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of Ontario
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of Debates
(Hansard)**

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Wednesday 6 October 2010

Mercredi 6 octobre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 6 October 2010

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 6 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 aboriginal prayer.

Prayers.

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 5, 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 œuvre 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. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this morning to speak on this bill.

Now, this bill that we're talking about, Bill 109, is the second in a series of bills of what we call backtracking. It's an admission that the current tax-and-spend McGuinty government has hit the tax ceiling. Why do I say that? Because in the first bill—I believe it was Bill 99, where they sort of implemented the activity tax credit for youth—I think they were unfair because they did not extend the same courtesy of a tax break or a bit of a break for seniors.

This one here is another, unfortunately. I usually like to be positive on these bills that are trying to give some of the money back to the people they've taken it from. But when I look the detail in this bill, it's yet another shell game, to the extent that there's no change, really. The ultimate refund is still maxed out at \$900. What they've done is changed the names, not the amount; they've changed the names.

What this bill does is in fact provide a \$200 income-tested tax credit for seniors for the increased costs of energy. The increased costs of energy are the direct result of Premier McGuinty's policy on energy. We have heard from my constituents, and I'm going to put on the record today, out of respect for my constituents in the riding of Durham—seniors primarily, but not always; persons on fixed income; persons who are on medical equipment in their homes; persons who have updated their homes to modern geothermal systems who now find out it's costing them more because of time-of-use pricing. The pumps that drive the fluid in the geothermal systems are electric, and they have to go all the time to keep the fluid going through the system, so time of use really penalizes them.

Mr. Speaker—the Speaker in the chair has changed—it's hard to say. I'm trying to be as positive as I can possibly be, because we realize that Premier McGuinty is really saying, "Mea culpa; I'm sorry." This bill should be called the "taxes are too high; I'm sorry" bill. That's what it should be called. The bill is well intended, but it's an admission that they've made mistakes, the second admission in a couple of months. But they still haven't fixed—the sad part is that they've changed the wording.

I've got to put it on the record, and I'm going to read it directly. This bill that we're debating, Bill 109, "An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007"—that's their bill; that's their budget—"to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and make consequential amendments." "Amendments" means fixing errors—that's what it means—but what the bill does, in fact, is that previously the maximum claim for the Ontario property tax credit, OPTC, was \$900; this proposed amount is the same. It's so tragic. People, I hope you're listening. If you phone my constituency office, I'll send you the information so you'll know honestly; it's been done by an accountant. It's the same; it's \$900. What it's done is change the breakdown for an energy claim in the amount of \$200 and the property tax claim to be \$700. What a sham. I'm embarrassed, actually.

If they were putting new money into it, it would be borrowed money, because they already have a \$20-billion deficit. The borrowed money would be future taxes, so they still haven't learned. They have no plan. I'm so concerned about the economy of Ontario. Businesses will soon catch on to this, with their high energy costs. It is tragic.

The tragedy of all this is that they aren't being straight with the people of Ontario. Let's call it what it is: It's an apology, a mea culpa, for providing no plan for how they're going to deal with the high cost of electricity in

people's homes, especially seniors. Those are the people who defended our country and who have given us the great quality of life we have today, and now we're taking it away from them a dollar at a time.

Now, they say it's only a dollar a day. That's \$365, and to get \$365 in your pocket you have to make \$700 because of the tax rate. It's tragic. Some people are living on \$800 and \$900 a month. I know them personally in my riding, so I have to put their names on the record here—my constituents in the riding of Durham have given me permission to use their names. I speak to them and, more importantly, listen to them. The names in the emails are here, because this is sensitive.

One of the best and most intelligent constituents, who—I'm not saying he's a supporter of mine. That's not what—I would question; perhaps he isn't. But I do respect what he's saying.

0910

If you check my website, johnotoole.ca, you will see that I have a statement, my own personal statement and my position that I will represent my constituents, specifically seniors; what I stand for. So I would encourage you to look at that.

One of them is Peter Box and his wife, Christine.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, I am hearing some noise on the other side from the newer minister, Mr. Murray. I'd encourage him to take the time to respond, and I'll listen carefully to his observations.

He says to me here—this is Peter and Christine Box—“Sorry to keep bothering you on this subject but can you please explain in layman's terms what the government is now proposing in regard to help for seniors, and if it is more ‘tax credits’ how do people who don't pay taxes get to take advantage of it.” In other words, if your income is below the threshold where you have to file—there's one example right there, and I know these people: intelligent, hard-working.

In another email, he goes on to show some of the treachery. I will leave it at that. He has a complete list of concerns here. In fact, he has 14 concerns. I'll just quickly go through them in my limited time. See, what's happened here is that they've limited the debate on this thing to the extent that I can't put all this on the record.

Here it goes on. This is Mr. Box, saying, “The higher the electricity bills the higher will be the HST.”

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, no, it's true.

“When” time of use “was first brought to the public's attention it was on the basis of forcing/encouraging a shift in time use of electricity.” I agree with that statement; I understand that statement. But let's tell the people that unless they shift, their price is going to double. Now, I'm telling you it's doubling.

Here's the bill that was sent by one of the high-paid bureaucrats at Hydro One, and this is what it is. Right here, it's clear that the time of use is an issue. It says that off-peak time—off-peak basically would be a good example; it would be from 9 at night until 7 in the mor-

ning—is 5.3 cents per kilowatt hour, plus all the other charges; mid-peak, which would be from 11 o'clock until about 5 o'clock, when nobody is home, is 8.0 cents per kilowatt hour; and on-peak is 9.9 cents per kilowatt hour. That's almost a 100% increase, so no wonder people are just struggling.

What they're telling seniors now is to do the laundry on Saturday because it's off-peak. If all of the seniors in the apartment building where Mr. Box lives lined up on Saturday, they'd spend their whole day waiting with their loonies and toonies in their hands to get the chance to use the washer and dryer on their floor in the apartment building. What a tragic kind of father-knows-best attitude toward life.

There's further information in this brochure, and I encourage people to read it. It's called Introducing Time-of-Use Rates. They probably sent this out to make sure that—I'm not sure how much they spent doing all this, but this brochure is worth looking at. It goes right up to showing you that if, for instance, you were drying your clothes, off-peak it's 12 cents per kilowatt hour, mid-peak is 18 cents a kilowatt hour and on-peak is 22 cents. It goes deeper, into air conditioning etc.

They've made it so complicated that you, the consumer, is to blame. When you say, “My bill is doubled,” they're going to say, “Why don't you use the smart meter? Log on to your computer and shift your time of use. You aren't learning how to conserve. You're not a decent, respectful citizen. It's your fault.” They've shifted the whole blame on this pricing, and now this bill is here, in its tokenistic way, trying to fix part of it. But they're not fixing it; they're not giving one new cent. They're taking \$200 out of one pot and putting it into the other pot. It's a case in this—I have to slow down, because I get so concerned. I do, in my riding, look at seniors and listen to them, and I feel that they're being left behind.

Later today, I'll be introducing a bill which is strengthening the Powers of Attorney Act for seniors. We've seen in articles in the Star how Premier McGuinty and his government haven't built, to any extent, any long-term-care beds, with the aging population. The year 2010 marks the first year that the baby boomers start turning 65. This is a silver tsunami coming at you. But what they have done—this is quite an artful game as well—is they're going to regulate retirement homes. Now, retirement homes are like fancy condos, basically; they're fancy condos. Basically, you pay—there's no government money; there's not one nickel in a retirement home from Premier McGuinty, yet they're going to regulate them. I'm not sure how they're going to regulate them. I guess they're going to hire more inspectors who make, probably, \$75,000 or \$80,000 a year to go around and visit all of these and give out tickets for some misdemeanour.

But I can tell you today what's actually happening. People in hospitals today who are there convalescing after an operation or surgery or something—they're high care and their rehabilitation needs are—they're still in the hospital; they're called alternative level of care, and they

take a lot more attention and cost more for the hospital. They're called bed blockers, too. They're moving these people, in some cases I know personally, into retirement homes, because there are no long-term-care beds available. You have to wait for a year. Basically, you'll be dead by the time you find a bed. Or, as we heard the other day, you have to travel 500 miles. They had one where they were going to transfer the patient—the spouse is living in, say, Kenora, and they're going to send the other one to Rainy River, 500 kilometres away. It makes it easy for the family.

There isn't one ounce of compassion that I can sense for this particular group that is being abandoned at this time, in this economy, under this government—abandoned, from everything I read. Not just Bill 109; they were ignored in Bill 99, the activity tax credit one. They should have encouraged seniors to stay active by giving them a tax credit for tai chi or whatever activity—walking groups or whatever else. That is what I want to bring to the discussion here and to the Premier, respectfully: that you've got to do more than just tinker around with these technical tax things. Now seniors are going to have to take their income tax to an accountant and keep their little paper receipts for all the expenses and things, and the accountant is going to charge HST.

Look, this does not fix any problems, but it is an admission of guilt. It is a clear admission that they've gone off the rails. I don't know what's happened. The Premier, with all due respect, is actually a very decent person. It's not personal here. But he has lost focus. Somehow—I can't explain it—it seems out of character, this deliberate avoidance of the issue, that he has hit the tax ceiling. What's the problem? The revenue is down. We understand the economy is on its knees. It's almost the same thing—I was a councillor in Durham region in the 1990s, when Floyd Laughren came to visit us. He was the Treasurer of Ontario. He said, "Look, we have an expenditure problem. You're going to have to tighten your belts." He asked every municipality, under the expenditure reduction plan, to reduce spending, which was basically payroll: 85% of all public spending—around that; 75%—is payroll. He wanted the municipalities to lay people off. Well, they didn't want any part of that; they wanted to be able to blame Bob Rae for that. The point I'm making here is, they hit the tax ceiling and they had the social contract.

Well, I see an uncanny parallel to what's happening now. The public sector is well paid. The \$100,000 list started like this, and now it's this. It's hydro; it's hospitals. The hospital CEOs—\$500,000 a year, some of them. Unbelievable. Not even doctors—they have a master's degree. That's good; it means they understand a financial statement. The point is: paying the right people the right amount at the right time is important. We've hit the tax ceiling here, and this is more serious than Bill 109.

0920

I'm going to go through, here—Russell Branch is another gentleman I've spoken to in the riding on a number of occasions. He has written to me in his handwritten

notes—a very neat writer—"We try to conserve," but "we will have to pay for less usage" that they can't afford in the first place. He's got it right. What's going to happen is that the utilities, who get paid for selling electrons, are encouraging you to save and they want the revenue to stay the same. So you're going to use less and you're going to pay more. That's what is happening; there's no question of that.

