a good job of this, there is no chronic pain management in some parts of the province at all. In the north, in particular, we've got very little by way of service for this particular problem of chronic pain. There's no strategy for it.

The member from London–Fanshawe keeps saying that this is the first part and the member from Guelph keeps saying that this is the first part, and I understand that. We know that the problem is huge. What we know is that we've got to move on this quickly, and what I

know is that you've got three political parties interested in working with you to make this happen today. All I can hope is that this government will move on this quickly. Let's, yes, get into committee, debate this, see what other folks have to say, and then let's move on to dealing with the other recommendations that are made with the support of all three political parties and deal with the problems.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I would just like to note that when you look at the select committee report and the recommendations in here, the only recommendation that said we need to do this immediately is to deal with prescription narcotics. That's what we are doing here: dealing with the required legislation immediately.

I would like to note that what I said was that the only part of the narcotics strategy which required legislation was the tracking. I didn't say that it was the only part we were doing. In fact, we are working with the regulatory colleges for doctors and dentists to do better education around prescribing practices. We are already working with the College of Pharmacists to look at dispensing practices. The tracking will enable us to figure out which patients actually need education about drug use. So the fact that this is the only piece that requires legislation doesn't mean that we aren't working on the other strands of the strategy. We are.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened intently to the member from Trinity–Spadina. He brings fire and enthusiasm to the issue, which is important to push the government into some sort of action as opposed to delay.

We saw yesterday—they passed the retirement homes regulation bill; yet, they've done nothing. We saw it in a report in the Toronto Star. This bill needs the urgency that the member from Trinity–Spadina brings.

The member from Guelph said—and I want to emphasize this. It says here that the College of Physicians and Surgeons issued a report called *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance*. These are their words: "There has been a steep and unprecedented increase in the number of individuals seeking treatment for oxycodone addiction since controlled-release (long-acting) oxycodone products became available in 1995." That's the call to action that the member from Trinity–Spadina is talking about—bringing some urgency. Let's get on with this.

If you need to have hearings to get this right, to make sure that we consult with the various stakeholders—including the college, including the First Nations people, and I would say the physician community as well as the pharmacist community. We need to get this right. We don't need to superimpose a new solution onto the technology solution of tracking, reporting and tracing the issuance of prescriptions and the issuing of the medication itself, and tracking the outcomes—whether or not it's an appropriate prescription—and working with the college to make sure that they're getting it right.

When you have people dying from a system that's out of control, I think the Premier has an eminent responsibility to act. The member from Guelph doesn't see this as an integrated solution, and that's wrong. Even the select committee report makes it clear. Almost every one of the 23 recommendations talks about the addictions portion of it, and this is an eminent one.

Let's get on with it. We're prepared to work with you. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has made it very clear to our caucus. We're here to support it. Let's get on—

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Trinity–Spadina speaking about this very important issue. He talked about addictions as a general issue in the province of Ontario. There's no doubt about it: Addictions are a problem.

We're talking about two different things as a result of addictions. First, addictions come from maybe opium drugs, hash and marijuana, which come from the street and which have nothing to do with the Ministry of Health. Maybe it will be talked about in the policing issue. And we talked about the drugs being prescribed by doctors and dentists and being dispensed by pharmacists. That's what we're talking about in this particular bill, which we can control. That's why we're trying to control—to make sure that, in conjunction with a full understanding between the Ministry of Health, the doctors and the pharmacists, we can create a database and monitor prescriptions, and also, by creating a full understanding with the pharmacists, control the dispensing of those narcotic drugs for the sake of the people of Ontario.

Addictions as a whole is an important issue that we should deal with, but, as I mentioned, there are two parts to it: one through the Ministry of Health and one through the policing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank the speakers in reaction to what I said. We've got to move on this quickly. We need a comprehensive strategy, and we need it today.

Now that we are allowing online gambling—something that Premier McGuinty said he wasn't going to do but changed his mind on, saying that that's okay now—it's going to make addiction even worse. This is the worst plague that could befall Ontarians. Online gambling means that more and more people are just going to gamble in the comfort of their little homes at their little computers. This is nuts. It truly is nuts. The government is afraid that they're going to lose money to other jurisdictions doing it. If other jurisdictions are doing it, they're equally nuts. Everybody's nuts on this issue.

It ought not to be about money. It ought to be about the fact that when people gamble, most of them lose. The majority lose and only a couple of people win. When those people lose, they're going to turn to drugs because that's all they've got to comfort their problems. They're

going to hurt themselves and they're going to hurt their families. I know Liberals are looking at me saying, "Yeah, we made the same arguments in our caucus meetings and we couldn't convince our Premier McGuinty to do otherwise." I know you're looking at me funny because we probably had the same debates in 1990-92. I'm telling you, it's the wrong thing to have done.

We need a comprehensive strategy aujourd'hui because the problem of addiction is going to get worse. Simply monitoring, through an electronic database, how we are prescribing is simply not enough. We've got to get ready for this.

All the good doctors who are in the Liberal caucus: You've got to push Premier McGuinty to move on this. All three parties are on the same team. Let's move on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Seeing none, Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 101. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This will be deferred until after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

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

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to recognize three really good friends who are visiting Queen's Park. In our members' gallery, from Ottawa: Meg Hamilton, who's the executive director of the Council of Heritage Organizations in Ottawa; Mike Steinhauer, who's the director of the Bytown Museum, which is located in the great riding of Ottawa Centre; and Andrea Miller, who's the executive director of the Ottawa Museum Network. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'd like to introduce here today Tom Reitz, the manager/curator of the Waterloo Region Museum, and also Bev Dietrich, the curator of the Guelph Civic Museum, McCrae House.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd like to introduce Michaela McGuire from my riding of Toronto Centre. She's just come down today because she's interested in seeing how the Legislature works. She's joining us here in the members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of page Audrey Steele and the member from Sault Ste. Marie, to welcome her brother, former page Alexander Steele, to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of page Brigid Goulem and the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, we'd like to welcome her aunt Keri Johnston to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of page Shanthos Thangalingam and the member from York South–Weston, we'd like to welcome mother Mary, father Thangalingam and sister Sharanja to the galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery this morning is Mr. Chung, former Prime Minister of South Korea. He's accompanied by Dr. Li and Reverend Kim. Our guests will be unveiling a memorial garden and statue at the Toronto Zoo in remembrance of Dr. Schofield's life and dedication to the people of Korea. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. One year from tomorrow, Ontario families will have a clear choice between my team of Ontario PCs, who will fight to ensure that tax dollars are focused on services that families need and care about, like front-line health care, or a tired Liberal government that presided over an eight-year feeding frenzy of Liberal-friendly consultants.

Tomorrow is also the one-year anniversary of the member for Don Valley East being dumped from cabinet and forced to carry George Smitherman's dirty laundry in the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle.

Premier, will you kindly update us: Since you dumped the minister to cover for Mr. Smitherman, how much more money have you wasted in eHealth Ontario experiments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will agree that Ontarians have a genuine interest in what is going to happen approximately a year from now, but I think they have a greater continuing interest in the quality of the public services today, and we're not going to take our eye off that ball. Among other things—and I would ask that my honourable colleague acknowledge these at some point in time—we have, in fact, made some progress. About a million more Ontarians now have a doctor. We're building 18 new hospitals. Not only are we measuring wait times, we're actually getting them down in the province of Ontario. We're putting in place 200 family health teams. We're putting in place I think 30 nurse-practitioner-led clinics. Those are all about delivering good-quality services right to the front line to help Ontario families to ensure they've got access to the best health care possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, as you know, a year ago you forced the member for Don Valley East to walk the plank to cover for George Smitherman and your own

waste of \$1 billion in the eHealth boondoggle. Now, a year later, page 76 of eHealth Ontario's recent report shows that not even a scathing auditor's report into your waste at eHealth Ontario stopped you from making Ontario families pay another \$343 million into eHealth last year alone.

It took them six years to waste the first billion dollars at eHealth. Now you're on pace to burn through the next billion dollars in three years alone.

Premier, after spending \$1.5 billion, can you at least say that eHealth is up and running? Can I access my electronic health record today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member opposite for the opportunity to talk about what's happening at eHealth. You're absolutely right: There were some problems there, and we have taken corrective action.

Before I talk about that, though, I want to talk about how important it is that we move forward and that we move forward aggressively with eHealth. It is not an overstatement to say that the future of our health care system depends on us getting results when it comes to eHealth. We do have new leadership at eHealth Ontario. We've got a new chair, Ray Hession, and we've got a new CEO, Greg Reed. We've reduced consultant use from 394 to just under 100. We've got tough new procurement rules; they're in line with government directives. We've got expense rules; expenses are now reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner and posted online. We are working very hard, and in the supplementary I'll talk about some of the achievements.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister answering for the Premier says that "there were some problems there." Minister, it was a billion-dollar boondoggle at a time when families were waiting to get a loved one care in an emergency room, when families were waiting to get a loved one into a long-term-care home for years. You say, "There were some problems there." It was a boondoggle. It was a scandal and a tragic waste of scarce health care dollars. Shame on you for saying, "There were some problems there."

What have we seen since? We've seen \$343 million more poured into the eHealth abyss and \$250 million into your bloated health bureaucracies—the LHINs—which don't spend a single minute with patients and don't do a single surgery or MRI.

Now the PC caucus has found out that not only is eHealth not up and running, they haven't even begun the procurement process for figuring out who is going to do that. What—

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

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to talk about some of the progress that we've made.

We now have close to four million Ontarians who have physicians with electronic medical records, and

we're moving forward; we're looking to double that number.

Telemedicine is a huge part of eHealth Ontario. Telemedicine allows people in Moose Factory to have a consultation with a specialist in London. Telemedicine is a growing part. I trust that the members opposite understand the value of telemedicine. Over 100,000 remote medical consultations took place this past year. That's double what it was the year before—on telemedicine alone. We've got 345 new sites added to telemedicine and upgrades at 92. That means that far, far more Ontarians are able to get access to specialists without leaving their home communities. There's—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, a year from tomorrow, Ontario families will have a clear choice between my team of Ontario PCs, who are focused on transparency and accountability in government, or Premier McGuinty adding to his seven-year legacy of only acting when his hand is caught in the cookie jar, handing out untendered contracts to Liberal-friendly consultants.

Premier, six months ago, we brought forward legislation that would expand FOI to hospitals and require that contracts and hospitality expenses be posted online. We would have put a stop to your consultant feeding frenzy.

My colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa has a motion before the House today to end the practice of consultants billing hospitals, long-term-care homes, your LHINs etc., taking money out of front-line care. Premier, will you support the motion standing in the name of our health critic?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to speak to the whole issue of transparency and accountability. I would ask, rhetorically somewhat, why it is that on every single occasion when we moved to introduce greater transparency and more rigorous accountability, the leader of the official opposition and his party stood in the way of that and voted against those very measures. I think he's got to ask himself that.

For example, when it comes to the sunshine list, we expanded that to include OPG and Hydro One, and they opposed that. Still, to this very day, I can't understand that. We expanded the Auditor General's role to value-for-money audits in the broader public sector: hospitals, universities and schools. They opposed that.

In each and every instance—and I'll take the time in supplementaries to go through more—they opposed our efforts to introduce more transparency and more accountability.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No doubt, after seven years, Dalton McGuinty has changed. The rot—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member about the use of names. Titles, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty has changed. The rot and culture of waste in the McGuinty government has set in deep.

This is the anniversary of the billion dollars you blew at eHealth Ontario, a feeding frenzy for Liberal-friendly consultants like the Courtyard Group. Instead of care for cancer patients at Cancer Care Ontario, you spent money on cupcakes. At WSIB, support for injured workers went into a GPS system for your chair so he could find his way home after months and months of travel—and \$10,000 to the Disney corporation to entertain your bureaucrats at the LHINs.

Premier, you have changed. Will you do the right thing and support the motion of my colleague Ms. Elliott to end this practice of—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows, again, and I think it's important that Ontarians understand, that every time we've moved to introduce greater accountability and transparency, they have opposed that.

My honourable colleague is given to rhetoric. He seems to enjoy and luxuriate in that particular forum. But I think results actually count to Ontarians.

Let me talk a little bit about what we've done in health. We have funded 2.1 million new procedures in order to reduce wait times. Angiographies, for example: Wait times are down by 52%. Angioplasty: 46%—that means down 13 days. Cataract surgeries are down 195 days. Hip replacements are down 176 days. Knee replacements are down by 255 days.

I'll put our record up against their rhetoric any day of the week.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: A clear pattern has developed where Premier McGuinty only talks about accountability when his government gets caught with their hands in the cookie jar and families are forced to pay the bill. Premier, you know the reality: You only banned expenses after we caught you; you only banned sole-sourced contracts after we caught you. And now, hopefully you'll do something about lobbyists being paid through hospital budgets, but it comes after you got caught out yet again.

Here is your chance, Premier. We have a motion standing before the assembly today to prohibit hospitals, local health integration networks, community care access centres, Cancer Care Ontario—we want those dollars to go into front-line care, not in the pockets of lobbyists. Premier, will you support the Ontario PC motion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I would ask Ontarians to ask themselves why it is that when we asked the Auditor General to begin to do value-for-money audits for our hospitals, the official opposition opposed that. Again, there's rhetoric and results, and I'll take results any day.

Here are a few more: One million more Ontarians have access to family doctors. We have 19 new MRI

machines in place and double the number of MRI hours of operation. There are now 2,300 more doctors practising in the province of Ontario. We have 170 family health teams; we're on our way to 200 in total. Those 170 are seeing 2.3 million new patients. We've hired over 10,000 new nurses. We've increased our hospital funding—100 hospital infrastructure projects, and so on and so forth. Again, at the end of the day, it's about results, not rhetoric.

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said that hospitals don't need to hire lobbyists. Does he feel the same way about colleges and universities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think what we're talking about here is a new era of accountability and a new era of transparency. We're making it very clear that the rules that were deemed to be acceptable by the former NDP government, the rules that were deemed to be acceptable by the former Conservative government, are not acceptable to us. They're not in keeping with Ontario's standards and they're not in keeping with our values. That's why we have put in place a number of new rules that heighten accountability and introduce greater transparency.

We will continue to look at these things. We'll continue to look for ways to make progress. In each and every instance that we do so, I ask again: Why is it that both opposition parties stand in the way of that progress? They stand in the way of our efforts to introduce more accountability and more transparency to benefit Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Freedom-of-information requests show that Laurentian University spent \$102,000 for the lobbying services of former Liberal staffers David MacNaughton, Andrew Steele and Katie Telford. And York University has three lobbyist contracts worth \$300,000. Why do publicly funded universities feel the need to hire well-connected lobbyists to get things done in this province?

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

Hon. John Milloy: I agree with the leader of the NDP: They have no reason to hire lobbyists. I want to make it very clear that our government—my ministry, my office—has a very good relationship with all of the province's colleges and universities. I meet and speak regularly with presidents and senior officials, as do members of my staff and members of the ministry. In fact, I would hazard to guess that members of my ministry speak with these institutions on an ongoing basis, probably on a daily basis. The fact of the matter is, there is no need for a lobbyist to have contact with my ministry or the government, and as the Premier has indicated, we want to bring in a new dawn of transparency here in Ontario and certainly make it clear that spending public funds on lobbyists is not acceptable.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Lakehead University spent more than \$30,000 on lobbyists last year. Wilfrid Laurier University spent almost \$70,000 on lobbyists. Something is very, very wrong here. Ontario students pay the highest tuition fees in the entire country. Why are universities spending that money on high-priced, well-connected, insider lobbyists?

1050

Hon. John Milloy: The leader of the NDP can't take yes for an answer. It's simply not okay to spend public money on lobbyists. The Premier has sent that signal. We have sent that signal; myself and other ministers are looking at ways that we can work with our institutions to make sure that this does not happen. I repeat, again, I am in constant contact with all the institutions, as are members of my staff and my ministry. You do not need to have a lobbyist to make representations to this government.

We're moving forward. I ask: Where were the NDP and the Conservatives when they were in power? They certainly did nothing to address this practice, and I'm proud of the leadership of the Premier in this area.

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Our publicly funded colleges are also hiring lobbyists. The Ontario College of Art and Design paid \$54,000 for the services of the same lobbyist that Laurentian used; Mohawk College has a \$31,000 contract with the Pathway Group; Lambton College had a contract with the Capital Hill Group for \$55,000.

Why are publicly funded colleges turning to well-connected insider lobbyists to get their issues on the McGuinty government's agenda?

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

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, I'm very proud of the ongoing relationship between myself, as minister, my office and my ministry with Ontario's colleges and universities. It's resulted in some of the most significant progress in post-secondary education in decades. We now have 140,000 more students in our colleges and universities. We've seen investments in the billions in infrastructure at our colleges and universities. We've seen an increase in terms of graduation rates at colleges and universities. That has been done in partnership between my ministry and these institutions. They do not need lobbyists to make that progress. As I said, I'm proud of the leadership that the Premier has shown in this regard, and we will certainly be following suit in my ministry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We found nearly a million dollars being diverted from students to lobbying. These public dollars should be invested in student aid and top-notch researchers, not handouts for well-connected insider lobbyists.

When will the Premier put an end to this practice and put a ban on lobbyists in the public sector once and for all?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I am very proud of the close relationship that we have between this government and Ontario's colleges and universities. We are a government that has invested in our students. We are a government that has introduced supports for tuition. We are a government that has made research and innovation one of our cornerstones.

It's a little passing strange to have the leader of a party that, when they were in power, cut student aid, increased tuition and cut funding to institutions standing up and not talking about the strength of the system—a system that has been built on the very close relationship between us and the institutions directly.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that this government has created a culture that forces colleges and universities to rely on high-priced lobbyists. With tuition fees rising and our public institutions being told to do more with less, we can't afford to spend our precious public dollars on fat contracts for insider lobbyists.

Will the Premier do the right thing? Will he finally do the right thing and ban this practice, or will he continue to let his well-connected lobbyist friends cash in with public dollars?

Hon. John Milloy: I am very proud of the progress that has been made in our colleges and universities, but I reject the assertion that they've been asked to do more with less. College and university operating grants have increased by \$1.9 billion, or 73%, since 2002-03. We've invested over \$1.5 billion in additional student support. We have invested billions and billions of dollars in infrastructure. This progress has been made through a close partnership between our government and our ministry and colleges and universities.

I agree with the leader of the NDP: There is no need for them to be spending public money on lobbyists. My ministry will be working to make sure that message is sent loud and clear to the college sector, something they neglected to do when they were in power and something the Conservatives neglected to do when they were in power.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. One year from tomorrow, Ontario families will have a clear choice between the Ontario PCs, who will ensure that what they pay goes to front-line care, or the sweetheart deals for Liberal-friendly consultants and lobbyists that didn't end with the eHealth scandal. For example, the Ontario PC caucus obtained documents that show Courtyard moved on to William Osler health services, one of the hospitals paying consultants to lobby the McGuinty Liberals. Six months ago, we proposed

legislation that would have stopped the waste, but they voted against it.

Will Premier McGuinty admit his mistake, support my motion and finally take real action on a real issue that matters to Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the member from Whitby–Oshawa has put forth a motion. We all look forward to the debate. But let me tell you as clearly as I possibly can that it is simply not okay to use money intended for patient care to hire lobbyists to lobby government. That is not okay. I've been as clear as I can be on that. The Premier has been as clear as he can be on that.

My question to you is: Will you support us as we move forward to make the changes that are necessary? We have not had your support in the past when we have moved to increase transparency and accountability. Will you be with us this time when we make those important changes?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Sadly, nothing has changed; hence the need for our motion. We've uncovered even more proof that the same Liberal-friendly consultants who got rich from the eHealth scandal are now getting rich from hospital consulting and lobbying deals. Courtyard and Accenture have moved on to University Health Network. We also uncovered that Sudbury hospital is paying for McKinsey and Company's contract to give this government advice on health care cuts. It's the same contract we asked about months ago. It's the same hospital, Sudbury media is reporting, that has been putting patients in a bathroom when emergency departments get too busy.

This government has had seven years. Will they give Ontario families the change they are looking for and support our motion to put a stop to McGuinty Liberal waste?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Once again, I don't think we're arguing about anything here. I think we all agree that change has to happen. I can tell you that the member opposite has recommended that that change come in the form of a memo. I can tell you, we are not talking about change in the form of a memo. We are talking about doing something much stronger than a memo.

Again, will you support us, unlike when we came forward with other transparency issues? Will you support us as we move to make sure that money intended for patient care goes to patient care?

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Mauro Orlandi writes about his hydro bill:

"I am writing from Ottawa, Ontario, and am one of the unfortunate few who is being billed using the smart meters (time of day) as well as paying the HST.

"Even after only doing laundry on weekends," as you've recommended, Premier, "and running the dish-

washer on off-peaks, my hydro bill has gone up \$130 per month to \$328 monthly.

“This billing is completely out of control. It has effectively eaten any disposable income I had.”

Premier, is Mr. Orlandi going to see some relief or is he going to get hit even harder when the OEB announces the new hydro rates a couple of weeks from now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think our government very clearly, through the leadership of the Premier, about a week or so ago, displayed that we do understand that Ontario families are going through challenging times. That's why we came forward with an initiative that's going to provide relief for those families and relief for seniors through our energy and property tax credit, which is good news for all middle-income families in the province.

It also requires us to make very tough decisions when it comes to ensuring that we do what we need to do in conservation and do what we need to do to build a strong system of energy in this province. The member opposite joined me last week when we were at an event in his riding, in partnership with the lung association, as we celebrated the removal of four coal units from our system, cleaning our air, building a stronger system of energy, a more reliable system—

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

1100

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier didn't have a good answer on that one. I'll try the second part.

Reema Bindari writes: “I have noticed about a \$150 increase on my hydro bill on a monthly basis and have had to take my child out of his extracurricular activity to maintain our lifestyle.

“I can only imagine what other people are going through. This is unfair and unjust.”

The people of Ontario want an honest answer. Is Ms. Bindari going to get hit even harder when the OEB announces the new hydro rates a couple of weeks from now?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to go back to the event that the member and I attended just last Friday. I want to share with the Legislature a story about a lady who attended that event. She's an ambassador with the lung association. She introduced me to something that she said was her best friend: It was her respirator. She said to me, “Brad, I want you to express to the Premier my appreciation for the courage that he's expressing, for the courage that he has demonstrated, in taking the decisions necessary to get us off coal, to clean our air and help the thousands of Ontarians like me suffering from a respiratory illness.” I appreciated the member joining us in the celebration, but it requires decisions in order to get there.

My question to the member opposite and his leader: Do you also have the courage to make the necessary decisions to help this lady and the thousands like her suffering from a respiratory illness across this province?

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is to the Minister of Energy as well. Southwestern Ontario has one of the most highly skilled workforces anywhere in Canada. When the Green Energy Act was introduced, there was a lot of buzz in my part of the province around the jobs that would be coming to Ontario and the economy that would be built around clean energy. I know that many large-scale projects are in progress or coming online across the province, creating opportunities. This is good for the environment, and it's good for the economy.

My question is this: Can the minister provide some tangible examples of jobs and investment in southwestern Ontario as a result of the Green Energy Act?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for joining myself and a number of members in this Legislature, from all sides of the House, ironically, as we celebrated this very, very important day, not only for clean energy in this province, but an important day for our economy, as we talked about, announced and moved forward with initiatives that are creating thousands of jobs across this province, and more particularly in southwestern Ontario.

I want to thank the member opposite for his leadership. I want to thank my colleague the member from Lambton as well, who joined us and was very supportive of the initiatives that were taken. I suggest the member opposite have a little talk with his leader, who does not support those very important jobs that we're working so hard to create, not only in his riding but in all of southwestern Ontario. It was—

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

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Being home to the largest online solar farm in the world is something that southwestern Ontario can take a great deal of pride in. It's physical proof of the direction this government is taking while looking at the future of energy in this province. There's no doubt about the advantages that clean renewables hold for Ontario. The Green Energy Act makes this clean energy a reality and creates an economy to go along with it.

My question is: On top of the thousands of manufacturing and construction jobs, and bringing clean energy online, what other benefits does the Green Energy Act hold for people in southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I can tell the member that one of the big added benefits for the people of southwestern Ontario—all Ontarians—is the fact that we're bringing renewable energy online and that that's helping us shut down coal plants in this province.

On Friday, as I said earlier, I was with the Ontario Lung Association to announce the permanent closing of two coal units at Nanticoke and two coal units at Lambton, a coal plant that the member would certainly be quite familiar with. I was joined by physicians, nurses and average Ontarians, young and old, who, frankly, are having difficulty, many of them, just simply breathing.

I want to quote the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, which said: “Nurses are pleased with today's

announcement because it will save lives. We know up to 250 deaths each year are directly related to the burning of coal. Getting rid of toxins such as mercury and lead would reduce the estimated 100,000 asthma attacks and other illnesses that people suffer as a result of pollution from coal.”

Mr. Speaker—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier. One year from now, Ontario families will face a choice to ensure their tax dollars are spent for front-line care. Premier McGuinty has made no effort to stop putting his expensive health experiments ahead of priorities that matter to Ontario families. Children whose parents need long-term care want a leader who is focused on their priorities: creating long-term-care beds or options for appropriate alternate care.

You created bloated regional health bureaucracies and paid them a quarter of a billion dollars to deal with long-term care. The money is spent, but wait-lists for beds have doubled. What will it take for Premier McGuinty to change the direction he is taking Ontario long-term care in?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question.

When it comes to long-term care, we are making significant investments. We’ve now opened over 8,000 new long-term-care beds. In fact, just this past weekend we opened a long-term-care home in London, Ontario. We’re adding more capacity in long-term-care beds: We’ve got plans to open another 1,600 or more beds.

But what we are really doing that is innovative and really making a difference for seniors is, we are investing in keeping people at home as long as they possibly can be. What we are doing is, we’re making strategic investments so that people can delay or avoid altogether moving into long-term-care homes.

We are seeing results. I had the pleasure of meeting Keith Cooper, who actually had moved from long-term care into his own home because of the work of—

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Your priority is making work for Liberal friends; the priority of children with elderly parents is making sure mom or dad have at least one bath per week. Your priority is to ensure your bloated bureaucracies are able to hire Disney actors and entertain them while they live it up at the Windsor casino; their priority is ensuring that mom and dad don’t have to wait 24 hours for someone to pick them up if they fall. Your priority, on the other hand, is to defend LHIN consultants, like Jay Connor, who bills for Starbucks in Tennessee; their priority is to make sure mom and dad don’t have to eat food that’s left on the counter to go bad.

Why do you think your priorities matter more than the priorities of Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that the rhetoric contained in that question was nothing short of astonishing. It comes from a party that is publicly committed to cutting \$3 billion out of health care. I don’t know where they’re going to find \$3 billion, but let me tell you, it is not going to result in better care for people.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order. The government side is shouting down their own member, and I’m trying to hear the minister’s answer.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have increased funding for long-term care by over \$1 billion a year since we were elected in 2003. We are working very hard with long-term care to see improved quality of care, and we’re seeing remarkable results: fewer falls, fewer people with pressure ulcers, fewer cases of depression. We’re seeing excellent results as we build the capacity outside of hospitals and outside of long-term care.

Our plan is working for the people of Ontario; their plan is to cut back.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, you know that the Abitibi paper mill in Iroquois Falls is one of the most efficient plants in the chain of Abitibi when it comes to operating paper mills. Why? Because they generate their own electricity, and it’s a lot cheaper than buying it from you.

There is now a situation where Abitibi is looking at selling those dams off to the private sector to basically go into the generation business.

My question to you is simply this, on behalf of the people of Iroquois Falls and region: Will you say today categorically that you will not allow those dams to be separated from the production facility in Iroquois Falls?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I’m pleased to answer the question. Certainly our government has heard from municipal representatives, northern mayors specifically, about the potential adverse effects that they predict, should a sale occur, on the people of the communities of Iroquois Falls and Fort Frances. We’ve very aware of the historical significance of the hydroelectric stations and the arrangements in place that provide the electricity for local pulp and paper production. We absolutely share the concerns regarding how AbitibiBowater’s business decisions will have the potential to negatively impact mill workers and healthy northern communities.

1110

I have written to Abitibi and I’ve requested that if there is a sale of the majority of shares to ACHLP, which owns the dams, Abitibi will continue to guarantee that they will satisfactorily perform to the terms and conditions of the water power leases.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But Madam Minister, that is the crux of the issue. The water power lease agreements say that those dams need to be associated with the mill so we can produce paper in that community at a lesser price so that we can keep it open. There is a concern on the part of the municipal council. They responded to your letter on September 27, where they're basically asking you for a copy of the water lease agreement because, quite frankly, they fear that this government is going to go forward with the sale of those dams and that mill in Abitibi may end up shutting down as a result.

I ask you this on behalf of the council: Are you prepared to share what's in the water lease agreements with the municipality of Iroquois Falls?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I have met with Mayor Gilles Forget and other representatives of the town of Iroquois Falls to discuss the future of the hydroelectric dams. They've been very passionate about their choices to have us be their spokesperson on this issue.

Certainly MNR has not received any formal proposal around the sale of the dams, but, as I said, I've indicated that we've requested that Abitibi provide written confirmation of the guarantee that we've requested. Through this measure I think we're signalling to Abitibi and the short list of bidders that our government is serious about the issue of power, particularly in Iroquois Falls, and we support those northern communities because we know how important those jobs are. We're certainly in their corner and we're going to be working very closely with them.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Yesterday, the member from Kenora-Rainy River brought up an issue in his riding. A senior in Fort Frances received a letter regarding new long-term-care beds in Terrace Bay. He stated:

"Two weeks ago, she received a letter from the North West Community Care Access Centre, telling her that a long-term-care bed is open to her in Terrace Bay....

"Is this the McGuinty Liberals' idea of quality long-term care for Ontario seniors? Send them 550 kilometres—seven hours—away from their family and friends?"

Could the minister please tell this House what this letter was all about and if people in this province are being forced to move farther away from their homes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to commend the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan for being such a champion for his constituents.

I want to make it very clear: This government does not force seniors to move far away from their loved ones to go into long-term care. We do our very best to keep them as close to home as possible. That's why we've opened 8,300 new long-term-care beds, including 22 beds in Terrace Bay, thanks to the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North. The CCAC was simply informing all

people on their waiting list that there was a new option available. It is completely wrong to suggest that there was any forcing going on.

This is what the letter says: "We have reviewed our long-term-care home waiting lists and are notifying all clients of the opening of this new long-term-care home. Please ... let us know whether or not you are interested in applying...."

Further, it says, "If you choose to apply"—

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm relieved, as I'm sure others are, to hear that this was simply a huge misinterpretation by the member.

I understand how important quality care is for residents and their families. In my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, I know that residents were very concerned in 2005 when the city of Thunder Bay announced it would no longer be operating two municipal long-term-care homes. Recognizing this challenge, the LHIN and the Ministry of Health worked with St. Joseph's health care to develop the Centre of Excellence for Integrated Seniors' Services. In response, our government is investing in new long-term-care home beds at this centre, and I know that seniors will soon have even greater access to health care services with the construction of this new facility.

Could the minister please tell this House more about the centre and how it will benefit seniors in my riding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to report on the progress of the Centre of Excellence for Integrated Seniors' Services in Thunder Bay. This facility will have 336 long-term-care beds. A hundred and nine of those are new beds; the rest are redeveloped. A hundred and thirty-two supportive housing units offer more choices to seniors. They will promote their independence so they can continue to live with dignity and with respect.

The centre will respond to local populations' increasing demand for seniors' services, so they will also be able to provide community support services for an additional 150 clients and enhanced services for existing supportive housing units.

This is a centre of excellence that will make a profound difference for the people of Thunder Bay and will have implications right across this province as we learn from the work that is happening in northwestern Ontario.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Your regulation 440/08 is a response to the Sunrise Propane explosion. You require risk and safety management plans by the end of this year, yet there are only about four or five qualified professional engineers in Ontario to prepare them.

Minister, will you suspend this regulation and work with propane dealers to write a sensible regulation?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, of course, the member would surely agree that the safety and protection

of the people of Ontario is paramount. It was with that in mind that right after this unfortunate event happened two years ago, we had an expert panel convened of two of the most prominent experts in the country to deal with this situation. They wrote a report. A regulation was passed almost two years ago. Since then, we've been looking at the implementation of that regulation, which will happen as of January 1, 2011.

We totally agree that there are different standards that should be applied to different sizes of organizations. We are working right now with the propane industry, we're working with the expert panel and we're working with the TSSA to come up with a system that will be sensible for all so that these businesses can remain in operation, but also so that society and the people of Ontario can be protected to the best of our ability.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Minister, each plan costs \$25,000, an amount that will force 90% of Ontario's propane refill installations to close. Rural areas depend on propane. Campgrounds and recreation vehicles depend on propane. You are destroying tourism, small businesses and small communities. Surely there is a way to address safety concerns without turning the lights off on small businesses. Minister, will you withdraw this regulation until you get it right?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As I indicated to the member before, we are working on the situation right now for both the large facilities and the smaller facilities. We are working towards a solution, but the safety of the people of Ontario is absolutely paramount. We've got that in mind.

We want to make sure that, at the end of the day, we've got a system that the fire services and municipalities can live with, that the operators can live with, that the TSSA can live with, so that the people of Ontario can be protected to the best of our ability. We're working on that, and if the member stays tuned there will be an announcement made on that fairly shortly.

COURT INTERPRETERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. There are more than 640,000 Chinese Canadians in Ontario. More than 70,000 speak only Mandarin. Why does this province have no accredited Mandarin court interpreters?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: In fact, we have a group of interpreters in the province of Ontario who are as good and qualified as any throughout the country. What we've worked to do over the years—the past two years in particular—is to support and improve their qualifications. One of the things we have found in the course of that is that we need some extra in certain languages. That's actually one of the things that has come out of the extended review of the qualifications.

We're going to work to find and accredit as many interpreters as we can in all the necessary languages for

court proceedings. We're going to keep working on that until we have as many as we need.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

1120

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a serious matter that could compromise the integrity of our justice system. The province is relying on unaccredited individuals to act as court interpreters. Let's be clear: These are people who have failed the government's interpretation testing.

I'm sure the government wouldn't allow an unaccredited surgeon to operate or an unaccredited pilot to fly the Premier's plane. Why are they allowing unaccredited language interpreters in our courts?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I think the leader of the third party's question touches the important point: that these are qualified people. The accreditation process was undertaken to support and enhance qualifications that are generally acknowledged to be as good as or better than anywhere else in the country, so the analogy drawn by the leader of the third party is not an accurate one.

We're going to make sure we have fully qualified people to do the interpretation at every case that's required. One of the advantages of instituting this new approach, which has had some communications challenges, is that we're in fact identifying where we need to do more—and we can do more and find more accredited, qualified people.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

On January 12, 2010, we received the shocking news that Haiti, one of the world's most impoverished countries, was hit with a series of 7.0-magnitude earthquakes, causing catastrophic destruction. Buildings all over Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince were reduced to rubble, killing and injuring thousands of people.

In my riding of Brant, I witnessed an overwhelming act of charity for those affected by the devastation of the earthquake. Students in my riding who attended the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, the Grand Erie District School Board and the private schools took action and raised over \$60,000 in support of Haiti. It is truly an amazing example of the power of charity and the compassion our children have displayed for those who need it most in a time of crisis.

I know that the member from Eglinton–Lawrence recently attended a Haiti-related announcement in his riding. Minister, would you please provide with us an update on this announcement?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's an excellent question.

First of all, hats off to the students of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board and the Grand Erie District School Board.

The earthquake, I think we all know, was a devastating occurrence in Haiti, and the support of the people of Haiti shown by communities throughout Ontario and Canada has been truly inspiring.

In my constituency of St. Catharines, I've received much correspondence concerning relief efforts, and I've witnessed the creation of many community-based initiatives in support of Haiti.

The people of Haiti needed help and Ontarians were quick to respond, none more quickly than the school kids. The unequivocal support that our children, Ontario's students, have shown for Haitians in need is truly inspiring.

The member for Eglinton–Lawrence recently spoke at Lawrence Park Collegiate Institute, where students collected more than \$12,700 for the Canadian Red Cross and Free the Children's Haiti fund. In total, Toronto—

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I know it's easy to say that I'm proud of the students in the riding, but I am absolutely convinced that every member in this House is proud of the way the students in their ridings responded and, indeed, of all of the students across Ontario for stepping up for those in need.

The youth of Ontario have shown great character. We should all be proud of the strength and leadership shown by our youth. Their actions do make a difference around the world.

As an educator, I truly believe that our children's actions are the reflection of their parents' and their teachers' efforts to instill in them a sense of charity. Alongside of our government's effort to create strong social leaders, together we are helping our students create positive local and global change.

The earthquake that destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes destroyed infrastructure through Haiti: schools, hospitals and roads. Haiti requires continued support in rebuilding after the earthquake, and in particular with the redevelopment of the infrastructure, which is the key component to Haiti's recovery. Would the minister—

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Excellent question.

I can tell the member that the province is moving forward to rebuild three public schools in Port-au-Prince. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence announced that a request for proposals to design and construct the three schools has been issued. We hope to announce the successful bidder by mid-November. All three schools were destroyed by the earthquake and have been identified by Haiti's national ministry of education as priorities for rebuilding.

These buildings will be constructed in a manner that makes them disaster-resilient, pursuant to the internationally recognized California building code. Construction of these schools will begin in early 2011. Each school will have about nine classrooms, plus rooms for administration, meals and other supports, and access to water, sewage treatment and electricity.