We believe conservation is important; it would be the first principle. Give the people the tools: educate them; spend some time before you implement these policies. It's like the eco tax: They implemented it, and then they withdrew it. But they're going to re-implement it. It's a tax thing; it's revenue.

So, there's Russell. He's another person I think highly of for taking the time to handwrite, not text. He probably hasn't got a computer because he can't afford the electricity. Turn your computer off at night.

Here's another one from Bob Beamish. I'll just read some of it in the few minutes I have left here:

"Thank you for your email June 22, 2010, about charging HST on gasoline. The HST makes many goods and services more costly. However, I agree that the added 8% on the cost of gas will be one of the worst impacts (along with the HST on heating fuel and electricity)." He goes on to say—and he's got it; he's working on his budget, and he tells me all his personal stuff. Look, they've hit the tax ceiling, and this little tinkering around with \$200 coming from heating that used to be on the property tax is surely moving the deck chairs around on the Titanic. This is a serious problem.

I think, in conclusion here—I can't say this. I think they're going off the cliff, personally. Large companies that haven't the ability to turn it around—some of them are large, well-known companies who can't turn it around—go off the cliff. Nortel would be an example of a company that was lauded, was a premier stock and now is penniless. The government is roughly on the same trajectory. They have a spending problem. We're spending more, but at hospitals there are lineups; we have problems in the schools—bullying and everything else that's going on; we have lineups in the courts. My point is this: The whole system is in paralysis.

It isn't an individual—Minister Bradley is an excellent minister; not a problem. Here's the point: They, as a team, have lost their way—totally. We're seeing it in mental health, we're seeing it in children's services—across the board. For instance, in the seven years they've had of a glut of spending, now a glut of debt and a glut of tax policy that's crippling industry—it's troubling to the degree that I become quite worried for our collective future. We have to turn around and do the right thing for the right reasons at the right time.

Premier McGuinty is on the wrong track on almost every file. Look around. It's tragic, it's sorrowful and it's sad. I'm not saying this maliciously and politically; this is what my constituents are telling me. These are the real people who are first hurt because they have the least amount of discretionary income. Pay attention to what

Mr. Branch and the others are saying on this, because certainly you are close to the line here.

I'd like to mention Loren Pascoe as well, another constituent who gets in touch with me, sometimes angrily, I might say. They often think that we as members are government; they don't really pay attention to the politics of it all. But they're telling me that they're mad. They're mad as hell, and they're not going to take it any longer. That's what I'm hearing.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to respond to my friend from Durham. Certainly, he brings to this House some of the comments of constituents that are echoed in my own riding and, I'm sure, echoed around the province. People simply are stretched to the maximum, especially those on fixed incomes. I hear from seniors. They can't afford the HST. They certainly can't afford the bump up in hydro rates. Their incomes have not gone up; in many cases, their incomes have gone down, and yet they're asked to pay more and more.

It would make a difference, I think, especially for those of us in the New Democratic Party, if we felt that the not-so-smart meters, for example, were actually delivering on the environmental file, but they're not. They're not. They're not delivering on the environmental file. They're not saving us environmentally. They're costing us, but they're not saving us. That's the reality of the not-so-smart meters.

This little stipend, this little bit that the government's giving back to seniors, represents what, about \$70 million? Seniors and others would be shocked to know that about \$240 million is going to public utilities profits. This was a deal engineered by the OEB. So they get back \$70 million, but \$240 million is going to increase the profits of public utilities due to a deal made, a deal objected to by just about every consumer advocacy group, including the manufacturers' association.

So really, this is not a gift. This is an attempt to paper over, literally paper over the egregious assault on our seniors, our small business owners—all of those in the province of Ontario who simply cannot afford to pay another cent in hydro and simply can't keep their lights on and do their laundry on the weekends, but have to work and live during the day.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Durham was dealing with some of these property tax credit questions. Just to be clear, this program of property tax credits for seniors, based on income, as he said, has been going on since 2003. This is basically an enhancement of it. In other words, there will be more credits as a result of this latest change, and it is not nickels and dimes. It's an increase of \$525 million as a result—\$525 million for seniors, based on income.

I think the member from Durham raised a good question about income eligibility. Seniors who do not earn income—they don't pay taxes, in other words—can also

be eligible for it. It's a refundable tax credit, so if you don't have taxable income, the key thing—and I hope all the members here remind the seniors; I know in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence I always do—is that it's critical to fill out your income tax forms, because that's what triggers the eligibility. A lot of seniors don't get their forms done correctly and they miss out; they can miss out on up to \$1,000 if they don't fill out their tax forms.

Plus on top of this, there is another enhanced property tax grant, and that's been doubled from \$250 a year in a cheque, in a grant, to \$500. So you add the \$500 grant plus the over \$1,000 on the credit, and it could mean relief of up to \$1,500 for seniors of modest means, low income, on a pension.

So it is really helpful, and this is something that our seniors deserve because they've worked hard. They've saved, so let's help our seniors today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: This is another in the pattern of the way this government works. It's an ad hoc policy on the fly. It's an optic. Like I say, this is a pattern because there's never a plan; there's always a knee-jerk reaction to public opinion. There's never public opinion sought while policy is being made, but when there's an outcry after the policy is legislated, then this government acts. You know what? Seniors and people in Ontario on any income are smarter than this. They get that this is an optic.

Seniors and folks on disability, folks on lower income, are on a fixed income and they are hurting. Yes, there have been measures that try to help these folks. Previously, the maximum claim for the Ontario property tax credit was \$900. This proposal amounts to that same \$900, so we're counting the same \$900 again, with a breakdown for an energy claim to the amount of \$200 and a property tax claim to a maximum of \$700. It is apparent that the value of these claims has just been moved around, and you'd have to be a master's graduate from university to figure out how this is going to work, because the formula is complicated.

Do you know what? Energy costs are estimated to rise by 43% by the year 2015; that's over \$700 a year. This tax credit confirms that this is a clear admission of this policy being unaffordable. We need to support families and seniors, so any tax relief is good, and because of that, I will be supporting this policy.

0930

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm very pleased to speak in support of this bill and to respond to the member from Durham.

We know that energy costs are rising. With this in mind, our government has taken several positive steps that will deliver an energy system that will provide an abundant supply of clean electricity at an affordable rate. For years, energy consumers were not paying the true

cost of electricity, and we can see that on our hydro bills—mine shows that the debt retirement is \$5.07 for one month. As a result, our generation transmission capacity suffered with the lack of investment in the 1990s, and our electricity utilities were burdened with the debt that we are still paying off and will be for many more years. We've reduced that stranded debt, but we must continue to pay.

Our supply of electricity is greatly improved. The IESO recently stated, "We are in the best supply situation in a decade as a result of the new generation and transmission added over the past five years." That's the IESO's response. They were sitting on pins and needles in the 1990s and the early 2000's because we didn't have sufficient electricity. Although prices are rising, the result is that an abundance of clean renewable energy has been added to our supply mix, and we have created a new and thriving green economy. Witness the opening of the largest solar facility in the world, 80 megawatts, in Sarnia this past week.

Parallel with our efforts on the renewable front, we are actively pursuing conservation, which the experts tell us is the most economical way to meet our energy needs. The home energy retrofit program has been a tremendous success. It was a program that I took part in myself, and I reduced the energy bills in our home by about 20%. We are supporting Ontario's efforts to conserve more, and with a range of effective programs, we will continue to do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to make sure I acknowledge all the persons who took part: The member for Parkdale–High Park said that it's an assault on seniors. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, whom I have a lot of time for, does listen to seniors, I'm sure, but he recognizes that it's an income issue and we have to do something about it. I think we all do, in fairness, without trying to be belligerent. The member from Burlington: I think her comment was right on spot. She quoted some statistics that there would be a 43% increase in the cost of electricity by 2015—43%. Unless you're getting an increase in pay, then I think she is rightfully concerned as well.

The member from Ottawa–Orléans made some very valid comments—a little bit insensitive, though. He said that we have not been paying the true cost of electricity for too long. It sounded like, "Too bad; suck it up." That's kind of what it sounded like; I don't want to impugn motive. But he said he was at the solar farm, and I do commend the government. They are looking at options. But solar energy: 80 cents a kilowatt hour. That's a 500% increase. Get ready.

These are all good ideas, but listen to the sounds of the economy of Ontario. We aren't using much electricity. The IESO said that. Why? Because 60% of all energy is used by industry. Where are they? On their knees. Stelco is shutting down smelters. Listen to the music. Watch the

economy. We work for the people of Ontario, not for the bureaucracy. Let's listen to the poor and the young, and let's make sure we have the resources to do the right thing.

This is an example of a government that realizes, first, that they have hit the ceiling on taxes; they're trying to give them a break, and we'll likely support that. But slow it down. The next shoe to drop is the eco tax—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. There having been more than six and a half hours of debate on this bill, pursuant to standing order 47(c), the debate is deemed adjourned.

Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, we would not want to preclude the member from Trinity–Spadina from speaking on this, so we would gladly continue debate on this issue.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, you see the kinds of friends I've got? You see that? Some of them love it when I beat them up a little bit—gently, of course, and compassionately, as George Smitherman would say. Because George, in the elections for the mayoralty race, said that he's going to make compassionate cuts. Have you ever heard of that? "We're going to make cuts, but don't you worry. They're going to be compassionate. So as we flagellate you, don't you worry. We're doing it with love and compassion." It cracked me up when I heard that expression. I loved it.

Mr. Mike Colle: What does "flagellating" mean?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Whipping.

I just want to thank the House leader for her kindness, because I've got a few things to say. I, of course, support this bill, because any support that we can give to seniors is good; any relief that we can give them is good.

But why are we doing this? Why are the Liberals doing this? They're doing some nasty stuff here and there. That's why they, first of all, take, and then give a little. Take big and give a little. We oppose the HST for good reasons. We New Democrats believe that this is a regressive tax. It's about what we New Democrats here believe in: We believe it's a regressive tax. The Liberals think it's a great tax. They say that we are modernizing our tax system. What does it mean? It means that they're cutting corporate taxes, because they're so kind. Corporations, as you know, are in such debt that they need money. So the Liberals said, "Not a problem." Jim Bradley, the Minister of Housing is here. Minister—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I remind the member for Trinity–Spadina that we use the names of ridings or positions in the House.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—Jesus, you have so many titles. It's so difficult to remember all the different titles you've gotten—and you deserve them. But that's not the point. The point is that you guys are so generous to those who need no support. You've given five billion bucks to the corporations, because they come begging

every year: "Please give us a little more." The Liberals are so obliging. They say, "Yeah, okay, how much do you need?" We're giving \$2 billion away.