It's a matter of thanking the students in this province and the government working with those students to assist those who are devastated by the earthquake—

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

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. There's been a great deal of controversy over the closing of the lake sturgeon fishing industry in the entire province of Ontario as it's listed as "threatened."

In a recent article in the Sault Star, it was stated that the ministry saw far more sturgeon than they ever expected in Lake Superior. Why would you close sturgeon fishing province-wide and place sturgeon on the threatened list when the data continues to clearly show that it's not?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I thank the member for the question. My ministry works very hard with a lot of fish management zone councils to evaluate the health of fish throughout the province of Ontario, and certainly any decisions we make are on the basis of science. We use the science to inform the decisions we make, and we work with local fish management zone councils to make sure that we have the best information. We're happy to look at all the science-based information in order to make those decisions. We work closely with the local areas and our stakeholders to make those decisions, and they are informed by the science.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, your own report, *The Lake Sturgeon in Ontario, July 2009*, states: "The impacts of dams and hydroelectric facilities appears to be the single largest impediment to the recovery of sturgeon in Ontario. Ironically, the threat to sturgeon as a result of the construction of large dams is expected to increase as the province of Ontario looks to increase the number of new hydroelectric sites to meet future energy demands."

Recreational anglers had no effect on sturgeon populations, but the McGuinty government's Green Energy Act threatens the habitat for sturgeon even more. It appears that the MNR is admitting that the Green Energy Act is going to have a detrimental effect on sturgeon populations.

Minister, why are you ignoring your own report and punishing recreational anglers?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I think that's a stretch to make that leap. I think our quota systems and our science are all informed by the long-term sustainability of our fish populations and, ultimately, the economic viability of the commercial fishing industry and fish-based communities. We work with lots of other communities. We work with the US border communities to reach agreements on what kind of fishing stock is available, the quota and the health of those populations. So I would say that the fluctuations in the quotas and the sustainability of fish populations are informed by the science, whether it's the water lake levels, the temperature in those lakes, or the health and sustainability of those fish populations. We work with the scientists and we work with our fish management zone

councils, and we appreciate their advice. That helps inform the decisions we make at my ministry.

SOLDIERS' REMAINS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. On May 19, I asked the Premier if he would fund a proper archaeological excavation, burial and recognition for the fallen soldiers of the War of 1812. The Premier said, "I think there's a legitimate issue here, and we undertake to look into it," which left the impression of a positive outcome.

Why has the Premier allowed the funding to be refused?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know the minister is going to want to speak to this in more detail, but I think, in fairness, in trying to introduce a modicum of objectivity into the workings of this place, when my honourable colleague raised that issue with me, I did, in fact, say that I would agree to look into it. I didn't say anything more and I didn't say anything less.

I've had the opportunity to look into it, I've had the opportunity to speak with the Minister of Tourism, and we've landed on a decision. I'll allow the minister to speak to that more directly momentarily.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The Premier's office quite rightly takes the lead on recognition of fallen police officers, firefighters and other emergency services, as well as Remembrance Day ceremonies. But in the case of these fallen soldiers, the Premier fobs off the funding request to the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Why is this Premier's office not taking the lead on and funding the proper reinterment and recognition of these fallen heroes, the soldiers of the War of 1812?

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question from the honourable member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

I'm proud to advise that our government, so far, has invested \$27 million in funding into the War of 1812. The War of 1812 is an important element in our history. It is said that Canada was saved because of the war.

With regard to the city of Hamilton's request, it's not within my ministry's mandate. That said, our government has invested another \$1 million to assist seven regional groups in planning and developing 1812 activities across the province. This includes the western corridor bicentennial alliance, which represents the city of Hamilton.

I appreciate the significance of the battle of Stoney Creek, and I encourage the city of Hamilton to discuss their project with this alliance so that we can come up with a proposal to address the situation.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As governments of all

levels face tough fiscal decisions in these lean times, there is a concern that the municipal budget shortfalls will translate into a reduction in services or the quality of services for Ontarians.

We all know that municipal elections across the province are rightly providing for discussion on these circumstances. I have noticed, however, that in my community and elsewhere, there is a perception and commentary suggesting that at least part of this fiscal challenge is a result of the province downloading services or costs onto municipal governments.

My question: Minister, is this correct?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for the question. He raises a very good question. It's one that I think we should all pay close attention to.

We are in the process of uploading a variety of costs, which will provide a net benefit of \$1.8 billion to municipalities by 2018. This will see more than \$41 million saved in the member's riding of Ottawa this year alone, with an estimated benefit of more than \$122 million by 2018.

There are a few interesting statistics. It will see every riding under the official opposition's watch save roughly \$250 million this year alone. It will also see every riding under the third party's watch save roughly \$220 million this year alone. So I find it very, very difficult to understand why they voted against—

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Ontarians can remember a time when this was not the case. I am very proud that our government has taken bold action in the last seven years to reverse the pitfalls of reckless downloading and the degradation of services that accompany that ideological approach, but my constituents know very well that the province is also managing difficult economic circumstances and is exercising a plan to recover from deficits brought about from the biggest recession since the Second World War.

Can the minister assure my constituents that this government will not, unlike past governments, look to downloading services on the backs of local governments?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. It's a very important one.

It is important to point out that while the two opposition parties did not support these measures—in fact, they voted against them—it is quite the landmark agreement and has received strong support from the 444 municipalities that are affected.

Our plan is to carry through with the agreement we entered into. So we are uploading Ontario Works benefits, saving municipalities \$425 million, and court security costs, which will save municipalities \$125 million by 2018. This year, we begin our upload on the ODSP program and are finishing that upload in 2011, which will save municipalities \$340 million. The Ontario drug benefit upload will save municipalities \$158 million.

So unlike the previous NDP and Harris-Hudak regimes, we are about working with municipalities—

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

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is to the Premier. Premier, about two weeks ago, in an answer to my question, you indicated that you were going to undertake a new look at the request of Nortel pensioners. I would hope that you would outline to me the process that you and your finance minister are going through with regard to their request. Would you also indicate whether or not you are going to enter into public meetings so that all Nortel pensioners and legislators here can hear the answers to the questions that the Nortel pensioners are putting to the government? I believe the government owes these pensioners the right to have their questions answered in public so that everyone knows what the risks and benefits are for the Nortel pensioners.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As the Premier indicated, we are undertaking a review. There have been ongoing discussions with the principals involved, representing a number of the pensioners. Just as we responded with \$250 million to protect the first \$1,000 of pension money, we take these all of these issues very seriously and want to work with all retirees, all former members of the plan, to try to resolve this in a way that protects the interests of as many of the Nortel pensioners as possible. We are continuing that review.

DEFERRED VOTES

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

Deferred vote 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 Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on second reading of Bill 101. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.

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

Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 101. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Murdoch, Bill
Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.
Bailey, Robert	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Hampton, Howard	O'Toole, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Oraziotti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Best, Margaret	Hoy, Pat	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Jones, Sylvia	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Savoline, Joyce
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Chudleigh, Ted	Levac, Dave	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Sterling, Norman W.
Craiton, Kim	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tabuns, Peter
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Elliott, Christine	Mitchell, Carol	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Munro, Julia	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Opposed?

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

The ayes are 89; 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? Government House leader?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

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

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

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introduction of guests?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So it's too hot today? It was too cold yesterday.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I guess things are going well for the Speaker when he knows he can't satisfy either side of the House. Things are all right.

There being no introductions, it's time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCENIC CITY ORDER OF GOOD CHEER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I rise in the House today to recognize two important community projects undertaken in Owen Sound by the Scenic City Order of Good Cheer,

a non-profit group made up of executive and associate members.

One of the projects is a new bandstand at Grey Roots Museum and Archives. More than 30 people dedicated time, muscle and diligence to complete what was initially thought to be a small job. A year and a half later, the bandstand is a proud complement to the museum's period buildings. It is representative of a bandstand from the 1920s, except ours is completely accessible for wheelchairs and strollers. The Good Cheer Bandstand was designed by architect G.M. Diemert, under the leadership of project manager John Hopper.

The second project is a quarter-million-dollar splash pad project at Kelso Beach Park in Owen Sound. After four years of raising money for the pad, the Good Cheer group, which most recently built an artificial outdoor ice rink at Harrison Park, has secured an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant of \$50,000 and another \$30,000 from the city of Owen Sound. When the pad officially opens next spring, it will feature water guns, mist sprays and water geysers. At completion of this project, the Order of Good Cheer will have contributed approximately \$1.6 million into the city of Owen Sound and surrounding area in the last 20 years.

All these community projects were made possible by a small group of people with big ideas, leadership and vision, and our community will be forever indebted to them for their exceptional efforts over the years.

WORLD JUNIOR BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Bill Mauro: This summer, from July 23 to August 1, the world junior baseball under-19 championships were held in Thunder Bay. Teams from Australia, Chinese Taipei, Cuba, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Korea, the Netherlands, Panama, the US and Canada attended and competed. The event was held at Port Arthur Stadium and Baseball Central, and both sites were in incredible condition to host an event of this calibre.

I was very pleased that our government was able to support these championships in a very substantial way. Back in 2005, we provided \$50,000 for upgrades to Baseball Central. The Ministry of Health Promotion provided \$200,000 in funding, and an additional \$350,000 came from the northern Ontario heritage fund. Funding from other sources brought the total provincial support for these championships to over \$700,000.

The volunteers put on a world-class sporting event, and that doesn't surprise me. I've seen the extraordinary things that the people of Thunder Bay are capable of. Thunder Bay is home to a large number of hard-working volunteers who have gained a reputation for organizing first-rate events. I know that those who attended the championships this summer from all over the world were thrilled with the quality of everything that was connected to the event.

Congratulations to my old friend and baseball teammate, Warren Philp, and his incredible team of volunteers. They put in so many hours over so many years to

bring the world championships to our city and we're all very proud of what they accomplished, not only for baseball fans but to the benefit of the city and the district of Thunder Bay.

Way to go, Thunder Bay! You did it again.

NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am pleased to rise today to recognize National Family Week, running from October 4 to 10. National Family Week was proclaimed an official week by the government of Canada in 1985.

Falling the week before Thanksgiving, it is a time dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the benefits and the strengths of family. This week encourages us to reflect on and appreciate the importance of family to our lives, our communities, our province and our nation.

National Family Week also gives us the opportunity to thank those child and family service organizations in our ridings that work tirelessly, often under tight financial constraints, to provide services to our most vulnerable families.

The theme of this year's National Family Week is Families Connecting through Stories, and celebrates the joys of reading and storytelling. Whether it's reading from a book or sharing real-life experiences of our parents and grandparents, storytelling allows us to make new memories and reconnect with loved ones.

I invite all families to unplug the electronics this week and enjoy the simple pleasure of each other's company.

DO THE MATH CHALLENGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today a little hungrier than I was yesterday because I'm doing the Do the Math diet, on which you have to live for up to a week on what people get when they go to a food bank. Five of my caucus members are doing it as well. I would challenge the rest of the House to join me on that.

It's a very interesting experience. In the process of living on Kraft dinner, rice, a loaf of bread, and a can of pork and beans, I am indebted to the two most amazing providers of food to those who are needy in my riding. St. Francis Table has been doing it for 23 years and are about to serve their millionth meal. Here's to Brother John, who's been keeping that going, among many others, and Robert Thorpe at Parkdale Community Food Bank, serving—on the increase, by the way, unfortunately—members of the Parkdale community.

I can tell you that both these establishments wished they didn't have to exist. I know that Brother John would love to serve the millionth meal and be done with it. I know that Robert Thorpe at Parkdale food bank would love to serve the last customer and be done with it because there were no lineups and because there was nobody needy in the province.

I stand here, and I hope not alone, in desiring that outcome. I grew up in a province where this wasn't the

case; I'd like to retire in a province where this is not the case.

EVENTS IN GLENGARRY-PRESCOTT- RUSSELL

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Last Thursday, I had the honour of attending the 3rd Annual Township of North Glengarry Business and Volunteer Awards in Maxville. Some 300 citizens of North Glengarry were present for the ceremony and everyone in attendance was delighted to be celebrating the spirit of North Glengarry.

I would like to acknowledge those who were awarded at the gala: citizen of the year, Réjean Belanger of Glengarry Community Living; community service award, Glengarry Memorial Hospital Auxiliary volunteers; business of the year, Richard Ranger of Tapis Richard Ranger in Alexandria; excellence in agriculture, Jack and Linda Fraser and sons of Fraserlock Farms; entrepreneur business of the year, Rob Merriman of Home Hardware, Maxville; youth merit award, Tori Conway; senior merit award, the remarkable Betty McCormick; dedication and leadership, Bonnie McDonald of Glengarry News; and finally, lifetime achievement award, Gerald Trottier.

1510

I would like to share with everyone in this House that Maxville is also the home of the Glengarry Highland Games, one of the largest Highland games in the world. The next games are July 29 and 30, 2011.

DEVONSHIRE COMMUNITY PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Today in this Legislature, it's my great pleasure to recognize Devonshire public school, which is located in Hintonburg, in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

Devonshire is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. There will be a great celebration which will take place on October 15 with teachers, students and parents. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend that celebration, so I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Devonshire public school and all the teachers, students and parents on this great celebration.

Devonshire is a wonderfully diverse inner-city French immersion school named after Governor General Lord Devonshire. It was also recently designated a heritage building. On April 9 of this year, Devonshire kicked off the centennial celebrations by opening a 25-year time capsule left by students from the 75th anniversary celebration—as well as historical activities for the kids.

There will be barbecues and treats on October 15, a big band will be playing, there will be old-fashioned games and memorabilia and a 100th birthday cake, and why not? There's also a speakers' corner for folks to record their thoughts and memories for a new time capsule for, I'm sure, the next 100th anniversary of Devonshire.

I'd like to congratulate Devonshire's principal, Deborah Kuffner, and all the teachers and students for the remarkable work they do at the school. Also, a big thanks to Bruce Tate, who has been the 100th-anniversary coordinator, along with the countless other parents, students and volunteers who have been part of this special celebration.

Congratulations to Devonshire public school in Ottawa Centre.

ORGANIC FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize that next week is Canada's first National Organic Week.

I want to commend Ontario's organic farmers. I know that in addition to working hard like all other farmers, they face some unique challenges and need to be even more innovative. Transitioning to organic is not something that happens overnight. It takes real commitment, and I want to recognize them for that.

Organic farmers, like all Ontario farmers, are affected by the fact that this government is ignoring the fundamentals of agriculture. Organic farmers are suffering the same increased hydro rates. Cows that give organic milk aren't able to wait for time-of-use pricing. Organic farmers, like all our farmers, need support programs that work, programs they can count on whether there is a short-term or long-term drop in market prices. They need more than someone who sings about the good things that grow in Ontario or promises to lobby for them. They need more than someone who stands by while government increases their burden with more taxes, more regulations and less help. They need a strong minister who will take action to ensure that farmers have the basic necessities they need to succeed.

Ontario's organic farmers have done their part. They identified a growing market and did the research and hard work to grow quality Ontario organic food. Now it's time for the government to work with them to ensure that they and Ontario agriculture have a strong future.

PEEL MULTICULTURAL COUNCIL

Mr. Bob Delaney: This Thursday, I will join with the western Mississauga community at the annual general meeting of one of our most vibrant social services and settlement agencies. The Peel Multicultural Council was established in 1977 as a council of ethnic leaders in Mississauga and Brampton. PMC grew to include interested members and other community groups drawn from across the diverse spectrum of the region. Today PMC comprises more than 150 groups, agencies and institutions and more than 350 individuals.

PMC offers such vital community programs as the host program, which matches recent immigrants to experienced Canadians to help newcomers integrate and adjust to life in Canada. The LINC program provides basic language instruction in either English or French.

Job search workshops offer new Canadians assistance with resumé writing, networking techniques and mock interviews. The enhanced language training co-op for internationally trained professionals provides clients with valuable Canadian work experience and coaching in their field.

I thank board president Eric Wen, executive director Naveed Chaudhry—both of whom I've known for nearly 20 years—and all of the other staff, volunteers and newcomers that serve the Peel Multicultural Council and make our western Mississauga neighbourhoods a vibrant place to live, work and raise a family.

IMMIGRANTS

Mr. Phil McNeely: The McGuinty government is committed to helping our newcomers succeed by investing in services they need to get settled in Ontario. Each year, Ontario receives almost half of all new immigrants that come to the country. We benefit tremendously from immigrants who choose Ontario as their new home.

We also recognize the valuable contributions that our newcomers make to our social vitality and our economic prosperity. That is why we are calling on the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement by spending the remaining \$207 million they promised Ontario newcomers.

We are also calling on Ottawa to immediately begin negotiations on a comprehensive new immigration agreement that provides Ontario with adequate funding, planning and governance to help our newcomers succeed.

As Ontario's workforce ages and as Ontario's birth rate declines, immigrants will make up a significant portion of our labour force growth. Their contributions will help our economy remain strong in a globally competitive world. So I ask all members of this Legislature to stand up for Ontario's newcomers by urging the Harper government to invest in our newcomers and immediately commence negotiations with the government of Ontario. The success of our newcomers depends on it.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: I beg leave to present a report on the unfunded liability of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The Auditor General's 2009 annual report contained a review of the unfunded liability of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, or WSIB, and as everyone in this House knows, this has been the

bane of the existence of governments for years and years. The auditor reported that "the assets in the WSIB insurance fund are substantially less than what is needed to satisfy the estimated lifetime costs of all claims currently in the system."

The unfunded liability at this point—this point being December 31, 2008, as of the audit—was at \$11.5 billion, which was an increase of \$3.4 billion over the prior year. We don't know what it is today, but it's significantly more, I would expect.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts held hearings on the auditor's review of the WSIB unfunded liability in February, and the committee report being tabled today makes 10 recommendations directed to the Ministry of Labour and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. I'll just include three of them so members can get a bit of an idea. One is that "information is required from the WSIB on its consultations with the Ministry of Labour regarding whether or not the WSIB would support legislative changes requiring it to become fully funded." Another is that "the WSIB is to report on the outcome of its review of the way it sets premium rates." Finally, "the WSIB is to report on whether it achieved its target of a 7% reduction of new claims in 2009 and, if not, what action is being taken in 2010 on this issue."

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated October 5, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Bentley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: During ministerial statements.
1520

G20 PUBLIC INQUIRY ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 CONCERNANT
LA TENUE D'UNE ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE
SUR LE SOMMET DU G20

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 111, An Act to require a public inquiry into government action and spending in connection with the G20 summit / Projet de loi 111, Loi exigeant la tenue d'une enquête publique sur les mesures prises et les dépenses engagées par le gouvernement dans le cadre du Sommet du G20.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This bill requires the Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint a commission under the Public Inquiries Act to inquire into and report on the decisions and actions of the government of Ontario and of Ontario's law enforcement agencies in connection with the G20 summit held in Toronto on June 26 and June 27, 2010.