By the way, what's your deficit again?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's \$20 billion.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's \$20 billion, you say?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Something like that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But that's okay; that's not a problem. Because if we give \$5 billion to the corporations, that will be good for us. Why? They're going to create jobs. Oh, really? We have been cutting corporate taxes for the last 15 years. Minister of Correctional Services—or community services.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Correctional Services—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Correctional Services—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: And safety.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And safety as well.

We have been giving corporate taxes for the last 15 years, and where are we with employment? The same place we've ever been: 8% and higher. We give and nothing happens. Unemployment is still as high as ever. But when we give our money away to the corporations, someone has to pay. Seniors have got to pay. So to make them feel good, we give them a little something. Now, would I not support that? Of course I'm going to support it, because we've got to modernize our tax system, and in the process of modernizing our tax system, we are reducing income taxes to the tune of \$1.2 billion. Liberals are proud of that because it's modernizing.

And what is the deficit again?

0940

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's \$20 billion.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's \$20 billion, I see. But not to worry. We can handle \$1.2 billion less. It's not a problem because the deficit really is irrelevant.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's 15% in NDP Nova Scotia.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, mon ami. It's about having a deficit of \$20 billion and you're giving \$2 billion away every year to the corporate sector that some of us are going to have to make up for. You give \$1.2 billion for income taxes that you need. You need that money to reduce your deficit, and yet you call it modernizing our tax system. How brilliant is that? I love Liberal politics. It cracks me up each and every day in this place; it does. But you've got to talk about these things.

The harmonized sales tax is regressive—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry if I'm shouting at you, House leader. It's a regressive tax because when you tax some person who earns \$30,000 plus one cent and you tax somebody who is earning \$300,000, it's an 8% tax. They get whacked equally, except the guy at the top says, "That's not a problem; 8% is not a problem for me." And the person who is earning \$30,000 plus one cent is going to get whacked in a big way.

It's a regressive tax. That's why we progressives, unlike Liberals who have no Trudeaus left federally and—

Mr. Mike Colle: His son is there.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: His son is there. God bless him. I don't know that he sounds to me like a Trudeau-senior type, but God bless. We'll wait and see. There's time to grow. We have no Trudeaus left in this Liberal rump or that Liberal phalanx in front of me. No one left.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, mon ami, former NDP'er. No, this one is a New Democrat. We have been consistently thus for a long time.

It's a bad tax. You're going to rake the money in—because you need it. I understand that you need it. That's why I say to you, keep the corporate taxes. Don't give them the tax giveaway, don't do that, because you need the money to reduce your deficit. Don't do it.

When you implement this tax, it's going to be a whole lot of hurting to a whole lot of people. Andrea Horwath, our leader, quotes somebody from some part of Ontario every day who is hurting because of the hydro rates that are shooting through the roof. Every day there is another story. We want to alleviate that pain.

How do we do that? New Democrats said that we're going to eliminate the HST—take it out—on hydro; do not apply the HST on hydro. The savings would be 500 million bucks for millions of people, not just seniors, who need it, but millions of people who are hurting across Ontario.

We've got vulnerable people—not just seniors—living on the edge; people who live with uncertainty day in and day out; people who are not getting the increases in their salaries; people who are worried about losing their jobs. Think about this: 70% of the wealth is owned by 4% of the population in this country, and 96% share the rest of the wealth. That's 4% who own 70% of the wealth in this country. It tells you that a whole lot of people in between are hurting, and it's not just seniors. They're living on the edge. They're vulnerable.

We have lost middle-class jobs, good unionized jobs. We're losing them by the day. We've lost 400,000 jobs in the last four or five years—good-paying jobs. What we've got are part-time jobs more than ever now; people working at two part-time jobs on a regular basis to make ends meet. Some people are at a full-time job and working at a part-time job. We're not just talking about seniors. This is serious.

When I went to the press conference but a short week and a half ago, and the Premier was there, we thought, oh my God, they're responding quickly to the NDP proposal to take the HST out of hydro bills, because they said, "We're going to put in a proposal that's going to cost \$500 million and it's going to deal with these hydro issues." Lo and behold, we find that this is an announcement of a previous announcement, because this tax credit was something that was announced in the 2010 budget, and of course it's being implemented now. It adds some energy dollars to help those who have been whacked and are getting whacked day in and day out with a little something, and it's worth \$70 million. It will help some seniors, but we believe that it's got to be bigger than that. The Premier made me believe that he was going to spend

\$500 million just on the energy file, only to find out but a couple of days ago that it's only worth \$70 million.

People don't know what to do anymore. Every time there is an increase of any kind, people of low income in my riding come to complain. Whether it is an increase in gas or fuel or energy or property taxes or their assessment, every time there's an increase, they feel it. Why? Because their incomes are fixed. Their pensions, those who have them, are fixed. And many have no pension, no private pension except the CPP and old age security, and it doesn't cover the bills; it doesn't. So every time there's the slightest increase on any one of their bills they are worried, and they're right to be worried.

The government lauds and praises their smart meter plan, and we don't see the savings; New Democrats don't see the savings. Liberals are proud of installing so many of these so-called smart meters at a cost of \$1.5 billion. Imagine what you could do with that money by way of conserving energy, by way of other policies that would indeed conserve energy. But at what cost? It's \$1.5 billion that we end up paying for and that somebody profits from.

The differential between time of use, highest use and low use is so minuscule that there are so few little savings that they're not worthwhile. Why are you doing it? Why do you put that cost on to every taxpayer imaginable, every citizen imaginable, even when they can't afford it? It's just not right.

My friend from Parkdale–High Park was talking about the decision the Ontario Energy Board made but last year when they held a hearing to decide if there needed to be any change in what's called the return-on-equity rate; in other words, how much profit utility companies needed to secure financing. The independent experts said no change was needed, but the American experts brought in by the big utilities said that the profits should be higher and that Ontarians should pay more. Theirs was a victory, and it was a victory of \$240 million in new profits. It's a victory for them and it's a huge loss for the rest of us. It's a huge loss for the millions of people who are going to have to pay the extra cost to give those utilities that do not need the money the \$240 million in profit. I don't get it; I just don't understand it.

We find ourselves in an economy that has crippled so many of us—not an economy that collapsed because of the work that ordinary Canadians do on a daily basis; not because of them, but investors and bankers, particularly in the US and Europe and beyond. They collapsed the economy, and then we governments, we the public, end up having to dole out billions of dollars to prop them up. And then we prop them up and in the meantime, those same financial institutions rake in billions of dollars of profits in the space of one year, and all because of the generosity of governments.

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I love it when private corporations come crawling back to governments saying, "Please, we need your help," and as soon as they get back on their feet, they say, "Please, get off our backs." It's funny how that works.

You've got utilities saying, "We need more money," while you've got Ontario manufacturers and exporters saying, "Not a good idea," you've got the Consumers Council of Canada saying, "Not a good idea," and you've got the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, "Not a good idea." They all wanted interveners. That is, they all wanted to make their case, and they never got a chance to do it.

This bill, for what it is, is a nice little gesture to seniors. It would be frankly unthinkable that we wouldn't be supporting it, because they do need support, but it is an admission, in my frank view, that your policies are not working. In my view, it is your admission that what you're doing is hurting people and what you're trying to do is to help them as you're hurting them. I think the pain is bigger than the relief. It's a little opiate that they need to help them through this chronic pain that they're experiencing from these Liberal policies that are not helping them at all.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: But you'll support it?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I already said. What am I going to do? Am I going to oppose this? Why would I do that? It was important for me to point out, however, how fundamentally I disagree with your policies. The HST was a bad, bad idea, endorsed by Tories at the federal level, where Liberals and Tories, federally and provincially, are tight with their policies.

Mon ami Monsieur Flaherty at the federal level was quite happy—I can say that, because he's at the federal level, right? Yes. He was quite happy to help the Premier out. He said, "Premier, if you need my help, we're just so glad to give it to you." It was beautiful. And the Prime Minister, he said to the Premier, "If you need my help, I'm happy to give it to you." And they together did it and it was beautiful, because the Premier, of course, gets all the blame, and the feds, who cut the GST by two points, losing as a result, of course, the \$10 billion a year that they so desperately need to get rid of their deficit—they too, by the way, are cutting corporate taxes and income taxes at the same time, and the GST to boot. God bless the Tories federally. They crack me up too, on a day-to-day basis.

It was beautiful because the Prime Minister could say, "No, it wasn't me; it was the Premier who did this." So the Premier takes the blame for "modernizing our tax system" and Monsieur Harper, the Prime Minister, gets away with murder. God bless him.

Anyway, I wanted to make a case against the HST. I wanted to state positively and with conviction that we believe as New Democrats that we've got to impose a permanent solution and we've got to give permanent relief to people who are feeling the pain on their energy bills. By eliminating the HST on hydro, we give them predictability and a long-lasting solution to some of their problems that they're having with respect to their bills. That's the kind of thing that we put forth that we believe is practical, concrete, and a long-lasting solution to some of the problems that every Ontarian is experiencing. Thank you, House leader, for the opportunity to speak.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's always a privilege and an honour to rise in the House, especially after the comments by my colleague from Trinity–Spadina. As no other member does, he delivers his message with a very different flair, and it's very enjoyable to listen to him every time.

I think the Premier understands and he sees the needs that are there, especially with our seniors. That is why, at this particular time, the government came up with the energy and tax rebate.

I have to tell you that in my area, in which a majority are seniors and low income—one pension, if you will; as the member said, they don't have a private pension. Among the 740,000 people who will benefit if this bill will pass, many of them live in my area. I can't think of anyone saying that almost \$100 a month is not worth our doing it or giving it to them or approving this bill. I can tell you that almost \$100 a month would go a long way in assisting our seniors, especially those in need, low-income pensioners, with their grocery bills or in any other way.

So I'm saying to the House I'm glad to hear that there is support for the bill. I'm saying let's move it on. Let's give it to them as soon as we can, because they are feeling the pinch, and when times get tough, the seniors are the first ones to feel the pinch.

I hope that we can move it along and get some relief to our seniors as quickly as possible.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I guess the member from Trinity–Spadina is always enthusiastic and entertaining, and often informative, and I commend him.

Now, he did say rather humorously that the alliance, if you will—his theatrics are an A-plus, actually—is a true alliance between Stephen Harper and Premier McGuinty. He does this quite often. What he doesn't realize is the proposal for this relationship is actually from the Premier himself; he initiated it.

What's missing here—that's a good analogy, though, and I commend him; I did listen. The thing is, Gordon Campbell in BC didn't put the tax on gas. He had other choices, a different schedule.