Specifically, the commission is required to inquire into and report on whether the fundamental rights and freedoms of Ontarians were compromised and how money was spent by the province in connection with the summit. The commission is required to make recommendations on how to manage similar events that may be held in Ontario in the future and to submit an interim and a final report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

TONUM LTD. ACT, 2010

Mr. Shurman moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Tonum Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT
(TENANTS' RIGHTS), 2010
LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION
À USAGE D'HABITATION
(DROITS DES LOCATAIRES)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 112, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to tenants' rights / Projet de loi

112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation à l'égard des droits des locataires.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The bill makes several amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, including, among others, the following:

The bill prohibits a landlord from increasing the rent charged to a new tenant by more than the guideline and abolishes landlord applications to the board for above-guideline rent increases where there has been a significant increase in the cost of utilities.

The bill requires that the board dismiss an application from a landlord who has been given a work order under section 225 of the act or an order under section 15.2 of the Building Code Act, 1992, and has not completed the items in the work order or the order.

The bill requires a landlord to obtain a licence with respect to a rental unit in a residential complex containing six or more rental units in order to enter into a tenancy agreement or renew an existing tenancy agreement.

MOTIONS

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe that we have unanimous consent to defer the late show filed Monday, October 4, 2010, by the member from Beaches-East York to the Minister of Children and Youth Services until Wednesday, October 6, 2010, after the House adjourns at 6 p.m.

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

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOOD GOVERNANCE

LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the McGuinty government to introduce legislation that, if passed, would enhance the services provided to businesses and to the public.

The Good Government Act, 2010, includes approximately 70 items of legislation from seven different ministries, including several changes to the Ministry of the Attorney General statutes.

L'objectif principal de ce projet de loi est de donner suite à la Loi favorisant un Ontario propice aux affaires. Si le projet de loi est adopté, il assurera que les structures nécessaires sont en place pour rationaliser les services aux entreprises et au public.

This bill's primary purpose is to build upon our Open for Business legislation. If passed, it would help to ensure the necessary structures are in place to streamline services for businesses and the public.

Most are technical changes to existing acts, but are important because they would improve clarity and keep the law's language current.

A number of these items are good housekeeping measures, but others include initiatives that would make the justice system more effective while giving businesses and the public more flexibility.

In 2006, changes introduced by our government were made to the Justices of the Peace Act which removed the partisan nature of justice of the peace appointments. We recognized how important it was to have qualified individuals sitting on the bench, individuals who were deemed qualified by an independent advisory committee.

Today, our government is proposing amendments that would further enhance our justices of the peace recruitment process, making it a more targeted one.

Similar to what's done for other judicial appointments, advertising would be tailored to the specific needs of the vacant position, as identified by the associate chief justice.

Rather than advertising for potential justices of the peace annually across the province, the Justice of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee could advertise within the region where and when a vacancy occurs. This change would allow the committee more flexibility to recruit candidates who meet the requirements of a particular vacancy, which will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our justice system.

Also, the Good Government Act, if passed, includes a number of amendments to several acts that will transfer responsibility for adjudication over liquor and gaming issues from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario board to the liquor licence tribunal. This would allow the AGCO to focus on its important public policy work.

The AGCO would retain responsibility for the regulation of alcohol and gaming, while the Licence Appeal Tribunal would take over adjudicative matters as directed under the following acts: Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, 1996; Gaming Control Act, 1992; Liquor Licence Act; Vintners Quality Alliance Act, 1999; and the Business Corporations Act, Business Names Act and Corporations Information Act.

Pour terminer, le projet de loi contient plusieurs modifications à ces lois et à d'autres lois qui, si elles sont adoptées, confèreraient une plus grande souplesse pour améliorer les services aux entreprises, faciliter les transactions commerciales et améliorer la capacité du gouvernement à répondre rapidement aux besoins des entreprises.

There are several proposed amendments to these and other acts that would, if passed, provide greater flexibility to improve services to business, facilitate business transactions and improve the government's ability to quickly respond to the needs of business.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Take your time. Don't go so fast.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You see, we have, all of a sudden, rampant enthusiasm for the suggestions in this law.

In conclusion, the changes proposed in the Good Government Act, 2010, were not developed in isolation and would affect many citizens, organizations and businesses. Indeed, in some cases, affected organizations have requested the changes and, in other situations, their views were sought through consultation.

The Good Government Act, 2010, includes a number of measures that would increase transparency, enhance accountability, and modernize provincial laws, regulations and systems to further advance the province's five-year Open Ontario plan to create new opportunities for jobs and growth.

1530

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

JOURNÉE MONDIALE DES ENSEIGNANTS

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Today, I am pleased to rise in the House to honour the countless achievements of teachers who work in Ontario's schools and school boards. Today is World Teachers' Day, an opportunity for us to recognize the outstanding individuals who are making a difference in the lives of Ontario's almost two million students. Each day in our 4,900 publicly funded schools, educators are committed to providing students with a world-class education. Each day they act as role models, leaders and mentors.

Aujourd'hui, je souhaite les remercier pour leurs efforts soutenus et leurs réalisations remarquables qui contribuent à l'excellence en éducation.

Thank you to the educators who support students as they overcome all manner of challenges—academic and non-academic. Thank you to the educators whose energy and creativity in the classroom helps prepare students for the next step in life, whether that is secondary school, post-secondary education or the workforce. Thank you to the educators who motivate students to engage in the arts, reading, math, science, technology and athletics. You inspire public confidence in our schools and engage entire communities in support of student achievement. Your determination to reach the hearts and minds of every student gives them the confidence that they need to pursue their dreams and overcome any obstacles to their success.

Vous avez compris que pour libérer le potentiel des élèves, vous devez exiger d'eux qu'ils dépassent leurs limites.

Your understanding that pushing students to their limits is key to unlocking their success is evident.

Nothing more powerfully defines Ontario's publicly funded education system than the individual impressions of those who experience it every day. Students, parents, teachers and the whole of the education community are excited that student achievement in literacy and numeracy is on the rise, that struggling students continue to be supported like never before, and that more students are graduating from high schools. We have the educators who work in our schools and school boards to thank for that. It is our government's commitment to continue to work in partnership with our teachers; a partnership that has seen seven years of labour peace and stability that has allowed all parties to focus on excellence in education.

This is an achievement, one that I know is highly respected and valued by students and parents, both of whom benefit from a stable, publicly funded education system. We have made significant investments in our schools from buildings and resources to new and exciting programs such as full-day kindergarten.

Mais nous reconnaissons que ce sont le dévouement et la diligence des personnes qui travaillent dans nos écoles et conseils scolaires qui transforment ces investissements en résultats concrets.

We had the opportunity, while hosting the recent Building Blocks for Education summit, to celebrate the results and achievement in education in our province. Educators from around the world were very impressed with what we have accomplished together in Ontario.

World Teachers' Day provides us with another opportunity to celebrate these achievements and recognize the educators who have helped accomplish them. Once again, to the educators and support staff across the province, you have my heartfelt thanks for your great work.

ORGANIC WEEK

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I rise today to acknowledge the celebration of all things organic and Organic Week, which begins Thanksgiving weekend and extends to World Food Day on October 16.

I just want to take this opportunity to introduce Jodi Koberinski and Matt LeBeau from the Organic Council of Ontario, and Elizabeth Chrumka from the Canadian Organic Growers. Welcome.

The McGuinty government recognizes the growing importance of the organic sector in the provincial economy. There are almost 700 organic farms in Ontario, covering more than 114,000 acres and producing a wide range of organic crops. Organic production continues to grow across the province each year. The value of Ontario's organic sector is more than \$750 million.

Our five-year Open Ontario plan is about opening the province to new opportunities, new jobs and new growth. We know that organics present a significant growth opportunity for both our agri-food industry and our rural communities. That's why we want to help Ontario's organic sector to expand and to prosper. We have a plan to make that happen. We are strengthening production, processing and promotion for Ontario organics.

Did you know that it takes three years to make the change from a traditional farm to an organic farm? Staff at my ministry are available to help interested producers make this transition. We welcome the national Canadian organic standard, which was introduced in 2009, and we encourage our organic producers in Ontario to earn their certification.

Through our rural economic development program, we have invested more than \$2 million to increase the capacity for organic food processing and help organic processors meet growing consumer demands.

We have also invested more than \$700,000 through the Ontario market investment fund to support the marketing initiatives for a wide variety of organic food that is grown right here in Ontario. This included support for the Organic Council of Ontario to participate in the Toronto Green Living Show. Council members promoted Ontario organics, demonstrating to consumers that they can buy local and organic at the same time.

What's more, we are investing in research and supporting research initiatives to develop greenhouse systems for organic vegetables and transplant products, as well as studies into wheat management and ways to improve organic beekeeping practices.

Organic Meadow is but one of Ontario's great organic success stories. What started as a farmer-owned co-op over 20 years ago transformed into an organic dairy business in the 1990s. This past August, in partnership with Steen's Dairy, they expanded their operations and have opened a new plant in Guelph. Our government proudly supported this venture through the rural economic development program by investing close to \$495,000 in their expansion. This successful partnership will mean the use of more milk produced by local dairy farmers, providing more jobs for local workers and giving consumers more reasons to buy local.

Ontarians know that our farmers grow high-quality food products that are among the best in the world. Buying Ontario means that you are supporting local farmers, helping to grow your community and protecting the environment. We're encouraging people to choose Ontario when they're buying groceries for their family, and that includes Ontario organics.

Across the province, there are a number of unique events planned to celebrate Organic Week, including lectures, local farm tours and gardening workshops. You can find out what's happening in your community by visiting www.organicweek.ca.

I encourage everyone in this Legislature and everyone across this province, whether you're a consumer, producer or organic enthusiast, to get involved and support Ontario organics.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise to talk about the Good Government Act that has just been introduced by the Attorney General.

He talks about 70 items of legislation from seven different ministries. He talks about this bill being introduced to enhance the Open for Business legislation that the government introduced lately and to enhance jobs and growth in Ontario. I sincerely hope that this bill does exactly that. However, given our experience in the most recent past, one must have pause.

Just recently, the regulations, if they are enacted, would take the small businesses that deal with propane in the province of Ontario and make their future extremely dim. If the government continues to ignore illegal tobacco in this province, which is now close to 50% of consumption, the convenience store operators in Ontario will have a very dim future as well, with hundreds of them already closed, most of them because of illegal sales in their neighbourhoods. Pharmacies across this province, particularly small ones, are finding themselves in great difficulties, particularly in rural areas, because of changes that this government has made in the rules surrounding pharmacies. And, of course, the HST has been introduced, which affects different businesses in different ways, and some of it not in a very positive way.

1540

The regulation and re-regulation this government has burdened Ontario with has required the additional use of consultants, to the point where government organizations are using them to lobby other parts of government. We've seen this in the hospital business; we've seen it in the Ontario lottery and gaming business, where they have hired consultants to lobby government; we have seen it in municipalities; and we have seen it, of course, with great excess in the eHealth situation. We have seen this government, through regulations or the non-regulations, attack agriculture in many and various ways, particularly in the fruit wine area, where once they promised to have it, and then they took it away. The safety net program, the microFIT program—it goes on and on.

We look forward to reviewing this act and we look forward to it being of a positive nature to Ontario. However, we do have some doubts.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It is a pleasure today to speak on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus to celebrate our teachers on World Teachers' Day. First recognized by UNESCO in 1994, World Teachers' Day provides us with an opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to our teachers and the integral role they play in the lives of almost two million students throughout the province. The UNESCO theme for this year is, "Recovery Begins with Teachers." Here in Canada, our teachers are supporting this theme with a national statement: "Canadian Teachers—Doing it Right!"

As Canadians and as Ontarians, we have much to thank our teachers for in doing it right. They tirelessly support our students and are committed to our students at every stage of their journey towards achieving personal success and their full potential. They act as role models,

leaders and mentors. We all can recall teachers who have had a tremendous, positive impact on our lives.

Throughout this past year, many teachers have received awards for their outstanding accomplishments, and I'd like to take this opportunity to just recognize three who I think are representative of all teachers: Alice Désormeaux, Colleen Drew-Baehre and Matthew Biggley. They are the respective recipients of this year's Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan award: an elementary teacher who makes teaching fun; a secondary teacher who connects students with the natural environment; and a beginning teacher who brings history to life. This is just a few of the examples and the types of teaching styles that we see in this province today.

We are extremely fortunate—our students are extremely fortunate—to have in this province so many outstanding, hard-working and dedicated teachers who motivate our students each and every day. On behalf of Tim Hudak and our caucus, let me thank you for your commitment, for your passion, for your professionalism, and thank you for all you do to help our students be the best that they can be.

ORGANIC WEEK

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses? The member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I would like to say to the Minister of Agriculture—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just call the members to order. Restart the clock, please. I want to ensure that the member from Toronto–Danforth has his full amount of time.

Member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

First, I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture for standing up today and giving the kind of announcement that she has, recognizing Organic Week. Organic foods are one of the fastest-growing sectors in Canada. In fact, I think a spotlight does need to be shone on this huge opportunity for us, economically and environmentally.

Some 85% of the organic food that is purchased here in Ontario is from outside of the province, so there's a huge market just waiting for Ontario growers and producers to fill. We need to take advantage of that opportunity. The announcement about Organic Week once again focuses in on that opportunity, and I hope that the Minister of Agriculture will take the opportunity at the cabinet table to push for greater investment.

There hasn't been the investment in organic foods and in organic food processing that we need. If we look at the United States, where there is approximately \$130 million a year that's provided for farmers to make the transition to organic food, we see a big investment. The European Union, about the same amount: \$130 million a year in research to develop the organic sector.

This government needs to look at the barriers that exist to organic production and dismantle those barriers.

The organic food council believes it's possible to double organic production by 2013 with proper government support. We should not miss out on that opportunity.

It was a good thing to make the announcement today. I hope a lot of people notice. I hope people come to the reception that's going to be held in the next few weeks, but I urge the minister to go beyond the announcement and to take action.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I also want to respond briefly to the Good Government Act that was announced by the Attorney General. It was much more like the house-keeping act, 2010. We will review the document that's been put forward and attend any technical briefing that's provided. On the face of it, when you go through the bill, it's largely technical amendments. It's quite something to get a bill with a title as grand as the Good Government Act and then find, essentially, all the odds and ends that need to be sorted out on a variety of bills sort of swept together.

I'm sure there are others who will be very creative in spinning a story around that act. I look forward to those acts of imagination and rhetoric.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: New Democrats join the government and the Conservative Party in recognizing and honouring elementary school teachers, secondary school teachers and education workers in general who work in our school system.

This is one of those rare occasions where three political parties agree, at least in recognizing and honouring our teachers. I want to say, though, that we do diverge from time to time in our opinions about the work they do because, I have to tell you, teachers do a very difficult job. They are counsellors, they are therapists, they're policemen and, on occasion, they are substitute parents. They do all that day in and day out. It's a complex job.

They are doing more than ever before. They've got bigger class sizes than ever before from grades 4 to 8—30 students and/or more. They've got split classes that they have never seen before, more and more split classes than I have ever seen as a former teacher, making the life of elementary teachers, in particular, difficult. Regular teachers are doing ESL, which they didn't do before but are doing more and more of. They've got regular teachers teaching special education for which they are not qualified, meaning that a whole lot of kids with special needs are falling through the cracks. And now, as a result of full-time SK and JK, which I support, they're going to be teaching kids in averages of more than 29 students. That's a lot of students to be teaching in a JK or SK class, but that's the job of teachers, and they do it. They do it even though it's getting harder and harder.

1550

We honour them today and we recognize their work, which is important to the lives of the two million kids, and we have three parties saying the same thing on this rare occasion. It's nice.

PETITIONS

PENETANGUISHENE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have over 1,000 petitions here.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Penetanguishene Secondary School is an important part of the community of Penetanguishene and surrounding area; and

“Whereas Penetanguishene is a small town within the greater Golden Horseshoe which meets the definition of a complete community, as set out in the Places to Grow Act; and

“Whereas Penetanguishene is a unique multicultural community that is reflected in the educational programming at Penetanguishene Secondary School (French and native studies); and

“Whereas research indicates that the success of teenagers in school is directly linked to a positive relationship with school staff and said relationships are fostered in small, community-based schools (400 to 800 students) that reflect the values of the community and serve the needs of the local community; and

“Whereas research also supports the continuation of small schools such as Penetanguishene Secondary School ... that experience increased attendance and lower dropout rates; increased student participation in school, community and extra-curricular activities; lower incidence of behavioural problems and vandalism; and provide a more positive learning environment for students in the lowest socio-economic backgrounds than in larger schools; and

“Whereas the accommodations review committee for north Simcoe recommended to the Simcoe County District School Board the continuation of Penetanguishene Secondary School; and

“Whereas it is the policy of the Simcoe County District School Board that its facilities will be made available for community, use for the mutual benefit of students and the community; and

“Whereas Penetanguishene Secondary School is currently at 85% capacity, which can accommodate the growing community of Penetanguishene as well as support the board-mandated community partnerships to provide educational and employment opportunities for local students such as shared-use facilities and co-operative educational placements; and

“Whereas the absence of a secondary school in Penetanguishene would negatively affect the lives of the students and their parents, increase the use of fossil fuels

and greenhouse gases through the busing of students to another town, and negatively affect future opportunities for growth in the community and in the business sector of Penetanguishene; and

“Whereas within the past three ... years the Simcoe County District School Board has spent in excess of \$4 million on upgrades to Penetanguishene Secondary School’s exterior, general classrooms and to make the building more accessible and energy-efficient;

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

“That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Penetanguishene and flow funding to the local school board so that Penetanguishene Secondary School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Penetanguishene and surrounding area.”

I agree with this petition and I will be happy to sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

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

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Kleeson—it should be Klees. It’s amazing; I suspect his office distributed these—“on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

““That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.””

I support the petition and I’ve endorsed it as required.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

“Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States” of America.

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Lathiha.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition on behalf of those suffering from multiple sclerosis in the province of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

“Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

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

“That the McGuinty government agree to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment, also known as liberation therapy, to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis.”

I will certainly sign this petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I would like to take this opportunity to thank Doreen and Norman MacNicoll from Athens for sending me this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in Leeds–Grenville do not want the McGuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and send it to the table with Brigid.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank Stu Hubble of 1609 Champlain Drive in Peterborough, Ontario, for forwarding this petition to me.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

“Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and give it to page Emily.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition and I shall read it.

“Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communication skills and lifesaving swallowing skills; and

“Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

“Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities;

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and

the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment.”

I support this petition.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to thank Douglas, Arlene, Matthew, Craig, Jason, Kellie and Terry-Ann Hare, and also Sandy Morin, for providing me with this petition. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis; and

“Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

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

“That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Nick.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: This is a petition to save the medical laboratory services in Stayner.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

“Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding funding and approval for CCSVI diagnosis and treatment.

“Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

“Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the US; the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

“Whereas not all people with MS” will “have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

“Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

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

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions.”