The fact is, though, really, what's happening here is Premier McGuinty went for the whole thing, everything: income tax, gym memberships, hockey registration. He got all the money he could—not any exemptions.

I think that, quite frankly, when I look at it, the federal government initiated an activity tax credit. Premier McGuinty copied it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: They're the ones who promoted the HST.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, actually, it was promoted by the Liberals federally. They're the same problem. They're addicted to your revenue.

People of Ontario, I put you on warning. Liberal governments—Quebec: Look at them. BC: Look at them; they're going to recall. And Ontario's in the same boat.

Pay attention. They have taken so much of your money now that they're warning you that they want all your money. They want you to do this, that and the other. No sushi. Eat apples. Brush your teeth. They're going to tell you when to wash your car and when to drive your car.

In fact, stay tuned: These guys are all about social engineering. That's what they're about—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Durham, please take your seat. The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Of course, it's always a delight to follow my friend from Trinity–Spadina. He's really the Lionel Barrymore of this place, or should I say the Robert De Niro of this place, so it's always a pleasure.

Let's name this bill for what it is, truly. Of course we're going to support it. It's like giving a baby aspirin to somebody who's having a massive coronary. It's not going to hurt; it might help a little, but the patient's still going to die.

That's what's happening in our ridings. We are hearing from people who are simply being swallowed up by this little cut, that little hurt, that dent. That's what's happening. This is not going to help. This is not going to even offset the bite from the HST, never mind anything else that has been assaulting them in the last seven years of Liberal rule in this province.

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What we in the New Democratic Party have suggested is something that actually could work, something that actually could really ameliorate the bite of the HST, and that is to take it off hydro. It's a very simple thing. It's over \$500 million instead of \$70 million. As my friend said, the \$70 million doesn't even come close, not even a third close, to helping pay for the increase in profits to the utilities. Come on. Why are we giving them more profits at a time when seniors can't pay their heating bills and hydro bills? Why is this?

This makes no sense. This is Liberal Ontario, where the big utilities and big corporations get what they ask for and the seniors, low-income people and people living on social assistance can't eat and pay the rent. This is the Liberal Ontario where the poor are poorer than even under Harris. That's sad, that's reality and that's today.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have to tell you, I nearly fell off my chair laughing when I heard a certain member in the official opposition make reference to the HST not being on fuel prices in British Columbia—especially after that particular individual has teased me about a federal report I wrote on carbon taxation, which recommended that provinces don't do carbon taxes. But no one in the opposition has read that. Does he not understand that there is a carbon tax in BC? I don't know what happened to Tory research, but they've been asleep at the switch. It's in the national newspaper. I guess the Conservatives are proposing a carbon tax now, because that, apparently, isn't taxation—the Tory carbon tax.

Then I love my friends in the New Democratic Party, who, in power, saw rents go up 27%. Have a little humility, please—just a little humility, not a lot.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You blew rent controls out of the water.

Last night, I was in the lowest-income part of my constituency at one of our accountability community planning meetings. Do you know what people were talking about? They were thrilled about this. They were thrilled that we've built more affordable housing in our constituency than in the last 50 years. They were thrilled with the support this government has given Dixon Hall. They were thrilled with the seniors' tax credit. They were thrilled with the personal income tax cuts they got. They were very, very pleased with the transitional funding.

Small business people, of which there are several who own small retail shops, get the HST, and that was the only person who raised it in a room of about 100 low-income people. I had two small shop owners. The only time the HST—he stood up and told everybody, including—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister, thank you.

The member for Trinity–Spadina, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All I can say is, I like the Minister of Innovation—that's it—but I hate the HST. I think the HST is bad policy. It really is. I think it's one of the worst things that we could do, and I don't think you could make a very bad tax idea progressive. It doesn't matter how you do it. It doesn't matter how Liberals present it. It doesn't matter how Tories, nationally, present it. It's a bad idea.

Liberals are moving to a user-fee system. They're going to tax services. That's how they're going to get the money. What it means is that people who are of modest incomes are going to get whacked. Those of us who have a higher income, and I include us, the rump included—we're well paid. We are well paid.

Mr. Mike Colle: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But we're well paid. And I think those of us who earn good dollars should pay a little more. That's what I think. I believe the HST is not going to hurt me as much as someone earning \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 a year. I'm going to be better off. And those who have higher incomes than I—a multitude of people in our provincial government earn \$500,000, \$700,000, \$1 million—are going to do even better. Those people don't even wink at the prospect of an HST, but a whole lot of people on low income, including seniors who get some tax relief, are going to be hurting and they're going to be hurting in perpetuity as a result of this HST. That's why I oppose it.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: Seniors have worked for many years building this province and building funds or pensions to support themselves in their senior years. I'm

pleased to stand here today to support Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments.

We made budget commitments to help Ontarians manage their home energy costs and property taxes, and an increase of another \$525 million will bring the total assistance to \$1.3 billion. With this bill we are increasing the earning threshold for eligibility, and this will mean that more seniors will qualify—a total of 740,000 in the province of Ontario. Ontarians who own or rent a home could receive up to \$900, and seniors could be eligible for \$1,025.

The income thresholds for seniors would be increased. The increases in Ontario energy and property tax credits under Bill 109 are in addition to several other actions taken by our government.

Seniors and most Ontarians, through the Ontario tax plan for jobs and growth, will benefit from parts of \$11.8-billion tax relief over three years. Part of that is a reduction in personal income tax of about 1% on the first \$37,000 in earnings, or about \$370 for the maximum reduction. These reductions started in January 2010 and were part of the major tax reform.

Through HST transition payments, single people received \$300 and couples and families received \$1,000. That's one third paid out. There will be further \$333 cheques in December and again in June 2011.

During the debate on this bill, the other parties criticized the energy mix, with the official opposition referring to all energy sources, except coal, as experiments. They also referred to the investments in transmission lines as experimental investments.

We know where they left us. They left the transmission and generating parts of electrical energy in Ontario in very poor condition. There was not enough supply to power our homes and businesses, which meant a risk of outages, brownouts and blackouts. On top of that, coal plants running on all cylinders were polluting our air and damaging our health, and we know what that does to asthma cases, for instance.

In a few short years, we have moved from a path of dirty coal generation to a future of clean energy. At the same time, we are creating jobs. Just to look at the jobs that we are creating—there was a list of them. Solar companies investing in Ontario: Everbrite, 1,200 jobs in Kingston; Solar Semiconductor, 200 jobs in Oakville; Canadian Solar, 500 high-tech jobs in Guelph; Oneworld Energy, 1,000 jobs in Welland; Fronius, 100 jobs in Mississauga; and Sustainable Energy Technologies, 300 jobs in Toronto. So we can see that the jobs that are predicted with the Green Energy Act are certainly occurring, and they are good jobs. They are high-tech jobs; they are jobs of the future in Ontario.

In a few short years, we have the IESO saying that for the first time, we have a secure energy system in Ontario.

We are helping Ontarians manage their electricity costs through tools to conserve and manage their bills by providing extra help to those who need it most.

I just wanted to look at my own hydro bill. This is the first bill that I've got with the time-of-use meters. Part of what we're trying to do in Ontario, of course, is to change the culture and get a culture of conservation. Without knowing it, I received my first bill—Hydro One may have advised me that it was coming on, but I just received it. Of course it was in July, which was so warm and the air conditioner was on much too much.

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On-peak, I had 25% of my kilowatt hours; mid-peak, 40%; off-peak, 35%. Well, we're going to work on that in our own home to see if we can reduce those percentages from the on-peak and the mid-peak. Those dollars may not show up on our bills for several years, but if we can move a good deal off of the on-peak time, then we're not going to have to build that new generation as early; we'll be putting off having to make those major investments in new energy. I think that's where we'll see a lot of the improvements.

The cultural change alone—you'll get that bill, you'll look at it and you'll certainly be more involved in your energy. We agree that the rising cost of energy in Ontario is a burden. That's why Bill 109 has been put forward. It is going to give relief to those seniors and those Ontarians who need it.

Creating a strong, reliable and clean energy system comes at a cost. We know that. Our energy costs more than Manitoba, Quebec and British Columbia, but they have abundant hydro supplies. In Ontario, our north is very flat. We heard from the Minister of Energy four or five years ago that there is not much generation in our north compared to Manitoba or Quebec.

We are the only jurisdiction in North America, and maybe in the world, moving to eliminate coal. Four plants closed this month and reductions of coal by 70% are the results from 2003. We're only using 30% of the coal generation now that we were in 2003. We are leading with renewables in North America. That's important.

The hydro costs that we've had are major costs in making our transmission lines more secure and capable of the changes that will be coming to the system. We've brought on 8,000 megawatts of new supply in hydro. It was the Niagara tunnel and the Lower Mattagami.

You will note on your hydro bill that you're paying each month—and I mentioned that in my two-minuter—for stranded debt, which is significant, which goes back to governments previous to ours. We've been paying it down since we started, and I believe it's down to around \$20 billion. We cannot afford to put those hydro costs on to our children any more, so we must pay the full cost of energy in the future.

We're giving Ontarians the tools to conserve energy. Some 350,000 Ontario consumers have participated in the home energy savings program. I did that myself and, as I said, I reduced the energy use in my own home by 25%. That's the only program I know of that the federal government had that was moving in the right direction on greenhouse gas reductions, and they suspended their part of the program on March 31, 2010.

It was a great program. It had the ability to reduce greenhouse gas production across Canada equivalent to what Ontario is doing with getting out of coal: 30 million tonnes of greenhouse gas reductions on an annual basis. We should be promoting that. We should be helping Ontarians make their homes better. We should certainly have the basic job with our homes of at least making them air-tight. That doesn't cost very much, but that is the biggest bang for the buck when you try to reduce energy in your own home. That is a simple thing to do and we should be encouraging it. The federal government should have stayed with us in that program. We've given Ontarians those tools.

The introduction of smart meters will permit users to transfer some of their usage to off-peak hours, when rates are 50% lower than on-peak. Innovation in home design will result from that, and appliance design and cultural change. We will reduce the peak energy use, and we will reduce the need to build new energy sources.

I just completed reading *Storms of My Grandchildren*, written by James Hansen. He's a scientist for NASA who has advised presidents on climate change over many years and has worked as a scientist on climate change for most of his life. I urge you to read his book. He visited the Legislature this September; some of you may have met him.

He is sure that coal generation must stop if we're to keep from reaching, in the lifetime of his granddaughters—and my grandsons and your grandsons—a very turbulent world. The parts per million of CO₂ in our atmosphere is now at 390. We're heading for 450 in 20 or 30 years. He is certain—and he's a scientist; he has been working with earth science all his life, and working for NASA, which is not just any organization. He has been recommending to presidents, and they haven't had the political will to make the changes. But he is certain that 450 parts per million will be catastrophic. That's 20 to 30 years from now.

Closing coal will not be easy, but we are almost there. We'll be the first government to close out coal. That is a great achievement for Ontario. This bill—

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have the privilege of introducing the parents of Alex Schmidt, our page. The parents are Mike and Merry Schmidt, the sister is Andrea Schmidt and the grandmother is Elsie Brunton.

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's my pleasure to introduce the grandmother of page Brigid Goulem, a neighbour of mine and former Toronto city councillor, Anne Johnston, who is in the gallery right above us here.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to introduce guests Michael Goldberg and Grant Goldberg, father and brother of Emily. Grant, in fact, was a former page himself.

Mr. Dave Levac: My friend and colleague from Cambridge introduced page Alex's family, but I wanted to point out that Elsie Brunton is a member of the riding of Brant and lives in the town of Paris, Ontario. I wanted to welcome her especially—and I don't know who she votes for.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to introduce Michael St. Amand and Marilyn Lee, the parents of page Chloé St. Amand, from the great riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would like to introduce the members of the Ontario Lung Association, including the president of the Ontario Lung Association, Mr. George Habib, who is going to be joining us in a minute—a large contingency of people. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park and invite people to attend their reception this evening.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My apologies. I'm not looking for extra face time, but family friend Elizabeth Maclean has also joined us in the members' gallery. Welcome, Elizabeth.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce Gloria Stock from the Ontario Lung Association and Dilshad Moosa, manager, provider of education programs and my constituent from Oak Ridges–Markham, in the public gallery.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise to ask for unanimous consent at this point that all members be permitted to wear bracelets and ribbons in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to introduce a former colleague of mine, a Toronto metropolitan councillor and a great advocate for people with disabilities, Anne Johnston from Pontypool, Ontario.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm really pleased to welcome a number of delegation heads who are attending the 29th congress of the Latin American Studies Association in Toronto. They're making their way up through the chamber now. Of special note is the 15-member University of Havana delegation, accompanied by the consul general of Cuba, Mr. Jorge Soberón. All members are invited to meet this LASA delegation at 12 noon in room 163. Welcome, and I say to them, buenos días y bienvenido.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome Doug Cooper, who's visiting from Ottawa as part of the Ontario Lung Association delegation. Welcome to Queen's Park, Doug.

USE OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last evening, in the legislative dining room, we had a celebration for the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Republic of China and Canada. Members of the opposition were only invited to this event at the very last moment by email—yesterday, I be-

lieve. When we got to the event and were handed a brochure, this event was being sponsored by the Premier of Ontario and the consul general for the Republic of China. This event was not being sponsored by the Legislative Assembly.

The emcee, or the person carrying the event, was the Minister of Tourism, Mr. Chan. Mr. Chan gave a very long speech introducing the Premier, which I would characterize as a political introduction that one might hear at a fundraising event for a party.

There was no opportunity for me, as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party, to bring greetings on behalf of my caucus to those present and congratulate the Chinese Canadians who have worked so hard in our province.

As well, when leaving the event, we were given a small gift. That gift did not come from the consul general; it came from the Premier, Dalton McGuinty.

I think it's most poignant in this case that the event include not only government members and participation by government members but participation by the opposition, as we are a democracy in Ontario, a democracy in Canada, whereas the guest organization, as you know, notwithstanding our diplomatic relations with them, is a Communist country, is not a democracy, and we should emphasize that the opposition is a very important part of this Legislature and our democratic structure.

I believe that the government has misused the legislative precinct for their own political purposes. I would ask you to seek compensation from the governing party for any costs associated with the event yesterday.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I rise on the same point of privilege. This was an event that was co-sponsored by the Premier's office and the consul general, but members from all parties were invited. I saw the leader of the third party there. I believe the member from James Bay was there. I noticed that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills was there and was introduced by the deputy consul general. There were representatives from all parties there. They were introduced when they were noted to be there. We had members of the government side there as well, some of whom were introduced and some of whom weren't, because it was a kind of an open invitation.

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I would take exception to the fact that the gift was presented by the Premier's office. It was a joint gift by the Premier's office and the consul general. If you looked at the gift, I suggest to the member for Mississippi Mills—the mat that was presented included pictures of former leaders of the federal government, including Brian Mulroney and the present Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, as well as former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and our Premier. So there were a number of leaders acknowledged. The presentation was made by both hosts. All members all the Legislature were invited, to the best of my knowledge. I think it was fully appropriate, and no privileges were violated. You can judge on the quality of the speeches that were given.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just to point out that that was not a point of order or a point of privilege, but I did want to give the member the opportunity to speak. I appreciate the comments made by the government House leader as well.

It's important to note that there is no procedural application that relates to this, but I will say that it does present me with an opportunity—because we've had some situations in the past that have come to my attention—to review the policies of the use of the legislative precinct. I will do so and report back to the honourable members.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PREMIER'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, one year from today, Ontario families will face a very clear choice between Premier McGuinty, who says he has a more intelligent understanding of Ontario families than they do—but the Ontario PC caucus believes that the best advice comes from the Ontario families who work hard and play by the rules but are last on the list of Dalton McGuinty's priorities—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: And every day, either I or members of the PC caucus are travelling across this province, speaking directly to those families who pay the bills but your priorities have forgotten about. Today we launched haveyoursayontario.ca to help move Ontario forward. Premier, why aren't you listening to families anymore? What's with all the elite advisers—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the free advertising that my colleague opposite is doing. I know he's spending a lot of time talking about the election, but I just don't think that many families are talking about the election today in their homes. I think what they're focused on are their immediate concerns. That includes the quality of their schools; it includes the quality of their health care; and it includes any concerns they might have about the economy insofar as it affects them in their homes.

One of the things that we'll talk about more and more as we move forward is where my honourable colleague has stood in the past with respect to those fundamental priorities that families have always shared, and that is schools for their kids, health care for everybody in the family and the strength of the economy that supports the jobs that mothers and fathers have to be able to count on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The PC caucus invites Ontario families to visit our website, haveyoursayontario.ca, to talk about how we can together move our province forward.

Sadly, Premier McGuinty has surrounded himself with elite advisers and has come up with some bizarre priorities that he never asked families about: his HST sales tax grab that has taken money out of the wallets of hard-working families; a sex ed curriculum that would start sex classes with six-year-olds when they should be learning their ABCs and tying their shoes; and then one of his most bizarre priorities: putting cellphones in classrooms across the province of Ontario.

Premier, you've changed. You've lost touch, and you haven't even spoken to one family about your eco tax grab that you're going to sneak back in next week. Premier, when exactly did—

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I choose to leave the gimmickry and the dog whistles and the buzzwords—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier, I'd just ask you to withdraw that last comment, please. I have ruled that out of order in the past.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I withdraw that, Speaker.

I refuse to engage in that kind of gimmickry and shal-low, wedge politics. I think our families deserve more than that.

In our schools, for example, we've been focused on smaller classes, higher test scores and higher graduation rates. My colleagues opposite said no to our plan, which we put into place, to hire over 11,400 new teachers. They said no to 3,700 new elementary art, music and phys ed teachers. They said no to the 400 new schools we are building in the province of Ontario. They said no to full-day kindergarten, which is benefiting our four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario. They said no to 20 minutes of physical activity in our elementary schools.

When it comes to Ontario education and Ontario students, families know whose side we're on.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your obsession with cellphones in the classroom and banning chocolate milk are a set of priorities that is dramatically out of touch with those of the hard-working families who pay the bills. You have changed; you have lost touch; and you've refused, in fact cancelled, public hearings on the Far North Act; you refused to have public hearings outside of Toronto on your greedy HST tax grab. You still, to this day, refuse to call a public inquiry into eHealth.

We believe that the best advice comes from the hard-working families who pay the bills, who have fallen to last on the list of Premier McGuinty's priorities. Clearly, you've changed, and now Ontario families are looking for change.

After all your tax hikes, your hydro rate increases, Premier, when will you get it? When will you give Ontario families the break they deserve?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my honourable colleague is confusing sloganeering with leadership, and I just see things differently.

Let's just talk a little bit about another very important concern close to the heart of families: health care. The opposition said no to 19 new MRI machines and doubling the number of MRI hours of operation. We've hired 2,300 more doctors—they said no to that. We've hired over 10,000 new nurses—they said no to that. We've increased hospital funding by 50%—they said no to that. We have 100 new hospital infrastructure projects under way, including 18 new hospitals—they said no to that. We opened Canada's first nurse practitioner-led clinics—they said no to that. We're putting in place 200 family health teams—they say no to that. We stand on the side of families when it comes to standing up—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members of the opposition, I have stopped the clock, but if you are going to persist, I will start it again. New question.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, today also marks the one-year anniversary of the Auditor General's scathing report on your \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle. That was the time when you forced the member for Don Valley East to carry George Smitherman's and your dirty laundry, that saw a billion health-care dollars that could have gone to front-line care, that could have gone to long-term-care homes, that could have helped people get quicker attention from a doctor, and it went into the pockets of your Liberal-friendly consultants. Now, a year later, Premier, you still refuse to call a public inquiry; you still refuse to figure out where those dollars go and put them back into front-line health care where they belong.

Premier, why won't you call a public inquiry? What Liberal friends are you trying to protect?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague and his party stand against electronic health records for Ontarians, but we think it is a very important initiative.

Let me tell you about some of the good news. In 2006, 770,000 Ontarians had electronic medical records. Today, nearly five million Ontarians have electronic medical records. By 2011, seven million Ontarians will be covered. By 2012 we're talking about 10 million Ontarians having electronic medical records. The fact of the matter is, we continue to make progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The first tragedy, Premier, is that you blew \$1 billion in your eHealth boondoggle. The second tragedy is that you have learned absolutely nothing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sorry to interrupt. Stop the clock, please. There are a number of ministers—

Minister of Transportation, Minister of Health, Minister of Finance, Minister of Energy. I would ask that you please come to order.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You learned absolutely nothing from one of the biggest scandals in the history of our province. And what have we seen from there, Premier? Dollars that should have gone into cancer care that went into the pockets of Liberal-friendly consultants, and you said, "I'm sorry," and you slapped your own wrist. We saw three scandals at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., where you said you're sorry and slapped your wrist. And now we're seeing Liberal-friendly lobbyists who are getting money meant for hospitals and, again, you're saying you're sorry and you slap your wrist.

Premier, people are tired of your phony apologies. They want to see change in our province and they want to see you support the PC motion on health care accountability tonight. Will you do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I haven't seen the motion, but I ask on behalf of Ontarians whether it makes reference to the fact that the opposition would like to cut \$3 billion out of our health care system. I think they're entitled to know that.