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 want to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseth for sending this petition to me.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Mr. Speaker, I have it signed, but I don’t have it stamped. I’m sure they will; it’s the same as yesterday’s. I’m sorry I didn’t have time to do that.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the residents of Ontario feel that this current Liberal government is directly responsible for their rising household debt by slapping them with higher taxes, such as the health tax and the HST, higher fees, higher hydro bills and higher auto insurance premiums; and

“Whereas the people have lost faith in their government;

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

“That the McGuinty government immediately resign and call an election.”

I have signed this.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONTARIO ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT FOR SENIORS AND ONTARIO FAMILIES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L’AMÉLIORATION DU CRÉDIT D’IMPÔT DE L’ONTARIO POUR LES COÛTS D’ÉNERGIE ET LES IMPÔTS FONCIERS À L’INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES ET DES FAMILLES DE L’ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 4, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / *Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d’impôt de l’Ontario pour les coûts d’énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.*

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments.

I have about 20 minutes allotted to me to speak about the context under which the Ontario energy and property tax credit is being introduced, how it is part of the broader tax reform package that was introduced by the government in the budget of 2009 and what it really means in terms of the kinds of issue which we have all been discussing—one that is a real issue around energy prices, how it will help our families to mitigate those costs, but also what the different facets are. I know the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, had spoken quite in depth and at length about the different facets of this particular tax credit, but think it’s worth noting again from a different point of view and in a different light.

The 2009 budget, I think we all know, came in very different circumstances to what we had been used to in some years in Ontario. Around the spring of 2009, the province, but not only the province, the country—in fact, most of the world and all the major economies in the world were in the midst of one of the biggest, most severe recessions we have lived through in many long years. Now, as we are coming towards the tail end of that recession and recovery has begun, we are starting to see a lot of economic analysis that is coming out in regard to that recession we lived through. One of the things which really jumps out is the reference to that recession and the reference being made by all leading experts that it was a great recession. The magnitude of that recession was comparable to what took place roughly 80 years ago, an episode in our economic history or political history that we refer to as the Great Depression. So this recession was extremely significant. We are still seeing the impact, and the impact has been that there has been no economy provincially that has not been impacted by this recession. Our federal government has taken a serious, serious impact because of the recession.

We don't need to look just at Canada. If you look at the United States and their economy and the challenges they are going through, and especially Europe and the challenges they're going through—Spain, Portugal, Greece—all these economies with a really strong infrastructure are going through significant upheaval at the moment. I was watching a program about Spain, what's going on and the kinds of measures the government is bringing in to get the economy moving again. They were talking about an unemployment rate of 20% in Spain. That is incredible.

In Canada and in Ontario, we actually have fared quite well, relatively speaking, compared to what's happening in the United States and in Europe. We're looking at an unemployment rate of roughly 8%. But that doesn't take away from the argument that there is a significant movement, a significant change that has taken place in the way our economies have operated. After many, many years of prosperous economic times, there has been a huge change, a huge correction in our economic system. It is the role of government, not only the provincial government here in Ontario but all governments, obviously to respond to that economic reality, to make sure that we put in place rules and regulations and infrastructure that meet the needs of the 21st-century economy. There's no better time than a decade in and starting the second decade of the 21st century to put together those specific measures. And that was the genesis, perhaps, of the nature of the 2009 budget, which has been debated in this Legislature many, many times.

There were three elements of that budget, and I guess the overarching theme of that budget was to reform and modernize our tax system.

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There are three types of taxes we all pay: There is the consumption tax that we pay, which, before July 1, was the 5% GST and 8% provincial sales tax, PST; there are

the personal income taxes that we all pay; and then there are the corporate taxes that our businesses pay. What that budget, the budget of 2009, did was to reform, to look at all those three types of taxes, not just one of them but all three taxes—the consumption tax, the personal income tax and the corporate income tax—and modernize them, reform them in a manner that they actually meet the needs of a 21st-century economy in the province of Ontario. That was a significant step, and it's something that was noticed, obviously, because we've talked about it not only in this Legislature but in our communities as well, but it was also analyzed, scrutinized and lauded by many of the experts out there.

Obviously, one of the most controversial parts of that tax reform was the harmonization of the GST and the PST, which is the combining of the 5% GST and 8% PST. But the reason for that harmonization or that combination was to create a truly value-added tax in the province of Ontario, because up to July 1, 2010, the provincial sales tax was not a value-added tax; it was a manufacturing tax, which basically put tax on tax on tax on our businesses that were producing things in Ontario and selling them, be it goods or services. Every economist has looked at it and said that that is the way to go. And we are not the only ones; we are actually catching up. We know that economies in Asia and Europe have been introducing value-added taxes. The federal government did so back in the late 1980s or early 1990s when the GST came into place.

But that's where we did not stop. We went further ahead and looked at personal income taxes and made sure that we reduced personal income taxes. As a result of what we did, as we all know, is a reduced personal income tax on the first income tax bracket, which is the first \$37,000 that we make. We reduced it to the point where it is the lowest anywhere in Canada—again, a very significant step to ensure that especially those who are on low-income salaries, mid-income families and seniors on fixed incomes pay less taxes in the province of Ontario.

Also, we reduced corporate income taxes very significantly, both for small businesses, because they are the economic engine in our province, but also for large businesses to ensure that they have a competitive advantage in place.

Along with the personal income taxes, the government also introduced certain targeted tax credits to help those low-income families, mid-income families and seniors on fixed incomes so that they can take the maximum advantage of the income tax changes.

The two most important tax credits—one was the sales tax credit that came into place earlier in the year, which gives up to \$260 for those who are low-income, mid-income families and seniors on fixed incomes. It's something like, obviously, a GST credit, but is on top of that. We also introduced an energy and property tax credit, the subject of Bill 109, which we are discussing now.

Here's an interesting thing that has been talked about and written about—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Point of order, Speaker: quorum call.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. You may continue.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess I wanted a little break. I saw the honourable member from Thornhill having certain conversations and—

Mr. Peter Shurman: We were talking about how interesting your speech was.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I noticed how you left the room because it was that interesting.

Anyway, going back to the point I was talking about, which was around tax credits and how they are important in a modern economy: A lot of literature I've looked at talks about that you have a value-added tax, consumption tax system because it allows for having a more modern sales tax system and helps bring the prices of goods and services down because businesses, under a value-added tax system, don't pay taxes on inputs, and that's less cost to produce those particular things.

You also bring down personal income taxes, of course, to help a broader set of the population. But in order to have a really lasting impact on targeted groups—that is, groups that are low income, which we want to make sure have the most tax benefit, groups like seniors on fixed incomes—one introduces tax credits, and that's exactly what we are doing.

It was interesting to look at the study which was done by the centre for policy alternatives, which is entitled "Not a Tax Grab After All." One of the things they outlined when they looked at our very broad tax reform package that included HST, personal income tax cuts and corporate income tax cuts—if I may quote a small passage: "From a tax fairness perspective, it would have been preferable if the offsets had been weighted more heavily towards tax credits, with their more progressive impact. Devoting more resources to the sales and property tax credits (which are steeply progressive) and less to the generalized personal income tax reductions (in which the benefits increase as income rises) would have strengthened the overall progressive aspects of the program and de-emphasized those measures that disproportionately benefit the rich." It further goes on to say, "The design of the property and sales tax credits is far better, being targeted to lower-income taxpayers."

It's very, I think, on point to say that having tax credits like the sales tax credit or the Ontario energy and property tax credit or the children's activity tax credit, which was introduced and is being debated through the

Legislature, really allows us, in a very progressive manner, to help in a targeted fashion those who need the help most. That is exactly what we are doing through the Ontario energy and property tax credit.

I think the context is even more important now as we've been debating and seeing that there has been a rise in the cost of energy, something, I think, we all have been hearing in our constituencies. Families, especially seniors, are feeling an additional impact of these higher prices. I think we know the reason. We have made a lot of investment to ensure that we have upgraded a very dirty, unpredictable, unreliable energy system which was inherited from the previous government, where little, if any, investment was made in our energy infrastructure. As a result, since 2003, the government has invested in about 5,000 kilometres of transmission upgrades, costing about \$3.6 billion; almost 8,000 megawatts of new supply online generation for Ontarians—the cost has been around \$8 billion, extremely significant; as well as other projects and, of course, investments in our renewable energy, which is not only making sure that we have a cleaner source of energy supply in our mix but also creating some good, long-lasting jobs in the province of Ontario.

What are the various elements of the Ontario energy and property tax credit? First of all, I think we should recognize that this tax credit is very much focused on seniors who live on fixed incomes and low-income families. I think that's an extremely important point, and I'll come back to that in a moment.

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This tax credit is extremely—I'm trying to determine the right word. The amount of money that's involved in this tax credit is significant. It's about \$1.3 billion in annual support, which we are providing to Ontarians through this Ontario energy tax credit. The threshold, as I was mentioning, is designed such that it is aimed towards seniors that are on fixed incomes and families earning low incomes.

I think it's best to talk about some examples to highlight the kinds of incomes we're talking about. You can talk about net incomes, adjusted incomes etc., and those who are listening to this right now probably will not get the real aim of how this will help our families and our seniors. So here are some examples. An individual who is a single senior and roughly makes about \$25,000 a year will, as a result of this new tax credit, if passed, receive \$811 per year. That's a very significant amount. This is somebody, let's say, who rents. A senior couple who roughly makes about \$35,000 a year, who owns a house and pays property taxes can receive up to \$795 a year in order to offset the cost of the energy or the property taxes they pay. A senior couple who makes roughly \$50,000 a year, owns property and pays a significant amount—let's say roughly \$4,000—in property taxes can receive up to \$625 in energy and property tax credits. A non-senior single mother with one child making roughly \$25,000 can get up to \$412. And a non-senior couple with no children can get up to \$260.

This is just to highlight the variety of different circumstances, family situations, that have been considered in this enhanced energy and property tax credit, which will allow for our seniors and our families to get a significant amount of money. Seniors can get up to \$1,025; non-seniors can get up to \$900.

There are a couple of other points in the limited time I have that I want to highlight. One, this tax credit, if passed, will be applicable retroactive to January 1, 2010—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Good point.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: That's a very important point. It covers all of the increases in hydro bills etc. we've been paying during this year. If passed, there will be compensation through this tax credit.

The first lump-sum payment, again, if this tax credit, this legislation, is passed, will come into force in May 2011, and from 2011 onwards, it will be paid on a quarterly basis. I think that's a very important point, because as we know and we've heard from many of our families—I've heard in this House that families, and seniors in particular, pay their bills on a monthly basis. So if there's going to be a meaningful way of helping them, it's to help them through ensuring that they get these tax credits paid on a regular basis. That's why, once this tax credit is passed, those payments will come quarterly from 2011 onwards.

The way this tax credit is designed and the income threshold that has been considered—two thirds of Ontario seniors will receive this credit and receive help from this credit. As I mentioned already, the value of this tax credit is \$1.3 billion, and because of the enhancement that has been made to everything that existed before, 50,000 more seniors will now be receiving some sort of help. This is a very important step to make sure that we continue to help our seniors who have worked hard, who live on fixed incomes, to ensure that they have real benefits accruing to them to offset any increase in hydro prices, the property tax they pay or their rent, for that matter.

I really hope that the members will support this legislation because it is meaningful. It will result in some real benefits for our seniors and for our low-income families, which will allow not only for the creation of a stronger economy through the tax reform package we have introduced, but also for helping our families.

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

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Here we are, listening to all this stuff. We wouldn't need to be listening to this if you hadn't been ripping people off for the last seven years. You guys in this government over here have been ripping everybody off for seven years, and now you come up with this piddly little thing.

You know, you've got to make money to be able to get a tax rebate. If you don't have any money because you don't have a job—because you guys have taken all the jobs away from them—how are you going to get this tax credit?

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Madam Speaker, who has the floor? If they want to speak, I'm sure they'll get their two minutes to yell over there if they want.

I'm sitting here listening to this and I'm saying: Where have they been for seven years? Again, as I said, they've been ripping people off for seven years. If you want me to get into it, I have a whole list of things here. The biggest one you've just done is the HST. What a big rip-off that is to everybody in this country.

So now you come up with this piddly little bit, which I'm sure everybody will support in here. Why wouldn't you? It's a little bit you're giving back. But you've been ripping them off. Boy, you should have a whole lot of—and then you even spent \$20 billion last year that you didn't even have. Holy cow, guys. What kind of a government are you? I think it's time you take a rest and maybe just sort of leave this place so there's something left for other people to come to.

You go on about how you have to help these people out. Again, where have you been? They've been asking for your help ever since you guys got into government, and look at the kinds of things you've done. Deficit financing is just one of the worst things you could have ever done. And there's \$20 billion you lost last year. Holy cow, guys. What have you been doing? What about all this money we're paying—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Bill Murdoch: You know something? They want to talk, but they don't—I'm really impressed that you're even debating this, because normally you don't debate these bills. You just sit there and let us do all the talking.

But do you know something, Madam Speaker? We will support this, but it's just a little pittance that you're doing. You've been ripping people off for seven years.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm always filled with the evangelical fury of the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. We're going to miss him.

I listened carefully to the member from Ottawa Centre. He's an ambitious young Liberal member of this caucus; he's the president of the Ontario Liberal Party.

Mr. Peter Shurman: He's running for leader.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Shurman makes an observation.

He delivers the Liberal spin very well, and I give him credit for that. Quite frankly, the Premier's office trusts him in a way that they appear not to trust a whole lot of the colleagues of the member from Ottawa Centre. The Premier's office doesn't let the colleagues of the member from Ottawa Centre speak, but they permit the member from Ottawa Centre to speak, of course, because they can trust him with the party line, and that's fine.

For an ambitious young MPP like the member for Ottawa Centre, it shows that he's on his way and that some of the others who thought that they were lined up for positions of leadership had better realize that they're

has-beens, because this young man is about to clear a path right through them. The old line, “Don’t stand in the doorway; don’t block up the hall”—well, they’d better watch out, because the member from Ottawa Centre is going to clean house in short order.

Those who have invested years in their leadership aspirations should cash in their chips now, get what little they can out of it and perhaps prepare for their retirement. Young Mr. Naqvi will make a great leader of the third party.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I was listening to my colleague from Ottawa Centre. My mother-in-law, who lives in his riding, on Parkdale Avenue, right next to Hintonburg, knows full well that he is a relentless MPP who is constantly helping people—Saturdays knocking on doors. He has been knocking on doors ever since he got elected.

I just want to correct the record here. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound was totally wrong. This is a refundable tax credit. That means that if you make a certain amount of income as a senior, you will get it taken off your income. If you don’t make any income, you can get a cheque and you get it back. That’s even if you don’t have any real income. The key is to fill out your income tax. That’s why, at our office, we—and, I’m sure, the members who understand this—tell seniors that it’s critically important to fill out your income tax. Then you’re eligible for these tax credits that you can get whether you’re a tenant or a homeowner.

On top of these tax credits, which are about \$1,000, based on your income, there’s also a property tax grant of up to \$500, which is the maximum you can get, again, depending on income. There are many seniors who have received the \$500 grant plus the other \$1,000.

I know that the seniors in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence deeply appreciate this grant and credit system for modest-income senior couples or seniors who are by themselves. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound doesn’t know, even for his own people, that this has been going on since 2003. Just think of all the people who have missed that in his riding because he hasn’t told them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just in response to the member from Ottawa Centre, I don’t think this bill does what he thinks it does. Our finance critic, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, has pointed out in debate that this bill replaces the property tax credit of \$900 that was announced in the 2010 budget and was retroactive for a year. Most non-seniors will still get \$900, but they’ll get it in the form of \$700 for property tax and \$200 for electricity. So this is a reshuffle of the previous property tax credit.

By the way, when the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound said you were ripping people off, yes—in the first budget, you cancelled Ernie Eves’s seniors’ tax credit,

which doubled the seniors’ property tax credit at that time. For seven years, they haven’t had the benefit of the increased property tax credits they would have had had we still been in office.

You brought in the HST, new hydro taxes, proposed eco taxes, the green energy bill, eHealth—over a billion dollars wasted there; unprecedented interest payments we’re paying on our debt now. It took 23 Premiers 148 years to rack up the current debt we have in the province of Ontario, which is about \$140 billion, and Dalton has managed to double that. Our interest payments have gone from \$9 billion a year—they’ll soon be \$16 billion a year.

If you go to daltonthehydrohiker.ca, a website that we’ve set up, it has a very simple calculator. Put in your monthly hydro bill now. It will then add all of his new hydro taxes alone. I know that mine, at home, is going to go up from \$100 to \$167 a month.

This new so-called seniors’ and energy property tax credit will do nothing to help—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Ottawa Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his comments; the member from Welland for his endorsement; and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence—please let your mother-in-law know if I can be of any help, and she can contact me at any time in Ottawa—and the member from Simcoe–Grey for their comments.

I think there’s one point which has to be made. Our seniors are very smart. Our seniors have worked extremely hard, and they have given a lot to our community to help build the kind of society we live in. I also know from speaking to our seniors that they all continue to think about their future. They know the value of having a good public health care system. They know the value of a good public education system for their grandchildren. They know the value of having a reliable, clean energy system for their grandchildren. And they are willing to make contributions to ensure that we live in a province with good public services available, not just to them but also to future generations.

We have to do our part to make sure that their quality of life continues to improve, that they have tools like the Ontario energy property tax credit and the sales tax credit available to them so that they can live in a comfortable fashion. That is our pledge to them. We will continue to serve our Ontario seniors to ensure that their lifestyle and health care needs are fully met.

I really hope that every single member in this House will support this tax credit and will ensure that our seniors receive the quality of life they so very much have earned.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Let me start off by saying, in response to the very last statement of the member from Ottawa Centre, that I am quite certain that every member

in this House will support this bill, and the reason we'll support this bill is because, even if it is a pittance, it's something. It reminds us of the northern energy tax credit. Whatever comes along, we have to act on behalf of our constituents, and in this particular case, too, we will, but it doesn't mean we have to like it any more than it means it's going to help them.

The fact of the matter is—and I hope you will show me some indulgence, Speaker, the indulgence that you showed the member from Ottawa Centre in preaching over and over again the litany of the wonderful things he believes the Liberal Party has done, because I would like to go a little bit further afield as well.

But I'll start by saying that the energy policy, if indeed you can call it that, of the Liberal Party is an abject failure. Listing a number of millions of dollars that have been spent on renewal, on the infrastructure of the energy system and all the rest of it is business in the normal course. It doesn't make them special. An energy policy used to be a cohesive, coherent situation that can be explained easily to people—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: And there's the energy minister, who is beginning to heckle already, because he knows he doesn't have an energy policy.

It's interesting that the member from Ottawa Centre referred in his remarks to Spain when he talked about the effects of the worldwide recession on various countries. Spain was the country from which the microFIT program that's in place in the province of Ontario under the Green Energy Act was borrowed, and most people who bother reading about what's happened to Spain—and even my friend from Ottawa Centre talks about the difficulties that they're having there—knows that the microFIT program hasn't been a success in Spain, and yet that's the one that was borrowed by the McGuinty government.

Taking a program and turning it into something that it was never supposed to be, in the name of the future—renewable energy, through the Green Energy Act, will help children and grandchildren that we produce in the future. Nobody can argue with the basic principle, but we certainly can argue with the how-to, and that's what the continual message is from this side. The continual message from that side is that if you don't vote for us, then you're necessarily against us, and that's not true. So I bring it back to the fact that we will vote for this, but we don't like it. We don't like it because it is a pittance when it comes to helping the very people that you single out as being the beneficiaries.

Your tax policy is equally a failure. On a number of occasions, after an initial solemn promise from Premier McGuinty that they would experience no tax hikes, Ontarians have had it basically, as the saying goes, up to here. Nobody can take it anymore.

When you take a look at people on an individual level, when you talk to individual families—and I don't care what party you come from—when you go into your ridings and meet people in the local Tim Hortons, or if you do door-to-door and talk to people about what their

problems are, what's the first thing that you hear? I know the answer to it, because I've done that, and I would hope that every member—NDP, Liberal and Progressive Conservative—has done that. What they're saying is, "I can't do it anymore. I haven't got any more money. I can't put my hand in my pocket anymore. You guys have got to help us." It is hypocrisy asking people—the Liberal government, I'm talking about—to make sacrifices. We just heard from the member from Ottawa Centre, we heard from many of you and we've heard from the Premier on multiple occasions that the times that we're in and the situation that arises from the economic downturn of the last couple of years require sacrifice. We all have to make sacrifices.

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I spoke briefly to a motion in this House for about five minutes last week, and I'm going to repeat some of what I said and expand upon it. Sacrifice is a very legitimate thing. There's not one of us, particularly—we're pretty well all of us parents in here; if we're not parents, we have a niece, a nephew, whatever, and we've made sacrifices. If we don't have relatives for whom we make sacrifices, we make them for people who are not as well off as we ourselves are. We give to charity, whatever it happens to be.

That's a sacrifice. It is not a sacrifice to continually expect people to put their hands in their pockets and hand over money to the government to administer on programs that it, in its own brand of wisdom, thinks are good for everybody, if the question becomes "How the hell am I going to pay the mortgage next month?" And that's really what it's about.

I think everybody cares about what happens to our world. I think everybody cares about whether there's enough energy. I think everybody cares about whether there's going to be clean air and clean water going forward. To characterize our party as not caring because we haven't voted for your lousy legislation is to characterize our party in a way that is absolutely not true. We favour all of those things; what we don't favour is the way that you introduce them.

Bill 109, which is what we're talking about today, Minister, will not bring the relief that's needed. It is too little and it's too late. This bill is a signal. It's a signal to anybody who knows how to watch what goes on in this place that the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty is struggling and that the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty is desperate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind you to refer to the Premier.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw.

The government of Premier McGuinty is struggling and the government of Premier McGuinty is desperate. That's why we're seeing so many turnarounds. That's why we're seeing a constant effort to backtrack.

I've got a list in front of me of things—why are we talking, if all of this is happening? If people are so frustrated with taxes, why are we talking about time-of-use rates being held while we see what we can do to fix

the smart meters? Why are we looking at a microFIT program where Liberals told ground-mounted solar power producers that they'd pay 80 cents per kilowatt hour and then slashed it to 58 cents? Why are we seeing—I could go on for a while. Why are we seeing so many of these things? Because every time you wet your finger and put it up in the air to see which way the wind is blowing, you find it's coming from the wrong direction and you decide you're going to reverse yourself.

I'm going to give you an encapsulated view of how that government operates, and I'm going to make it relative to Bill 109. The finance minister comes out and sees a senior citizen drowning 40 feet from shore, and the Premier comes out and says, "I'm going to throw you a rope," and he throws a 30-foot rope. And then the finance minister comes back in here and says, "You see? The Premier has met you more than halfway." Humour, okay? But not so funny. The guy is still going to drown, and that's what's happening to our seniors.

There are a lot of ways to relieve the tax burden on seniors. There are a lot of ways to address energy costs. But what we're doing here is we're looking at a bill that will provide an average additional benefit of \$93 per year—\$93 per year in relief on average to a family that is constrained by income that has been, in the case of seniors, which is what we're talking about, hit by the downturn of the past couple of years generally—in a nest egg that was invested even in safe investments and hasn't come back for them because they had to dip into that nest egg to make ends meet during the bad times. And so you're going to give them \$93 per year.

Let me read into the record a couple of salient emails. These are emails that came to my office, but I know that they're parallel to emails that came to all of your offices.

This one reads: "I am a resident of Thornhill.... I have been reviewing my hydro rates and seen not a significant but an astronomical increase in my rates this year. Although our power consumption has been pretty much the same and in fact been lower in some months, our hydro bill has gone up by ... 96%!

"I am writing to you for the following reasons:

"(1) I want you to be aware of the significant increase in our hydro bill so as to bring the matter and its importance to your attention.

"(2) An increase of 96% cannot be condoned by any organization, especially the government. I recognize that hydro rates may need to be increased; however, an increase of this magnitude is not equitable or fair to any citizen of Ontario. My understanding from the utility (PowerStream) is that the increase is a direct result of rate increases that the government of Ontario approved"—and that's absolutely the case.

"(3) I would like to understand what you have done and intend to do going forward on this issue in trying to persuade the government to review the power rates so as to come up with a more reasonable increase as the current increases are not fair or affordable."

I say to the writer—whom I will not identify, but I'll simply say that if you live on Summerdale, I'm talking to

you—I'm not going to do anything except highlight this in this forum, as I'm doing right now by reading your letter and debating this government on a bill that we are going to have to pass, including our party, just to get you an average of \$93 per year. Is that not ridiculous? You will have your day in court, sir. You'll have it one year from tomorrow.

Another letter: "I had written to the Premier last July expressing my concern about the various increases coming together for the cost of electricity. As yet I don't have a smart meter, but my best guess is that it will add 20% as we are in our mid-70s and not inclined to get up at 2 a.m. to do the laundry or dishes and also not inclined to buy new clothes and dish washers with delayed start-up timers when our current appliances work just fine. The point of this note is to advise that today PowerStream sent us a letter increasing the monthly instalment from \$194 (which they set themselves from historic data) to \$378 per month for the next six months. Upon calling, I found some was catch-up but a significant portion was the inclusion of the HST and the 12.9% rate increase. I suppose part of this is helping fund the Premier's green agenda. I still don't understand how he will keep the Ohio/Pennsylvania power plant emissions at the border once his new plants are in place. Anyway, just thought you'd like to know I did send him a second letter on this issue but don't expect a response."

There are many, many more letters just like that. You can hold your hands up and you can yell at me, you can heckle, but the fact of the matter is, you get them too. This is a major issue. It's a major issue for a lot of people.

When we read letters like that, where we're looking at 100% or 100-plus per cent increases in the case of people like the ones I just read about, what are we going to tell them that \$93 a year, on average, is actually going to do? We're talking about \$1,000 a year here, and that's just power. That's before we get into anything else—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: And that goes for you too.

Multiple hits taken by Thornhill families and seniors on hydro bills are what we're talking about here—multiple hits.

It's not about Bill 109 in particular. Bill 109 is simply another one of those 30-foot ropes, where the Premier says—and in this case, he hasn't even met them halfway. He's met people one twelfth of the way, because if you look at a \$1,000 increase over a year, what's 93 bucks? It's not even 10%.

The multiple hits include the 12% increase, referred to by the writer of one of those emails, that was put on everybody's electricity bill back in May; the 8% HST that was applied in July; \$53 million spread across all bills for the green energy fee; and smart meter increases from time-of-use rates.

Last week, we in the Conservative Party did an opposition day motion where we talked about smart meters. We talked about freezing the installation of smart meters until they worked and then providing an option on the

smart meters. What we got from the other side was what we expected—a negative on the motion—but we got a lot of rhetoric about how, because of the fact that we want a freeze and we want an option, we're against conservation somehow. How you can connect the dots and come up with that conclusion, I don't know, but that's what you did.

1650

I informed myself on time of use in other jurisdictions by taking a look at what everybody looks at these days: YouTube. I took a look at American jurisdictions, where power companies are sometimes privately owned. There is a variety of models for the business case in the States on supply of power and there are various ways of generating power—some clean, some cleaner, some not-so-clean.

Time of use is a problem there, too, and time of use is a problem because of the same phenomena we've discovered here. The meters themselves are probably functionally fine, but interfacing with the software that does the calculation at this point hasn't been perfected. So when our party comes forward and says, "We want you to stop installing smart meters or at least deactivate them for use, because even by the Premier's admission, things aren't right," you say we're against conservation—not so.

When we talk about an option, if the option is for a full-time meter that supposedly is going to allow people to buy power on a non-time-of-use basis at some differential rate, not at a discount, again you say that we're against conservation—nonsense. We're being mischaracterized, and I want to make that perfectly clear.

Ninety-three dollars a year is what you're offering.

I see I've got four minutes left. I want to refer—because this is not only about power conservation; this is also about property tax. Property tax for seniors is a major issue, and it was a major issue before we ever even got into what you like to call the downturn and what most people are calling the recession, which I don't believe we're really truly out of yet, but that's another story for another day.

The very first private member's bill that I personally chose to introduce in this Legislature was at the time known as Bill 78, the Property Tax Deferral Act, 2008. We were debating this even after the recession had begun, but before the Premier had uttered those famous words, "This, too, shall pass." My bill was an interesting bill because it deferred property tax—it didn't erase property tax—and it didn't have to cost the government of the province of Ontario one thin dime. As a matter of fact, there was a provision for a lien to be taken on the property so that the government could recoup, if it ever had to, and there was interest on the money charged to the account of the taxpayer, but the property tax could be deferred so long as the owner or the owner's spouse held the property, basically until you died. Then when the house was disposed of by the heirs, all of that money would be recouped, and the biggest deal: The people who lived in the house could retain that ability, could retain

ownership, could stay in the house. I had support from several people in this House, not least my friend the House leader for the NDP, Mr. Kormos. I was happy about that at the time.

It's something that's still worthy of consideration because what it does, at a time when the province of Ontario can ill afford to hand out money, is not put us in a position of having to support your poor excuse for legislation in Bill 109, to hand people back this pittance and say, "Look what we've done for you with our 30-foot rope." It puts us in a position of saying, "We'll give you a chance to keep your house. We'll give you a chance to keep your dignity. We'll give you a chance to keep your pride, and you don't have to give up anything."

Then, one day in the future that house that may be worth—who knows where you live?—\$400,000 or \$500,000—and the average house in Toronto these days is a million dollars—and you owe \$50,000 in income tax accrued for eight years or 10 years, so the heirs get \$950,000. The government of Ontario gets the same interest or better than it would get on the open markets on its money, and everybody is the better for it.

But, no, instead we see legislation like this, where this doesn't really help anybody. I remember, in the time when I was doing my research on that bill, going to see my local seniors' club, Thornhill Seniors Club—600 members; very active, vital seniors—and they told me, "This is a great bill." The reason is, that was not an association of seniors who lived in old folks' homes; that was not an association of seniors who were in long-term-care facilities. That was an association of seniors who only got together for one reason: to have social contact with other seniors. They're all in great shape. People are living longer. People are living better. They're a terrific group, and they choose to live in their homes. They deserve to live in their homes. They are on limited fixed incomes that have now been affected. So, we're going to tell people like that that 93 bucks a year is about what it is? To say it's not fair is the understatement of the year. The fact of the matter is, they deserve more dignity than that.

With that, I'd like to close and say I would hope that over time there will be some further consideration given. Although we will, as a party, support this bill, it is under duress, and for the same reason that we support bills that provide these pittances: because anything is better than nothing.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I think that was not only an incredibly important analysis of this bill, but of this government's style. It caused me, while I was listening carefully to the member for Thornhill, to reflect on the fact that this government's approach to these matters is very much the slot machine approach. It's the lottery approach. I'm going to talk to you about that in around 10 minutes' time when I get a chance to have the floor.

I'm so pleased that the government House leader has come back in, knowing that I'm going to be speaking.

Her interest in my comments always delights me. I have high regard for her as well, and I listen carefully. She doesn't get to speak as often as we do, of course, but I pay great attention when the government House leader speaks.

Look, the sad reality is that people are being hammered out there right now with electricity bills. Just wait. You heard the member from Kenora–Rainy River saying that the cold weather is already coming in up north. But down here in southern Ontario, just wait until December, January, February, when that furnace motor is running 90% of the time, when the cold winds are blowing, and when that brass monkey has lost all of its balls, when they're shattered across the deck of the ship—just wait for what happens with people's electricity bills. You ain't seen nothing yet.

In the summertime, people can open a window, put on a fan, put on a ceiling fan, as a surrogate for expensive air conditioning—and they have, and they've still been hammered. But I've got folks down where I come from—just like you've got folks everywhere in this province, every single member of this Legislature—who are sick to their stomach about the upcoming electricity and then natural gas and other heating and enhanced electricity bills.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Thornhill for his comments.

As is the pattern in here, of course, the opposition continues to minimize the effects of this particular credit. Also, as has been the pattern, what they are not doing is talking about the full breadth of all of the credits and income tax reductions that have been part of our total tax reform. They don't do that.

Yesterday, when I had my 20-minute opportunity to speak on this, I left a very basic sort of mathematical equation for the people in Ontario who follow the goings-on in this place to maybe jot down and try to remember and then see if at some point the members of the opposition want to try to assail that particular math. One of the other tax reforms that we brought in was a 1% reduction in your personal income tax on the first almost \$37,000 of income, so that means \$370 if you earn that. If you earn \$25,000, it means \$250. If you have a spouse or a partner in your home and you both earn \$37,000, that mean \$740 more in your pocket. If you had a hydro bill that was \$1,000, 8% is \$80 more that you have to spend as a result of the HST. Before you use up \$100 of the money we're giving you back, you have to spend \$1,250 on something that was previously PST-exempt. You have to spend \$1,250 on something that was previously tax-exempt from the PST before you use up \$100 of credits that we've given you back. As I just said, the one alone, the personal income tax reduction, gives you \$370 back if you earn \$37,000, or it gives you \$250 back if you earn \$25,000.

1700

I would ask the members opposite to talk about the full breadth of the tax reform that we've introduced in

this place since 2009, and maybe that rope will be longer than 30 feet.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to congratulate my colleague from Thornhill for an accurate presentation of what this bill does and what the tax hikes have been since Dalton McGuinty came into office.

We started in the 2003 campaign where Dalton McGuinty was on the TV and in our living rooms saying, "I won't hike your taxes," and then we had the largest single tax grab in the history of this province—the health premium. I know that when my mother was alive—she just passed away a year ago this week—it cost her \$700 a year as a retired school teacher. By the way, in their early budgets they cancelled the property tax credit that Ernie Eves had brought in. He had doubled the seniors' property tax credit from \$250 to \$500; that was cancelled.

You jacked up corporate and business taxes to the stratosphere. We were among the highest in North America. Only now are you reducing them because you realize you've killed the economy even beyond what the recession has done. You've killed the economy so that Ontario is a have-not province. We went from being the economic engine of Canada to behind every other province and territory in terms of growth. We're losing jobs by the thousands every week in this province, and you're doing nothing to address that.

Now you have the gall to say that this \$93 a year, which is the net benefit to seniors of the bill we're talking about right now—you're just repackaging the \$900 property tax credit they get now and you're calling it the energy and property tax credit. Of that, \$700 is for property taxes and \$200 is for energy taxes that you've brought in, to help cover them, but it's still the same \$900. The net benefit they get is about \$93 per year. Yet their average hydro bill—if you go to daltonthehydrohiker.ca and put in what your hydro bill is this month, you're going to find it goes up between 63% and 67% a year and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to add some comments to the member from Thornhill.

I just want to clarify something. The member stated that you have to have an income to claim the credit. You don't have to have an income. All you have to do is file income tax at the end of the year.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I didn't say that.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm not here to argue the fact. I just wanted to clarify: You do not have to have an income. They can say whatever they want to say, but we have to justify.

I also want to talk about—the member from Thornhill says that \$1,000 is a pittance. Maybe in his circles it's a pittance. To the people in Northumberland–Quinte West it's a lot of money and they appreciate it. I'm sorry that not everybody is in his circle where \$1,000 is a pittance. I don't have \$1,000 in my pocket; it's not a pittance.

We talk about the \$1.3 billion in annual support to Ontarians. I'm not sure what—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: That's a lot of money.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: That's a lot of money—an increase of \$525 million. I just fail to understand.

Then they said when they were in government they didn't have to do all those things. Let me remind the member of the blackout. Let me remind the member about destroying Hydro One. That was under that government. They didn't do infrastructure.

Let me talk about a school in Port Hope that under their watch was full of mould. We built a brand new school. They let the school rot. It was full of mould; we had to build a new school.

They closed the hospital in Port Hope; we built a community health centre. That's how they governed. We think differently.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: That was interesting. Thank you very much.

In no particular order—I wouldn't want to say of the member from Northumberland–Quinte West that he ever lets the facts get in the way, but the fact of the matter is, don't attribute to me anything, when you talk about a pittance, than what I said, and what I said was that \$93, on average, per year back in the pockets of seniors is a pittance when you take a look at what your party and its various organizations, boards and agencies have done to the power bills that are arriving at the homes of every single Ontarian. There are people—and we all know them, including you, sir—who are afraid to open that envelope every month, and those are the facts.

When it comes to my friend from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, he's doing what I would like to describe as Liberal math. We've heard the justification for most of the past year in here for the HST on the same basis, and that is that there's a quid pro quo: We're lowering the income tax, and we're bringing in this new and revolutionary tax, and it really more than balances out—until probably, oh, a week or two weeks, if my memory serves correctly, before the tax was implemented, when the Premier was actually forced to admit that, well, there was a bit of a differential and it wasn't necessarily in our favour. That's when we started to hear that word that we've heard again today in this Legislature, “sacrifice”: We have to make sacrifices.

The only sacrifice that we in Ontario are being asked to make right now at the family table when we pay our bills is higher tax rates, net, so that we can pay down a deficit that that government created because that government doesn't understand priorities. And that will change on October 6, 2011.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. One of things people have got to understand is that there's nothing new here. There's been this property tax credit in the province of Ontario for a good chunk of time. I

suppose the fascinating thing is that this government, the McGuinty government, wants to somehow call this an energy and property tax credit. How the heck can it be an energy credit if it doesn't take into consideration the increases that people have in their energy bills? What it is is an acknowledgment on the part of the government that people's energy costs have skyrocketed.

Let me tell you what Sarah Thomson, Toronto mayoralty candidate, had to say. She said that in the 30 years he's been in politics, he's learned how to “manipulate, trick and pull the wool over” voters' eyes. Sarah Thomson, mayoralty candidate, said that in the 30 years that he's been in politics, he's learned how to “manipulate, trick and pull the wool over” voters' eyes.