The electronic health records—let me tell you why that's so important. This is all about making sure that your health care provider, whether it's your family doctor, your emergency department doctor, your home care nurse or your pharmacist, has access to the right information at the right time so that we can give you the best possible care. More than that, the electronic medical record is also about making sure that every health care provider has access to the best expertise, regardless of where you are being cared for. That's why in government we are so committed to moving forward and to ensuring that this is a genuine success for all Ontarians. It's about improving the quality of their care.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: While the Ontario PCs launched haveyoursayontario.ca to hear directly from Ontario families, we have a Premier who boasts that he has a more intelligent understanding of the issues than Ontario families do. You'd think, though, that this Premier, who boasts about his intelligent understanding, would have learned lessons from eHealth, but instead we see now a further \$300 million-plus poured into the program with no results for families. We've seen \$250 million taken from front-line care for your regional health bureaucracies, the LHINs, that don't do one minute of patient care, that don't do a single surgery or a single MRI. Now the Premier says he wants to address retirement homes, but that very same day, Liberal members in the committee voted down the idea of our PC health critic to explore that issue, to fix that problem. Your members voted it down. Premier—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague is working hard to try to undermine confidence

in Ontario health care and I understand he wants to lay a foundation for some very significant cuts that he wants to put—

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague wants to undermine confidence in public health care. I can understand that's part of their strategy. They want to do away with electronic health records, which we think are fundamental to improving the quality of health care.

But again, I think it's important to look back on their record. They closed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm quite prepared to allow the Premier to continue. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I mean, it's difficult for them to listen to this, but they're going to have to listen to this and, I can assure you, much more as we move forward.

They closed 28 hospitals on their watch, they shut down 7,100 hospital beds, they fired 6,200 nurses and they remain committed to taking \$3 billion out of the Ontario health care system.

I say shame on them. I say to Ontario families: Beware of this party. Beware of this leader. You should understand who's on your side when it comes to protecting public health care in Ontario.

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier and his ministers have stated that public money shouldn't be spent on insider lobbyists. My question is, should municipalities heed that advice as well?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the Minister of Health spoke to this yesterday. We believe that is a matter of principle. In this, we part company with the former NDP and Conservative governments. It was a standard that they had in place that they found acceptable; we find it unacceptable. We intend to change the law in the province of Ontario. We're going to ensure that people who find—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will be introducing provisions to make it perfectly clear that Ontario tax dollars are not to be used by the broader public sector and agencies to lobby their government in order to secure still more funding or one benefit or another. We think that's in keeping with the values and standards shared by families and taxpayers generally, and that's why we'll be moving on that front.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Every day, the gap between what this Premier says and what his government actually does widens.

The city of Brampton is paying the former vice-president of the Ontario Liberal Party \$129,000 to lobby this government. Durham region has a contract with another former Liberal staffer for \$23,000. Why do municipalities think that in order to be heard by this government, they need to find a well-connected lobbyist and hand them a lucrative contract?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we look forward to introducing these new measures.

We're always interested in any advice offered by the opposition parties, but I must say, they have not been there in terms of supporting accountability and transparency in the past. When we expanded the sunshine list to include OPG and Hydro One, the opposition opposed that. When we asked the Auditor General to begin value-for-money audits of the broader public sector—hospitals, universities and schools—the opposition opposed that. When we asked the Integrity Commissioner to review the expenses of our 22 largest agencies, the opposition opposed that. When we made publicly posting expenses mandatory for ministers, political staff and senior managers in the 22 largest agencies, again the opposition opposed that. Every time we move forward with a new accountability measure and a transparency measure, they oppose it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families want a government that listens, not one that charges access fees. The town of Tecumseh is paying former Liberal staffers Andrew Steele and Katie Telford \$25,000 for their insider connections. The city of Niagara Falls paid StrategyCorp \$102,000 last year.

Why are municipalities forced to turn to the Premier's friends to get their issues on the agenda?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I appreciate my colleague's advice in this regard, but I want to come back to the record of the opposition.

As I say, every single time we have moved forward with a new measure to heighten accountability and transparency, they have stood in the way of those measures.

More recently, we asked both parties if they might post their leaders' offices' expenses. We asked them that in February, and they have yet to comply. When we go home, so to speak, right into their offices and ask them to comply with the advice that they put forward, they refuse to do that.

1100

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. The province provides billions of dollars to municipalities. Families themselves contribute billions more through their property taxes. They're paying for transit; they're paying for road maintenance and for

garbage collection, but the money still keeps finding its way into the pockets of well-connected insider lobbyists. For seven years, this Premier has allowed former staffers and partisans to collect this public subsidy. Why should people believe him when he says he plans to stop it now?

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I am very, very proud of this government's record with regard to our relationship with municipalities. Never in the history of this government of the province of Ontario have we had a better working relationship than with the municipalities. We understand that they are a very important, integral part to ensuring that the lives of Ontarians are made better. We work with them. We don't fight with them; we don't download; we don't diminish the services, as when you were in government. We will continue to ensure that that partnership is strong. We will continue to ensure that we respect municipalities and that we deal with municipalities in a responsible way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The town of Oakville spent \$9,000 on a lobbyist, a counsel of public affairs. The Premier might be familiar with that particular lobbyist: Charles Beer, a former Liberal cabinet minister. The town says, "We're just trying to get support for a new hospital." I don't blame them. Why do municipalities have to hire the Premier's friends in order to get ahead?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: In order to ensure that the member understands the type of working relationship we have with municipalities, let me quote a little bit about the relationship and how it has benefited the city of Hamilton: \$16.77 million for 186 rental units; \$350,000 for 20 homeownership units. We are talking about affordable housing. The social housing renovation and retrofit program: in 2009-10, \$18.6 million; in 2010-11, \$14.2 million. The rent bank program that we on this side think is important: \$226,000 in 2009, for a total of \$1.2 million. We prevented 1,152 evictions.

The reality is, when it comes to caring for the people of Ontario in any class, this is a government that—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families pay their taxes. They expect their hard-earned dollars to fix potholes and build better public transit, not make life easier for Liberal MPPs and staffers. Municipalities shouldn't have to be redirecting their money into the pockets of well-connected lobbyists, well-connected Liberal insiders. Will the Premier support a ban on public sector lobbyists that includes municipalities?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: As I deal with the municipal councils, as I deal with the municipalities, more and more am I hearing the fact that they are very, very excited about the continuing partnership. You know what they say, though? They really tell me that "NDP" stands for "No Developed Plan": no developed plan for long-term affordable housing; no developed plan for social housing; no developed plan for affordable housing; no developed

plan for housing in general; no developed plan for official plans; no developed plans for provincial policy statements; no developed plans for short-term rent support; no developed plan for retirement homes.

The reality is, this government has a plan. We will continue that relationship with municipalities because it is important. We know that the people of Ontario define the NDP as "No Developed Plan."

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. One year from today, Ontario families can choose to put an end to the McGuinty Liberals' pattern of not doing anything about eHealth-style rot until they get caught. Ontario PCs won't wait until next year to put forward ideas for change, which is why I put forward my motion and which is why we asked the Premier to explain the record increase in what families paid for eHealth last year. The health minister's response to our question about the hundreds of millions more they spent was a boast about reducing consultant use.

So my question is, how did you manage to break the member for Don Valley East's record for eHealth spending by \$100 million when you have fewer consultants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm actually very happy to have the opportunity to talk about eHealth. We haven't been talking about it a lot lately, but there's a lot to talk about.

We are moving forward aggressively to electronic health records in this province. The future of our health care system depends on us being successful in moving from the old paper-based system to the electronic system of the future.

I am very distressed and surprised, frankly, to hear the opposition party talking about putting the brakes on eHealth. We need to do exactly the opposite. Our patients are counting on us. If you talk to people, they want electronic health records. And do you know who wants it the most? Seniors want it the most because they have more interaction with the health care system. They're used to electronic banking. They're used to other electronic services. They want electronic health records.

We're moving forward. We're providing—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact of the matter is that electronic health records are absolutely essential to our health care system in future years, but this government has totally dropped the ball and we're no closer to these records than we were five years ago.

Back to the question: You don't need to understand the Premier's "more intelligent understanding" to figure out that runaway budget increases while reducing consultants has more to do with consultants being added to eHealth's payroll. Former Courtyard consultant Ian Fish is now added to the permanent staff, and there are sure to be others.

Ontario families are looking for a change from the McGuinty government, which didn't give a straight answer to the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle a year ago and still aren't.

My question: How many other former consultants are Ontario families paying for, but now as eHealth employees?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am astounded at the lack of foundation for the question. We are making tremendous progress. You heard the Premier earlier, if you were listening, talk about how many more people now have access to electronic health records. That actually costs money, and that's what we're doing.

I do want to tell you about one story that I'm particularly proud of, and I'm sure the member from Timmins—James Bay is interested in this as well. Just last week, the communities along the James Bay coast got hooked up to the Ontario Telemedicine Network. That means that people in Attawapiskat and people in the James Bay communities now have access to excellent health care without leaving their home communities.

We've greatly expanded the Ontario Telemedicine Network, and we are continuing to move forward with electronic—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

After seven years of the McGuinty Liberals, why are our seniors waiting more than 618 days for a long-term-care bed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. The member opposite raises an important question, and that is, how do we move forward in providing the best possible care for our frail and elderly seniors in this community?

We are expanding capacity when it comes to long-term care. We are improving the quality of care. We are improving staffing levels in our long-term care. We are also focusing very heavily on providing care outside of long-term care, in the community, at home, where people want to stay.

Our aging-at-home strategy—over a billion dollars—across this province is actually keeping people out of long-term care and, in some wonderful cases, bringing people from long-term care back into their own homes.

We do need to expand capacity. We are—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Why do I feel like saying, "How is it working so far?" Minister, 618 days is a long wait away.

Under McGuinty's watch, the wait time for Ontario nursing homes jumped by 129%. Seniors with complex health care needs are forced into retirement homes. What do we see in retirement homes? We see seniors left in

urine- and feces-filled briefs for hours at a time. We see people with dementia wiping themselves with their hands or with a flimsy communal towel. This is gross; this is disgusting; this is disgraceful and appalling. The Premier should be ashamed. Why has he allowed this crisis to fester for the last seven years under his watch?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For the first time ever, we are regulating retirement homes in this province. I think all of us would agree that it is time to do that. It is time to turn our attention to the quality of care in retirement homes.