Now, it's a good thing she's not talking about a member of the Legislature, or else me saying that would be unparliamentary. She's talking about George Smitherman, a former member of the Legislature.

So Sarah Thomson says that in the 30 years that George Smitherman's been in politics, he's learned how to “manipulate, trick and pull the wool over” voters' eyes.

If he's learned it, I suspect he's learned the largest part of it at the feet of Dalton McGuinty, Premier McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario, because if there ever was an exercise in manipulation, tricking and pulling the wool over people's eyes, it's right here in Bill 109.

I take Sarah Thomson at her word. I take her at her word. Her call on Mr. Smitherman is probably bang on. I accept the fact that Furious George learned how to do it, and I suspect that he did most of that learning, while he was in the Liberal caucus and while he was Deputy Premier, at the feet of Premier McGuinty here in the province of Ontario.

The proof is in the pudding. Here we've got having the wool pulled over people's eyes. Here we've got people being tricked and manipulated.

A slot machine—and you can't call it a “one-armed bandit” anymore because those old one-armed bandits were mechanical. Mind you, they could be doctored, too, just like dice can be shaved. But these new, Premier McGuinty slot machines—the Liberal slot machines, the Liberal Internet gambling, the Liberal Poker Lotto—are devious devices.

1710

Let me explain to you why this is relevant. I've been reading some of the experts who have been testifying in some of the litigation, whose expert evidence has been accepted by the respective courts. One of them that I made reference to a week or so ago was a Dr. Robert Williams from Alberta, who studied slot machines, Premier McGuinty slot machines here in the province of Ontario. You see, these slot machines are designed to give the impression that a person is winning when in fact they're losing. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You put lots in, and they give a little bit back and they give a little bit more back, but

you've put more in. Are you starting to see the connection to Bill 109?

The slot machines in Premier McGuinty's Ontario, in his crooked casinos, are designed to take every last penny out of the player. They create the illusion of giving something back, but in fact all they do is Hoover every last nickel and dime out of that player's pocket.

So what do we have here? We've got the member from Thornhill, who painted a vivid, beautiful but scary picture. Help me with this, member from Thornhill. You had a senior drowning 50 feet out into the lake, and the Premier of Ontario throws him a lifeline, except it's only 30 feet long; manipulation, trickery and pulling the wool over people's eyes. That poor drowning senior has a brief moment of hope when he sees Premier McGuinty reeling like this with the rope and hauling it out, only to find that it's 20 feet short. And that senior starts sinking, knowing full well that that brief moment of hope given him or her by Premier McGuinty was the cruellest bit of trickery, the cruellest bit of manipulation that could ever be done to somebody.

We've got seniors drowning out there. I talk to them every weekend, and if I'm not talking to them, I'm talking to their kids. Those kids, a big chunk of them are baby boomers like some of us here in this chamber, those people born after the war. I was born in 1952, and my older brother was born in 1948. We baby boomers are getting close to being seniors ourselves. And people my age, by and large, either have very, very old parents or have lost their folks already. So you've got yet another generation now, people in their 35s, 40s and 45s, who are looking at their parents as seniors, drowning.

And they're not in very good shape themselves. You know, if they were industrial workers like down where I come from in Welland riding, 900 John Deere workers lost their jobs. And if they're farmers down there, maybe the ones who grew peaches, they lost their livelihoods when this government—the Premier McGuinty government, the Liberal government—allowed the St. Davids fruit processing plant to close. Those farmers—if you're down from Wainfleet, let's say, a beautiful little community in the riding of Welland, and you're growing cucumbers, you just had the rug pulled out from underneath you too, because the Bicks processing plant down Dunnville way just got shut down.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's pickled.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's not funny stuff; it's serious stuff. They're cruel, cruel games to play with desperate seniors.

You've heard the horror stories already. Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats have been in this House on a daily basis, Monday through Thursday in question period, talking about real people in real communities, not talking statistics. Oh, we could if we wanted to. The statistics are not very impressive either. Why, in fact, a polling company called Angus Reid released some pretty damning statistics just a short while ago. Let's take a look; I'm sure I have them here. I know I kept them. I'll reach into this historic Queen's Park

MPP's desk. We've got 86% of Ontarians saying that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. Now, let's say there's a margin of error of 4% or 5%. That would take it down to 81% or it could take it up to 91%, because, you see, that margin of error works both ways. Eighty-six per cent of Ontarians say that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago.

And what are they talking about when they say that? We know what they're talking about. Don't try to trick, manipulate and pull the wool over people's eyes. It's not fair to those folks. Those folks worked too hard for too long, sacrificed too much, to be manipulated, tricked and to have the wool pulled over their eyes by Mr. McGuinty's Liberal government here at Queen's Park, the one that appears to have—

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: Premier McGuinty's—of course, Speaker. Premier McGuinty's government.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I asked you to withdraw.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I withdraw, yes.

Premier McGuinty might have the support of 24% of the electorate, because 76% of the electorate say they'd like to see another party in power.

I look across the aisle here and I see Liberals. I see the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan up there, desperate, because when 76% of Ontarians say they want another party in power, he up there in Thunder Bay is in real, deep trouble.

I look over there and I see the member for Oakville—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member not to comment on people who are or are not here.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm sorry, Speaker. It was you who said they're not here. I was saying they were here. I apologize. I'll not say they are here, then. I was trying to give them freebies. I was giving them the benefit of the doubt. But you're right: They're not here. But I'll not do that. So I want the record to be clear: When I said the member for Oakville was here, I was wrong, and when I said that the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan was here, I was wrong. The Speaker has pointed that out. I appreciate it.

So we talk to those folks, and when 86% say that life's harder now—it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago—what they're talking about is both the skyrocketing electricity prices and then, of course, Premier McGuinty's Liberal HST, his new sales tax.

Oh, my goodness. Somebody suggested earlier—some ambitious young Liberal—that a value-added tax was the flavour of the month. We've had provincial sales tax for a good chunk of time, and although I don't personally agree with provincial sales tax—it's a flat tax; it's not a progressive tax—I'd say that Ontarians had become acclimatized. But what rotted their socks, what jumped up and bit them square on the keister, was when the Premier McGuinty Liberals added tax to a whole variety

of things that had never been taxed by this province before. They adopted Brian Mulroney's tax scheme. That was popular, weren't it?

So, please. We know electricity prices have gone up and that they're going to continue to go up. We know that the spiking in electricity rates could mean electricity increases skyrocketing well over 50% or 60% of what they are now.

And then there's Mr. McGuinty's—Premier McGuinty's—HST. And what does this government do? They throw, as the member from Thornhill so colourfully put it, a 30-foot lifeline to a drowning citizen who is 50 feet out into the lake.

1720

By God, it seems that manipulation, trickery and pulling the wool over people's eyes isn't just a set of traits that George Smitherman, the former Deputy Premier, has; he seems to have it in common with a whole lot of his former colleagues right here at Queen's Park sitting in the government benches.

You heard the story last week about Sammy's variety down in Welland. I know the folks. They're a Lebanese family who came here fleeing the horror and the devastation of Beirut in Lebanon. They run just the tiniest little variety store at 211 King Street in the building that—our constituency office is sitting around the corner in the same building. Malcolm Allen, MP, the federal member, a New Democrat—his constituency office is there.

The place is so small you couldn't swing a cat in it. There's the coffee pot, there's stacks—because upstairs, at this—I'm sorry; it's not 211. We're at the corner of King and Division; 211 is down the road. It's 60 King Street. It's a small variety store and it caters to the folks who live in the building in the apartments upstairs—good people, various people who work in some of the offices and workplaces downtown, the few that are left. They will drop in at lunchtime or after work. You know what it's like running a variety store? You're talking 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. You're talking the crisis of shrinkage. Shrinkage is a polite word for theft. It happens. There are any number of reasons why it happens: sometimes just bad people, sometimes hungry people.

When a variety store owner like Sammy's—and I say, you swear that if you reached out like this—I've been in jail cells bigger than that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I've been in smaller ones, too.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski notes.

You swear you could touch both walls like that. It's chock full of canned goods and bread and buns and the little counter. These folks work hard. Of course, there's a cooler to keep the beverages cool and the packaged meats that little variety stores like that sell. There's a freezer where the Popsicles and the Fudgsicles and the Freezies, or whatever the heck they are, are in. You can't turn that freezer off. Never mind during the day; you can't turn it off at night, either. It's got to run continuously. The cooler has got to run continuously or else that processed meat goes bad. Sammy's variety—he came right next door; he's right next door to the constituency office.

Look, he's ready to throw the towel in. His electricity bills now are over \$600, \$620 a month, and they're going higher.

As I say, it's a little—boom—wall to wall. You've got to sell a lot of cans of canned soup at a five-cents-a-can markup to pay for that. Customers won't tolerate jacking up the prices. Howard Hampton and I told that story last round, when we went to Celi and Presti down in Welland. The Ramundo family—I love them dearly. They're hard, hard, hard-working people. It's an Italian deli, one of the finest around. Prosciutto from Italy, capicollo, salamis; they make their own sausage; they make meatloaves. You see, they're freezing. They've got a walk-in freezer; they're a little bigger than Sammy's. They're not a variety store; it's an Italian deli. So they've got a walk-in freezer where they hang—because they buy their sides of beef and pork and lamb and rabbits, of course. Everybody goes there to get the spring lamb. The baccala—you don't have to put it in a freezer. It's dried, it's salted. You leave that outside. But you can't turn that freezer off. And the meat displays, the white enamelled meat displays with the glass in front: You can't turn those off because you've got meat in there. They've got the processed meat on one end, and then they've got their fresh meat on the other end.

And they handle great—this family is from Castropignano. I've told this Legislature before about the village of Castropignano. It's high in the mountains east of Naples: rich, rich people; poor, poor country. Almost half of the village of Castropignano emigrated to the Niagara region—the Thorold, Welland, Port Colborne area. Wonderful people—these people have taken care of me all my life—the Scapellatis; countless people. They handle Molisana pasta, and I've become a fan of Molisana because it's Castropignano pasta.

But you've got to sell a lot of bags of 99-cent macaroni on small markup because you're competing—these small business people are competing with the Zehrs and Sobeys and the big chain stores that can do loss leaders. You've got to sell a lot of 99-cent bags of linguini or fettuccine to pay a huge electricity bill, one that's climbing higher and higher and higher, and again, you can't raise the prices. These people are being hammered.

It's like that Johnny Cash song How Deep Is the Water, Mama?

Mr. John Yakabuski: How high is the water, Mama?

Mr. Peter Kormos: How high is the water, Mama? That's right. The water is getting higher and higher and higher. These folks are climbing, trying to keep their heads above water, but Premier McGuinty and this government are drowning them with increasing, skyrocketing electricity costs, drowning them with HST, drowning them with stupid meters that cost them \$1.5 billion—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to speak to this for a couple of minutes. I listened to my friend opposite, and he spoke at length, albeit in generalities; very colourful

generalities and entertaining generalities, but generalities nevertheless. Very little—in fact, I'd say it's not a question of very little. His comments, as interesting and as entertaining as they were—and it provides a certain relief at this time in the afternoon—were completely devoid of facts. Just for the record, here are some facts that we should keep in mind as we're working through this piece of legislation.

First, the Ontario energy property tax credit: What does it mean in terms of dollars? It's \$1.3 billion in annual support. That's an increase of \$525 million compared to the tax relief that was provided last year. That is a fact—fact. Another fact: The tax credit will mean that 740,000 Ontario seniors are going to see an increase in tax relief. Here's another fact: To target the relief to those who need it most, the tax credit will be income-tested. What does that mean? Ontarians who own or rent a home can receive up to \$900 in tax relief, with seniors able to claim up to \$1,025 in tax relief. Here's another fact that's going to be helpful: The credit will be paid out in four quarterly lump sum payments so that Ontarians will have access to the money throughout the year at four points when they need it. Those are the facts, and I urge the listeners to the debate, don't be distracted by the colourful and entertaining language. Look at the facts of this tax credit.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I listened with great interest to the comments made by the member from Welland, as I always do, in this case with respect to the energy and property tax credit for seniors. I would really beg to differ with the member from Willowdale, who indicated that the comments made by the member from Welland were just talking in terms of generalities. In my view, I think he was spot on in terms of his analysis of this piece of legislation and called it slot machine legislation—I was listening very intently—that gives you the illusion that you're getting something back. But it's really a sleight of hand, and I think Ontario seniors know that. They're paying a lot of money out. They're getting a very little bit back in return.

1730

I think that that is going to tell the tale when we get to the next election, because in the meantime, seniors and everybody else in Ontario are going to see their energy rates going up and up, and as we get into winter, it's not going to be easy to ignore. Seniors are on fixed incomes. They're going to be hit a lot harder than some of the rest of us. They don't have the luxury of moving out, going out somewhere else during the day. They're at home. A lot of them have medical needs. A lot of them have specialized requirements that mean that they can't use some of the savings that are offered through the so-called smart meters. They're going to see their rates go and up and up and up, and we need to make sure that the people of Ontario realize that.

But I don't think seniors are so easily fooled. I think this government is taking them for granted. I think that

seniors know what they're not getting out of this legislation.

The member also mentioned the 86% of Ontarians saying they're having more trouble making ends meet than they did two years ago. Certainly, that's what I hear in my riding. I get calls constantly from people saying, "Do something about this. We are drowning."

There are mounting increases in our cost of living, more and more levels of taxation, more and more things that we're being required to pay for. This has got to stop, and we need to make sure that we speak out on behalf of our vulnerable seniors.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I was also very intently listening to the member from Welland. I hope he was running for the leadership of his party as well. I think that will be a great addition, nonetheless.

One very interesting point, which I keep hearing from other opposition parties, is their assault on smart meters, that somehow they are the cause of all the problems. I don't understand where their change of heart took place and their support for dumb meters circa 1950 comes from. Times have changed. Technology has come forward. We need to make sure that we have a smart grid in place. We need to make sure that our systems are more in line with the 21st century. These are the same political parties which I recall always favoured time-of-use pricing to ensure that we encourage conservation, that we create incentives in place for Ontarians so that they can shift, so they can change their behaviour in terms of how they use electricity. The only way we can do it is by ensuring that we upgrade our electricity, our energy infrastructure in this province.

All that stuff costs a lot of money. I don't think anybody at home will be fooled by the promises that are being made by the opposition parties, that somehow we can be the champions of the 21st century and not spend a single penny to do so. We need to upgrade our infrastructure. We need to make sure that the manner in which we are generating electricity and distributing it is done so in a 21st-century manner.

We're not doing so by using coal, which is a dirty form of creating energy. I find it very surprising now that even the NDP is somehow supportive of nuclear or coal as a mechanism to create electricity as opposed to using more renewable sources like wind and energy, which will result in cleaner air and less smog.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just in response to the member from Welland, our finance critic, the honourable member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, points out the truth about this bill: that the net benefit to seniors—low-income seniors, at that—is \$93 year through this bill. It's not this billion dollars or whatever; it's \$93 a year.

Hydro bills alone are going up between 60%, and 67%. I went to daltonthehydrohiker.ca, which is a website that we put up. It has a wonderful calculator there,

and I put in the average price—a calculator that's confirmed by the experts in terms of it not being a gimmick. Go to the daltonthehydrohiker.ca website and put in your average monthly hydro bill. Mine goes up \$67 a month from \$100. That's a 67% increase.

All seniors will get—because this particular bill just replaces the \$900 property tax credit that was put in place in 2009. It only replaces that. It comes up with two fancy parts: \$700 for covering your taxes like HST and that—sorry, property tax. It doesn't even address the HST or the health premium or the myriad of other taxes, the 67% increase you're going to see on your hydro bill.

I think the most telling thing was the story in the weekend Toronto papers where a lady whose husband is on an oxygen machine—and the member for Whitby–Oshawa mentioned this: fixed costs. She can't turn her 84-year-old husband's oxygen machine off. Her hydro bill—this is not my story—for a two-month period went from \$450 to over \$950. She cried when she opened her bill last week, and her son is telling the story to the Toronto Sun newspaper. You should read that and you should be ashamed. It's a shocking story, what you're doing to seniors in this province.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I read this fascinating quote attributed to Ed Koch while he was running for mayor of New York City in 1989. This is what he said: “If you agree with me on nine out of 12” issues, “vote for me. If you agree with me on 12 out of 12, see a psychiatrist.”

Well, the people of Ontario don't agree with this Liberal government on any of their policies. It isn't a matter of nine out of 12; it's zero-zero.

I don't know if you've ever seen street hustlers playing three-card monte on a cardboard box down in Manhattan, down around 24th Street, the area where the Chelsea Hotel is, a great historic hotel. It was one of the areas where I noticed guys had set up their cardboard box. You've got to find the one-eyed jack. Inevitably, some sucker will come along and he'll win a fin, he'll win a fiver, and by God, he wins another, and by then he figures this is going pretty good. By God, by the time those guys are finished with you, those pockets—they're like rabbit ears. You just pull them out and it's like walking around with two white rabbit ears beside you.

This government is playing three-card monte with the people of Ontario, hard-working people who deserve far better, seniors who have worked hard all their lives and whose incomes are shrinking and whose costs are growing. This government, then, teases Ontarians with legislation that has titles like “energy tax credit,” along with “property tax credit.”

Sarah Thomson said it: “Manipulate, trick and pull the wool over” people's eyes. I'm not sure I would have voted for her, but she was sure right on that one, weren't she?

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up and speak on Bill 109, Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act.

I've been listening to the opposite party speaking for a long time. We've gotten used to it in this place: Whatever we propose, whatever we say, they always work against it and vote against it and talk against it.

I was listening to the member from Welland speaking about the candidate for mayor in one of the States: “If you agree with me a certain amount of times, vote for me, or if you don't agree at all, see a psychiatrist.”

It's important to talk about those important issues concerning our seniors and low-income families across the province of Ontario.

Last Tuesday I had the privilege and honour to go to London to make this announcement on behalf of our government. We did that announcement in the seniors' activities place in the city of London with a group that's called Huff n' Puff. Those members, 55 years and older, get together on a regular basis to exercise and keep active. The majority of those members are seniors of this province who worked very hard in their lifetime to support this province, maintain our economy and create the wonderful stuff we enjoy today. So I think it's our obligation and duty, as elected officials who get the chance to govern in this province, to give people some kind of support and thank them for the hard work they did on behalf of all of us for many years in this province. That's why this announcement came about: to support them; to give them some kind of support; to make their lives a bit easier.

Everybody knows in this province and everybody knows in this country, and maybe around the globe, that every community, every province, every country faces economic hardship due to the collapse of the financial industry. Many different nations are trying to stimulate their economies, trying to do something to support their communities and to get back on the right track.

1740

What we did in this province is we worked very hard to invest money in many different elements of our economy to stimulate the economy and create more jobs, to be able to sustain our infrastructure, to be able to invest in our energy generation, to be able to continue to maintain what we have in health care, education and many other services in the province of Ontario. As a result of this hardship and the economic circumstances we face in the province of Ontario—we still maintain our ability to support our seniors and low-income families.