We will continue to invest in long-term care. We are spending more than \$1 billion more now in long-term care than when we took office in 2003. We have built more than 8,000 new long-term-care beds, and more are coming. We are working very hard to address this issue. We are seeing the results. We know there is more to do and we have a plan to do that.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. For years we've been seeing a shift in the world economy. In northwestern Ontario, where resource-based industries have for a very long time underpinned our economy, a variety of factors have impacted the viability of some of these industries. Global competition, a huge increase in the value of the Canadian dollar, a collapse in demand in the American market as a result of the global recession and the credit crisis have all created difficult economic environments across North America.

In spite of this, there continue to be good-news stories coming out of northwestern Ontario. Can the minister highlight a very recent good-news story in the forestry sector?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan for the question. I'm certainly very pleased to share a good-news story about the forestry sector.

This past Monday, I was in Terrace Bay to help celebrate the reopening of the Terrace Bay Pulp mill—a great piece of news—bringing 340 people back to work. I'm very pleased that our government was able to provide a conditional loan, which allowed the company to access further funding assistance and also to have some creditor protection. As I say, 340 are people back to work and a couple hundred more in the woodland section. This means a great deal to people in Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Marathon, Nipigon and Red Rock.

This pulp mill is an extremely important asset, one that indeed means a great deal to the Terrace Bay taxpayers. It provides about 40% of the tax base to the community of Terrace Bay.

Certainly, you can tell that Mayor King couldn't have been happier about this. He said that we've probably gone through the hardest time we've ever seen in Terrace Bay. It's nice to see that burden lifted off—

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Minister, and I do know how grateful Mayor Mike King was. I congratulate you on your efforts as well. I do remember very clearly, when the Premier was at NOMA last week, when that gentleman came over and thanked the Premier as well. He had three sons—one man, three sons hired back in that mill, and we know how grateful he was.

We also know that there are a significant number of supports that have been made available to forestry companies over the last number of years. More importantly, in our 2010 budget, we added more support on top of the initiatives in programs that already exist. While we can't fix the fact that there is a diminished demand for two-by-fours because of the collapse of the US housing market, there are measures that we have taken and continue to take to support those companies still operating and to create a climate to encourage more to reopen. Can the minister please highlight some of these programs for the House?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: There is indeed more good news. I must say, to drive up to the gate at Terrace Bay Pulp and see the smoke coming out of the stack—it was a wonderful thing to see the smiles on the faces of the 340 workers.

We've also set the stage for a transformation in the forestry sector as it moves into a new phase. Since 2005, our government has made available over \$1 billion through various programs to assist the forestry sector: a loan guarantee fund; we uploaded the road maintenance, which had been downloaded by a previous government; and the forest sector prosperity fund as well. But another example of how this sector is transforming: In 2009, our government, through the budget, committed \$25 million to creating the Centre for Research and Innovation in the Bioeconomy in Thunder Bay, a tremendous announcement. This plan will coordinate the government, the companies and the secondary industries as we transform the economy.

The fact is, the forest industry is in the midst of a transformation, one that we strongly support, and we're excited about the good news ahead.

HEALTH CARE SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. One year from today, Ontario families will have a choice of a Premier McGuinty who says he has a more intelligent understanding than they do. Ontario PCs haven't been waiting for next year to come. We've already put forward groundbreaking accountability legislation that, in light of hospital lobbying contracts, is proving to be quite a topic on this, the anniversary of the eHealth scandal. We've also put forward a motion to strike a legislative committee to fix the problems at retirement homes.

I ask the Premier, why are the McGuinty Liberals against the changes that Ontario families want today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are going to continue to improve transparency and accountability in this province. We are the party that has opened up to freedom of information. We've expanded the powers of the Auditor General. We are committed to publicly posting information on health care, on wait times and on a number of different initiatives.

It's time to move forward. I look forward to the debate this afternoon on the opposition day motion, but let me assure you, when it comes to transparency and accountability, we will take no lessons from the party opposite. It was the party that stood in our way every single step we have taken toward transparency.

I'm proud of our record. We're going to do more, and I look forward to introducing legislation in the near future that will provide expression to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier McGuinty is out of touch with the priorities of Ontario families. While the Premier was busy contemplating how many millilitres of chocolate milk our sons and daughters should be allowed to consume, Ontario families paid another \$343 million for eHealth, the Ombudsman exposed secret, illegal LHIN meetings, and we uncovered LHINs, Cancer Care Ontario and now hospitals handing out eHealth-style sweetheart deals. I suppose the only silver lining in the Premier's approach is that when the McGuinty milk police catch our sons and daughters buying that extra carton of milk, at least they'll have cellphones in the classrooms to call their buddies to bail them out.

Premier, do Ontario families who want change have to wait another year for that change?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The entertainment level is rising in this place, and I guess we can expect that for the next—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: The comedian's up now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I hope that wasn't a reference to the Speaker.

The member from Simcoe North, the member from Lanark, the member from Oxford and the member from Leeds–Grenville will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to make it very clear that we are of the position that taxpayer dollars ought not to be spent to lobby government for more taxpayer dollars. This is something we can all agree on. As I said, we will be introducing legislation to make sure that people understand that that is an inappropriate use of taxpayer dollars.

We've focused a lot of our attention on reducing the use of consultants in this province. In fact, we've cut in half the number of consultants working in this province.

But I do have a question for the opposition: When will you post your expenses? We've asked you for months and months now to post your leader's office expenses. If you're such a believer in—

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

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, these not-so-smart meters have come to northern Ontario, and people listened intently a couple of weeks ago when you suggested that how we deal with this is to do our washing on weekends. We have a question in northern Ontario. We'd like to know: When are we supposed to heat our homes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I have a question as well. Either the NDP want to build a stronger, more reliable and cleaner system of energy or they don't.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe–Grey, member from Lanark, member from Simcoe–Grey, again.

Minister?

1120

Hon. Brad Duguid: Day after day over the last couple of weeks, this member's leader has gotten up in this House, opposing the investments we're making to build that stronger, more reliable and cleaner system of energy.

Let me talk about some of the things that our investments are doing in the north. The member opposite was with me as we celebrated the Lower Mattagami hydro project in his riding, creating 800 jobs in the north, something we're celebrating in his community. Let me go on. Kenora–Rainy River: 140 jobs, Lac Seul hydro-electric.

Does his leader support those jobs or does she not? If you don't support the investments to get us there—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, we've been told when to do our washing. My question is a very simple one. We know now, in northern Ontario—the not-so-smart meters have come to northern Ontario—that the on-peak will become the mid-peak, and the mid-peak will become the off-peak, come November.

We're wondering, when are we supposed to heat our homes, when the full charge of electricity on-peak is going to be between 5 and 9 at night and 7 and 11 in the morning? My question to you is, when are we supposed to heat our homes?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We will not be able to modernize our electricity system without making these important investments. We will not be able to build a stronger, more reliable and cleaner energy system without making these investments.

The NDP cannot have it both ways. We cannot create the jobs we're creating in the north if we don't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Perhaps some of these cross-floor conversations, which are not part of the rhythm of question period, would be

much better taken outside. There are a lot of members and guests who want to be attentive, to listen to the discourse back and forth across the floor, and we are all being challenged because of some of these cross-floor conversations. I would very much encourage those members to please take those outside.

New question.

SMOKING CESSATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport. Today, representatives of the Ontario Lung Association are present here at Queen's Park and meeting with members about the need for a strong smoking cessation system in Ontario. As a physician, and representing the people of Oak Ridges–Markham, this is an extremely important issue for my constituents and me.

Could the minister tell us how the government is working to encourage Ontarians to quit smoking?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'd like to take this opportunity, first of all, to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for her question and her advocacy for health promotion.

I commend the Ontario Lung Association—and again take this opportunity to welcome them to the Legislature—for engaging members today on smoking cessation, and for the valued partnership which we, as a government, share with them.

While I take this opportunity to remind Ontarians of the dangers of cigarette smoking and the importance of not starting to smoke in the first place, our government recognizes that smoking is an addiction.

Over the last five years, we have invested \$33.8 million in smoking cessation. Thirty-nine hospitals are participating in the Ottawa Model for Smoking Cessation program, which identifies and treats smokers admitted to hospital. We support the Driven to Quit Challenge.

These are only a few of the examples—

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I am glad to hear that the government takes smoking cessation seriously and is working with tobacco control partners like the Ontario Lung Association to educate and provide assistance to Ontarians looking to quit.

The smoke numbers are clear: In the recent Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, 15% of Ontarians 15 years of age and older smoked last year. While that number is the lowest amongst all provinces, a distinction we share with British Columbia, we cannot take our successes for granted.

Minister, how will the government move forward on the issue of smoking cessation?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Cigarettes kill—that is not new news. What is good news these days is the Vital Signs report for Toronto in 2009, which showed only 2% of seventh graders had smoked their first cigarette by grade 6, compared to 27% in 1997.

Also, the numbers from the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey demonstrate significant strides have occurred in reducing smoking rates through our smoke-free Ontario strategy.

However, there is much more work to be done, and that is precisely why we are working with partners like the Ontario Lung Association as we develop our plan to establish new directions in tobacco control. We will build on our past successes, such as banning smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces, banning tobacco power walls, protecting children in cars, and \$300-million worth of investment in the smoke-free Ontario strategy—

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

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. I share the alarm expressed by many in my riding about your ministry's plan to force a merger between the Leeds and the Grenville stewardship councils. This short-sighted scheme risks undermining 15 years of great work done by these groups, and even your own ministry staff say it will reduce the capacity to deliver invaluable environmental programming. Incredibly, you're doing this as my riding is under threat from the emerald ash borer beetle.

Minister, please tell the people of Leeds–Grenville what you have against these councils. Is it the hundreds of thousands of dollars in programming they leverage every year? Is it the thousands of children to whom they provide hands-on learning opportunities? Or is it the wonderful trust that has been built between landowners and government? Please tell me, Minister.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm very pleased to answer this question. I want to tell you how proud I am of the MNR's Ontario stewardship program. It focuses on protection and restoration of Ontario's natural resources through community engagement and support.

It's pretty rich for this question to be asked by this member when, in fact, when your party was in power, in 1996 you closed MNR area offices in the province. You closed an office in Brockville. You closed an office in Carleton Place. You closed an office in Carleton. You closed it in Napanee. You closed it at Tweed.

At the end of the day, we are streamlining our efforts in Leeds and Grenville, not closing them. It's something we are proud of, our relationship with those partners in the communities providing restoration efforts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, you know it's pretty rich for this minister to—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's pretty rich that this minister talks the way she does. Due to the fact that you've pushed Bill 191 through—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. That took eight seconds from the moment I sat down—

Mr. John Yakabuski: They won't co-operate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not helpful either.