The announcement last week was an important announcement to support our seniors. We include more than 740,000 seniors in this province and we give them a chance to benefit from our tax credit, whether on property or energy, up to \$1,025 per year. I know it seems for some people not a lot, but it's a very important step toward supporting those seniors, as I mentioned, who worked hard to maintain their residences, their homes, and to be able to function like everybody else in the province of Ontario.

This announcement was important for the people who I talked to last week and continue to see on a regular basis, on a daily basis. They thank us for thinking of them. Despite our difficult economic time, they still have some kind of support. This announcement was more than \$525 million. The total announcements which were made from 2009 until now would be \$1.3 billion to support seniors and low-income families in the province of Ontario.

The member opposite from Welland said people don't believe us. I'm wondering why no government in the past 15 years invested any money in hydro generation and electrical generation. That's why, in order to keep the lights on in the province of Ontario, we've been forced to go back and find many different avenues, find different ways to reinvest in our generation to keep the lights on for the people of Ontario, especially for the seniors, who need it the most.

People talk about extra energy prices. No doubt about it. Many people complain in the province of Ontario about this stuff. Nobody wants to pay extra money. But as a matter of fact, in order to keep the lights on, we have to reinvest in generation, whether from hydro, wind or solar; from methane, thermal or gas. We have to foster all these avenues in order to maintain the lights we have in the province of Ontario. Madam Speaker, you probably remember in 2003 what happened in the province of Ontario when people lost their lights, lost their hydro for many days and many, many hours, and so many businesses lost a lot of money as a result of this loss of hydro.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It was a problem in Ohio.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: And the member opposite mentions it was a problem in Ohio.

The problem was clear to all the people of this province because we never invested in that generation to update it because that generation was getting old and tired. We have to keep investing in that generation to keep the lights on, so that's what we're doing.

As a result of that, we have to reinvest. We have to buy new generation. We have to find a new way. That's why we implemented and passed the Green Energy Act to invite companies from across the planet to come to Ontario and invest in our generation. We have companies from Korea, from Canada, from everywhere, coming to Ontario to invest. As a result of that, we have created more than 50,000 jobs in many different areas, in many different cities. I think it's a good initiative. If you drive from here to Windsor, to the United States, you see a lot of windmills everywhere, and the focus on these windmills is to create more energy, to sustain the consumption we have in the province of Ontario for energy.

As a result of this investment, the price went up a little bit, and as a result of this investment and the price going up a little bit, we decided to go back to our seniors and low-income families to give them support.

This support is coming after many other initiatives came to support many different people across the province of Ontario, especially seniors. In 2009, in our budget, we announced individual tax relief to almost 93%

of the total population of the province, to give them the support they need, to give them some kind of tax relief in order to be able to observe our new initiative, modernization of taxation in Ontario. As a result, we were able to stimulate the economy to create more jobs, to attract more companies, more factories, more places to come to Ontario. And despite the hardship we face in the province, we came to invest in our kids. We invested in our kids, and our initiative, early childhood education, started this year with 45,000 students across this province. They are willing to go to school, to start to learn early, because we know the best investment is an investment in our kids to create a brighter, smarter and sustainable province.

We don't forget all our sectors, our economies, our people, our genders, our levels of age in this province. We invest in every segment of our society, because it's important for all of us to maintain the prosperity we have. I know the members opposite don't believe in this, because it's coming from this side, but we are working hard in consultations on a regular basis with many people who believe strongly in this province, because our obligation as a government and as elected officials is to find a way, always, to support our populations, to support the hard-working families, to give them the financial support they need, to give them a chance to put the lights on and keep the lights on and also to find a way to support their families.

I'm supporting Bill 109 because it is a good step in the right direction to support many people in the province of Ontario. Those numbers are estimated at 2.8 million people in this province, from low-income families to seniors. As I mentioned earlier, we have 740,000 seniors in Ontario who will benefit from this energy and property tax relief to support our seniors, who worked hard in province of Ontario. And do you know how much? It's \$525 million, in addition to what we invested in 2009. Altogether it comes to how much? It's over \$1.3 billion, and the opposite side is saying it's nothing—\$1.3 billion. It's a lot of money reinvested back in the community, reinvested in our seniors, reinvested in our hard-working families in the province of Ontario. So \$1,025 for every senior, who can claim on a yearly basis; almost \$900 can be claimed by families who are experiencing hardship.

It's a lot of money invested or reinvested in the community because we believe strongly that by reinvesting in our people, we're stimulating the economy. Reinvest in our communities—give them the chance to live with respect and dignity. That's why I'm standing up in my place and speaking in support of this initiative, and I hope that the members opposite, from the NDP and the Conservatives, stand up and join us to support this initiative, because it's good for seniors, good for hard-working families—100%.

After I listened to many speeches from the opposite side, I have a doubt that they're going to stand up and support us. It's a good initiative. I would invite the member from Welland and the member from the Conservative Party to join our team and vote in support—yes, 100%.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Say something nice about John Milloy and look like you mean it.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank also the Minister of Colleges, Universities and Training for his hard work to make sure that we have a lot of trainees in Ontario to keep serving the low-income people, keep serving the seniors and produce for us all the educated people who are going to carry the province for years to come.

All of us on this side work very hard to make sure that all segments of our society get looked after very well.

1750

Mr. John Yakabuski: I need to know: Are you working hard?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Always—always to support my constituents of London–Fanshawe, because my constituents believe strongly in our initiative.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What about the seniors in London–Fanshawe? What about the hard-working families? What are you doing for them?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's very important to talk about the hard-working people of London–Fanshawe who get all the support in this bill. Every family—hard-working poor people can claim up to \$900 per year. I think this is very good stuff. Maybe it's not a lot for the opposite party, but for many different people, \$900 and \$1,025 is a lot of money.

I hope you will join us and support the hard-working families and support the seniors in the province of Ontario. I look forward to listening to the responses. Hopefully, they will say something good about what I said.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I was actually disappointed that the member from London–Fanshawe didn't keep going, because there had to be somebody in his riding who had not been recognized at this point.

But I do want to hearken back a little bit to the member for Welland and then the member for Willowdale, who responded to the member from Welland. He characterized the member from Welland's speech as being devoid of facts.

You know what? Real life is not a pretty picture sometimes, I say to the member from Willowdale. The facts that he talked about—the people he talked about in his speech are real people.

When he talked about the corner store owner being unable to shut that freezer down or shut those coolers down, those are facts. You can't shut those coolers down, or the food spoils. You can't shut the freezers down, or the food spoils. Those people who are working day and night and night and day and have put their lives into that business, they can't afford to let one little morsel of that food spoil because they're right up against it as it is. Their profit margins are so razor-thin that any spoilage, any loss at all, and they're over the edge.

I say to the member from Willowdale, take into consideration real people out there in the province of Ontario, seniors and otherwise, small business owners, working families that are struggling every minute of

every day to keep their heads above water in Premier McGuinty's Ontario. Let's not forget about them.

The facts will show you, I say to you folks over there, that this is a shell game. You're rolling one program into another one. People are getting a crumb from the master's table, and you're selling it as the panacea. It's not the truth.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I do want to comment on the bloviation of the member for London–Fanshawe. But first I want to come to the defence of the member from Willowdale, who got a real scourging from my colleague here the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—and not undeserved. You have to understand, I say to you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's got no choice.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have to say to you, when my folks down in Welland hear a Liberal implying that they're not real, when my folks down in Welland hear a parliamentary assistant in the McGuinty government saying that they're irrelevant and that their stories aren't factual, why, the Liberal support drops from 14% down to maybe 7%. So I let it speak for itself.

The folks that I talk about here in the Legislature know that they're real. Folks that I they talk about here at Queen's Park know that their stories are factual.

And, gosh, the parliamentary assistant has somehow had the cabinet door slammed in his face. We should be supportive of him. I want to see the member for Willowdale in cabinet where he belongs. I will continue to tout the member for Willowdale for cabinet until he gets in. I will continue to hector the Premier about the member for Willowdale until the Premier lets the member for Willowdale into cabinet. I will not rest until I've achieved that job. But in the meantime, the member for Willowdale has to understand that he may well have learned the same traits that George Smitherman acquired at the feet of the Premier, and that is trickery, manipulation and pulling the wool over people's eyes.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: Speaker, I wanted to take a moment just to let you know that I will be talking about the speech that the member from London–Fanshawe gave. I want to point out something that obviously got missed and maybe still will get missed by the opposition, and that is, he was identifying the hard-working people of Ontario. He was saying that the people in his riding are going through a tough time and that the government of the day is acknowledging that.

He was also saying that it is his intention to support the bill that is going to be giving some relief from that. That is an acknowledgement that the system that existed previously was in disarray and that the energy costs were up and down like a yo-yo. There was no considered plan

by the previous government because of the privatization of the electric system. Now that we know that we have to invest, my suggestion is that the member from London–Fanshawe is suggesting that fair-minded people will take a look at what the condition was and is, and when they compare the two, they’re going to say that at least there’s now somewhere that we can get a concrete plan in place and a long-term goal to reach. It’s going to take some money to do that and those costs are going to be borne—that the future holds bright for their children and grandchildren.

The member from London–Fanshawe has been making it quite clear that his intention is to work hard for—and he’s always done that—the constituents of London–Fanshawe, to acknowledge that they are running through tough times. Advocacy for seniors, advocacy for those who are less fortunate and advocacy for those who need our help has been paramount for the member from London–Fanshawe not only in this place, but in caucus, in London–Fanshawe and across the province. He’s well known for that advocacy. Those are the things that he said in his speech today.

It’s rather interesting that they wanted to spend time on somebody else and some other comments and some other kinds of words that basically deflect the concept of what the member’s speech was all about. The member deserves our credit and thanks for bringing the concerns of his constituency right here and explaining why he’s going to support the bill.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I’m pleased to provide some comments on the address from the member from London–Fanshawe regarding Bill 109.

I was at the announcement for Bill 109, and I’ve got to tell you, it was a wonderful, theatrical event. The Premier was impeccable. He takes off his jacket and rolls up his sleeves—

Mr. Robert Bailey: He loosens his tie.

Mr. Steve Clark: He loosened his tie, too; that’s right.

He had the minister for seniors standing behind him smiling. All was well and wonderful in the world.

I just can’t believe what I heard from the member from London–Fanshawe. He talked about constituents in his riding coming up to him, thanking him for thinking of them and for the fact that they’re keeping the lights on. In my riding, you know what they’re saying about you? “The lights are on but nobody’s home.” That’s the problem with you guys: You don’t understand.

I had my own little press conference on Friday, and that’s when we launched daltonthehydrohiker.ca. It really told the story. I plugged in my monthly bill, and I couldn’t believe that in the next five years my monthly bill is going to go up 44%. I was shocked. But people in this province know what you’re doing. They’ve started to look at some of their bills and some of their household expenses, and what the HST is costing them, and what the eco fees cost them until the government did their

climbdown right after they announced it—a couple of weeks later. They’re starting to add up their household expenses, and I tell you, they really know that with you people, the lights are on and no one’s home. That’s absolutely, positively what they know.

The Premier can do the photo ops with the minister, but the people of Ontario know, and on October 6, 2011, they’re going to get their chance to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member from London–Fanshawe has two minutes to respond.

1800

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank all the members who spoke and commented on my speech, not on other people’s speeches. Anyway, I listened carefully to the comments by the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Brant, who commented on my speech.

It’s very important to tell the people of Ontario that we recognize that they’re facing difficult times. But it’s very important to reinvest in our generation of hydro, of energy, because if we don’t, we’re not going to have the lights on—exactly what happened in 2003, when the Conservatives were in power. You know what happened. The people of Ontario lived in the dark for days. There were no lights for anyone; no electricity for companies and factories to keep their doors open.

That’s what we’re doing in the province of Ontario. We’re recognizing the difficulties some people are facing, especially seniors, especially the hard-working poor people in the province of Ontario. That’s why we have come up with a lot of initiatives, one of them this initiative to support people to live in their homes, to give them some kind of energy relief to be able to pay their bills. We know it’s a difficult time for them and for us as a province—a difficult time for everyone on this planet.

But the most important thing is when government takes leadership, not ignoring the problem; facing it, not running away from it. This is leadership. That’s why on this side, under Dalton McGuinty’s leadership, we’re facing difficult times by reinvesting in communities, by supporting our families, by supporting our seniors. We don’t take anything lightly; we don’t joke about those important things, as the member from Welland and a member of Conservative Party mentioned a few minutes ago. We take it seriously because it’s important to us to support all the segments of our communities, from seniors to children to youth to adults to hard-working families. That’s why we are in government and they are not.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Wellington–

Halton Hills has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment. This matter will be debated. Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

The member has up to five minute to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yesterday I asked the Minister of the Environment a simple question. I asked only that he repeat in this House a statement he had already made some five months ago. This minister, while he was still the Minister of Revenue and endeavouring to sell the people of Ontario on the virtues of the HST, was evidently speaking to some of his constituents at a meeting in Mapleton township. Two community newspapers reported the minister's remarks: the Wellington Advertiser and the Drayton Community News in their May 21 editions. I have copies of both of these articles in my hands. They're easily accessible to anyone. The minister appeared to promise his constituents that if municipalities refused to sign off on the wind farm applications, the Ministry of the Environment would not approve those applications. I'll read from the article verbatim:

"One resident in the gallery asked point blank if there is anything the township could do to stop wind farms if the proponents have otherwise met all the government's criteria.

"Wilkinson replied companies must obtain the signature of the township for the application to be complete.

"If the application is not complete, the project will not proceed," he said."

Let's imagine the minister at this meeting. He is taking questions, and the mood of the room is decidedly heated. It was, of course, his government that imposed the Green Energy Act, and no doubt he voted for it. Under fire, his instinct is to try to shift the blame for the wind farms to the local municipal government, to imply that the local municipal government has a de facto veto over the project application, that they can stop it dead in its tracks simply by refusing to sign. I wonder what the municipal councillors present in that room were saying under their breath or through gritted teeth.

Anyone reading those articles in the Wellington Advertiser and the Drayton Community News would conclude that the minister was saying that municipalities had the power to stop wind farms. Now he's the Minister of the Environment. It is his ministry that approves the wind farm applications.

In his initial response to me on Monday, he failed—indeed, he was unwilling—to categorically repeat his response in question period, as I'd requested. Instead, he told this House that a wind farm "proponent must submit a complete application, and that includes a review and a consultation with the municipality."

To any reasonable person, that is very different from saying that municipalities could stop a wind farm application simply by refusing to sign it. Whereas the minister once suggested that municipalities have an effective veto

over new wind farm proposals, he is today speaking about proof of consultation.

The minister failed to address the obvious: What constitutes consultation as required for an application to be complete? Is it consultation or is it just information? And what if a democratically elected municipal council decides it doesn't want a wind farm in its community? The minister now appears to be suggesting that as long as that municipality is consulted, the application would still be complete. So which is it: what the minister said in May or what the minister is saying today?

Whatever the case, he validates my initial response as long ago as February 2009 during second reading debate. That's when I responded to the McGuinty government's so-called Green Energy Act, saying it should be more appropriately called the Power Grab Act. Communities know this.

Families are concerned about the health effects, particularly the long-term health effects, of living near wind farms. Perhaps in response to those concerns, the government asked the chief medical officer of health to report existing research on the issue. Yet the government itself has tacitly acknowledged that that report is insufficient because the Premier has, in addition to the chief medical officer's report, appointed a research chair to study health effects. In fact, he's spending public money, \$300,000 a year for five years, to support this second study by an internationally recognized scientist in the field of renewable energy.

The Minister of the Environment should know this because his ministry is providing the funding. And if the Premier genuinely believes that this study is necessary, surely he must therefore recognize the legitimacy of the health concerns.

So I want to return to my question about municipal consultation. Very simply, can a municipality reject a wind farm proposal or does this government plan to foist it upon them against their will? Do they have a veto, as the minister once suggested, or do they not have a veto? It's a simple question, and the people in my riding and across Ontario are demanding answers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It really is a pleasure to rise today to expand a little bit on the provisions of the Green Energy Act for the edification of our colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills.

First of all, I'd like to say that the Green Energy Act is a great step forward for the people of Ontario. It means we can phase out dirty coal and promote cleaner, renewable energy like solar and wind in Ontario.

I think Gordon Miller, the Environmental Commissioner for Ontario, said it best, and I quote, "The ECO strongly supports both the vision and goals underpinning the" Green Energy Act "and views it as a bold and sincere attempt to recast energy policy in a positive direction."

As a physician, I know that coal kills people. I'd like to remind the member for Wellington-Halton Hills that

when his party was in government, emissions from coal increased 124% during their time in office. And of course we are eliminating it.

I'm very pleased that health professionals are also taking this view. Hilary de Veber from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment is quoted in the *Toronto Star*, September 23, 2010: "We need to close the coal plants now and make more room on the grid for healthier renewable energy sources, like wind and solar."

Our renewable energy approval keeps people's health top of mind while encouraging the development renewable energy. All wind project applicants are required to meet the same standards across the province, including a minimum noise setback of 550 metres for wind turbines.

This distance was set based on a precautionary principle because Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, has stated, "There are no direct links between wind turbines and adverse health impacts."

Our new renewable energy approval means we have a coordinated and improved approvals process, and certainty with respect to provincial standards. No longer will municipalities have to deal with the issue of setbacks themselves, which did in fact start to create a patchwork of setbacks across the province. The renewable energy approval is transparent and offers public review.

Specifically, if an applicant of a renewable energy project has a proposal, they must consult with local municipalities prior to applying for a renewable energy approval—which I think I'll now shorten to REA. Municipal consultation is mandatory for all projects requiring an REA, except for very small wind projects. Consultation with the municipality in which the facility would be located is required to take place at least 90 days before submitting an REA application.

The Ministry of the Environment provides applicants with a form that outlines what needs to be addressed with municipal officials. This must be submitted to the ministry as part of the application. The form requests municipal feedback on matters related to municipal services and infrastructure, such as the proposed road access; the rehabilitation of areas disturbed and/or municipal infrastructure damaged during construction; and emergency management procedures and safety protocols related to the ongoing management of the facility.

If the applicant is not able to provide all of the required information, the complete submission must explain why. In addition, the applicant must describe and document efforts to address any issues raised during municipal consultation.

I'll now quote a particular mayor who is clearly extremely enthusiastic about the Green Energy Act. Lynn Acre, mayor of Bayham—the municipality of Bayham is home to Erie Shores Wind Farm—said, "Our municipality has benefited so much from wind energy that it is now a part of our identity."

In the remaining few short seconds I have, I'd also like to point out that one of the great benefits of the Green Energy Act is of course the creation of jobs. Earlier today, one of our caucus members read out a list of the jobs related specifically to solar and wind projects in this province. It was absolutely astounding, the number of jobs we're creating. This act is good for the health of Ontarians and for our economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1813.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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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Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
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Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
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Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
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