Please continue.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's pretty rich that the minister talks about pushing things through in consultation when, clearly, you failed to consult people with Bill 191, and your ministry, which actually has an office in my riding in Kemptonville, is trying to do the same thing with this merger.

A week before the public meeting to discuss this unpopular proposal, here's what district manager Alex Gardner told a reporter: "Planning for 2012 will proceed based on an integrated council." In other words, it was a done deal, and the meeting was just for show.

Minister, why are you so afraid of consultation? Will you commit to meet with the leadership of these two stewardship councils and hear their concerns directly?

1130

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm really proud of the work that we do with our stewardship councils. They are a group that help us with education, they do workshops, they do high school outreach, they do creek restoration projects, they do water management and wetland restoration training, and most importantly, they help us with species-at-risk education. That's something that this government believes in, the Endangered Species Act, something you voted against, and yet you, at this point, are indicating you're supportive of stewardship programs. You have to walk the walk, you have to support endangered species, and that's what these stewardship programs do. We support the work that these groups do. We are committed to a stewardship approach in Ontario. These volunteers are extraordinarily important in supporting endangered species, and they help us with those projects. We're proud of our relationship.

HOSPITAL GOVERNANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Earlier this week, the London Free Press reported that London Health Sciences Centre is paying an American for-profit consulting company \$640,000 to lead employees through an internal communications training course. Does this minister think that spending close to two thirds of a million dollars on a dubious communications course is an appropriate use of front-line health care dollars?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. You know, when it comes to hospitals, I think the member opposite understands that our hospitals are separate entities. They are heavily funded, of course, by the

province, but they do have boards of directors and they are responsible for their governance.

We are, however, very clear with hospitals about expectations we have when it comes to quality of care and when it comes to the services they provide. We have strict accountability agreements that are negotiated between the LHINs and the hospitals, so that when people pay their taxes in this province, they have the assurance that the money they are paying in taxes is going to better health care. We work hard with our hospitals to get the outcomes we expect, whether it's lower wait times or higher quality or higher volumes of service, but we do leave the governance of hospitals to those hospital boards.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: London Health Sciences Centre has been cutting costs in other areas. Nurse examiner positions at the breast screening program were completely eliminated. Those nurses would still be on the job with the money being spent on this questionable American training course.

During this time of restraint, the minister has an obligation to instruct hospitals to focus spending on front-line care. Why is this minister so obviously failing to do so?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm not going to comment on this particular decision at this particular hospital. We do rely on the hospital governance to govern those hospitals and to make the right decisions.

But I think it's just a bit naive to suggest that front-line care can happen as efficiently and as effectively as possible without the proper communications and interactions between different employees in the hospital. LHSC has 13,000 staff and positions; 13,000 people work at LHSC; it's 846 beds. It's important to properly train the people working in the hospital to work together to improve outcomes, to improve quality of care and to improve the value for money that we are getting for our health care dollars.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. People in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex rely heavily on propane for their rural homes and farms. Propane has always been regarded as an efficient energy source for cooking and heating in the home, and even more importantly, for heating livestock barns, drying grain and other farm activities.

I have been approached by not only farmers but also small propane facility owners concerned about the propane safety requirements that will be coming into effect in January. Minister, I understand that you are seeking input to the proposal that will assist small facility owners in achieving the intent of the requirements. What effect will your proposal have on small facility owners and, ultimately, on my constituents?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, let me congratulate this member, as well as our other rural members, for

great advocacy on this particular issue—as well as northern members.

First of all, safety of Ontarians is our ultimate concern when it comes to the issue of propane, and everything is based on that. However, we've also listened to the small operators and are proposing a template risk and safety management plan that is more appropriate for smaller facilities. As a matter of fact, we posted this proposal on the regulatory website yesterday. The template would reduce the cost and complexity for small facilities, which can complete the templates themselves. We will also require the local fire department to review and comment on the template. It would include such information as basic facility information, updated facility plans, a map of the surrounding area, and, of utmost importance, an emergency response and preparedness plan.

We are also going to allow the facilities—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to thank the minister for the attention that he gave our rural caucus when we first brought this issue to his attention.

The 2008 Sunrise explosion was a terrible and tragic event. As a result of that, propane safety became even more of a priority for Ontarians. Our government, as a result, created an expert propane panel to make recommendations regarding propane safety.

For all our constituents, safety has always been a priority, but most especially for those who live close to a propane facility. Minister, how does our proposed approach compare to the safety standards of other jurisdictions?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Public safety is our first and primary concern, and that's why we've worked, both my predecessor, the former minister, and myself, on this issue for the last six months to come up with a system that will work for everybody.

The risk and safety management plans are a new safety requirement based on international best practices. We will be the first jurisdiction in Canada to mandate these plans both for large and small facilities. The larger facilities will have to go through the entire process and have their plans, in effect, be certified by engineers.

We will continue to work with our partners towards continuous improvement to ensure that Ontario has the highest possible standards. I think this will work for everyone, but we want to make sure that the people of Ontario have the best safety in mind when it comes to the use of propane.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Education. For 30 years, rural intellectually disabled adults in the Kawartha Lakes region have been using buses provided by the school boards to access their day programs and volunteer placements. Your ministry has now intervened and ordered the two boards to stop busing these people. You have gone as far as to threaten

the Catholic board with clawbacks and a supervisor if they do not obey you.

Minister, both boards support these adults, as does the community, but you and the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock appear not to. Why is your ministry determined to deny these most vulnerable people access to lifelong and continued learning?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This an important issue, and the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has brought this to my attention. We certainly have looked at all of the issues, the responsibilities and roles of school boards, as well as other community partners in this important issue.

We continue to believe that the resolution of this very important issue is to be found in the local communities. I have been given to understand by the local member that there is a commitment there to find a resolution for this very important issue. I certainly appreciate his advocacy and his very good work on this file. Again, I know that all partners involved do want to find—

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

1140

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the minister again: The response is cold comfort to the parents of these young adults.

I have heard from many people in the Kawartha Lakes region, and not just the parents. They are upset and hurt by the decision to cancel busing and the rigid policies of this ministry.

Roseanna Vachon, whose daughter has ridden the bus for years, states, “This government has turned its back on our most vulnerable citizens, robbing them of life and denying them access to continued learning, and is putting them in crisis.” She is lobbying to retain busing for her daughter and seven disabled adults.

Minister, will you show compassion and provide busing for these people?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It’s important that the members of this House appreciate how hard the local member has been advocating for the families in the region. This is a very unique—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, the local member has been working so very hard. As I have already stated, there is definitely a desire within the community to have this issue addressed, and I am confident that with all of the best of intentions within the community, there will be a resolution to this matter found locally within the community.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. On October 4, US Steel idled the blast furnace at its Hamilton worksite. This is a repeat of its 2008 shutdown when

it promised not to cause any job losses, but reduced the workforce below its promised 3,100 minimum.

The loan that this government gave to Stelco made the sale of Stelco more attractive to US Steel because it lessened the liability that US Steel would have been responsible for. What safeguards were put in place for this loan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The safeguards that were put in place were mostly designed to protect pensions of workers, and that was the role the government of Ontario played in that.

This is an unfortunate situation that has occurred. The Premier and the Minister of Economic Development have been working very hard on this file, as we have on a range of files around the situation in Hamilton, and as have the member for Hamilton Mountain and other colleagues.

The government’s original involvement was to protect workers’ pensions. We did that. That was appropriate at the time. That was supported by a range of advocates in the Hamilton community. It remains the right thing to have done at that point in time.

With the challenges now faced by that particular circumstance, this government remains prepared to work with the community, both on that and other alternatives, to help create more jobs in the Hamilton region.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: That wasn’t the question, but anyway.

Hamilton Works processes Canadian iron ore from Labrador. The Canadian steel industry, as a whole, cannot meet the domestic demand for Canada. When US Steel bought Stelco, part of the agreement was to maintain a minimum workforce and certain levels of production. US Steel locked out Lake Erie workers to force concessions. With the idling of the blast furnace, it appears that US Steel is not fulfilling its obligations again.

What safeguards are in place to keep the processing of Canadian raw materials in Hamilton, the steel centre for Canada?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think the member knows full well that what he speaks about is largely federal jurisdiction. We will work with the federal government on this situation and others to help protect the interest of that community and the workers there.

The member opposite has to know as well that there has been a consolidation in this industry around North America. The broader decisions we’re taking are designed to enhance Ontario’s opportunity for new investment, from a range of tax reforms to a range of investments through loan programs and so on, to a range of programs that have been designed in effect to protect workers’ pensions, as we did in 2006 with the situation in Hamilton. The member for Ancaster lobbied strongly on that—and the member from Hamilton Mountain. We will continue to—

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

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. The people of Ontario have increasingly high expectations of the services they receive from our government. In many cases, Ontarians expect that service to be as good as or better than that of the private sector. Ontarians want convenience and accessible services delivered by a well-trained and courteous staff who are willing to go the extra mile.

I am aware that your ministry is expanding services and making the experience simpler and easier for Ontarians to access their government services. Minister, can you please tell the House what the government is doing to improve services to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member for asking the question. This is Customer Service Week, so this gives me an opportunity to actually recognize the hard work of our civil servants, especially those who work on the front lines to provide outstanding service to all Ontarians with the highest degree of care and professionalism.

Our first priority is to continue to provide a high degree of personal service to all Ontarians by providing all of our services under one roof, making it convenient for them to avail themselves of those services, and also by providing service guarantees and providing services within a certain radius as well.

This is our priority, and we will continue to focus on that. I want to thank again all the civil servants who provide the front-line services.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very privileged today to introduce one of my constituents, Ms. Gloria Stock. She's from Bowmanville and she represents the COPD program for the Ontario Lung Association—a wonderful person. I thank her for being at Queen's Park here today.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to recognize in our gallery today here Rory Gleeson, Emily MacKenzie Strowger and Marie Lauren Gregoire, who are all here from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies; as well as Jo Michaels from Jewish Child and Family Service; Rob Thompson from the Toronto CAS; and Suset Silva from the Toronto Catholic Children's Aid Society. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RED WEEKEND

Mr. Robert Bailey: I recently attended a special event in Petrolia in my riding, organized by Linda and Gene

Smith, known as the RED Weekend. RED is an acronym for remembering everyone deployed. The purpose of this event is to celebrate and show support for our nation's military personnel, veterans and first responders and their families.

On Friday, the RED Weekend special tribute was paid to three families from Sarnia–Lambton who lost loved ones in service to our country. I would like to particularly mention them by name: William J.J. Cushley, Trooper Mark Wilson and Corporal Brent D. Poland. Each has made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country. They and their families are deserving of our utmost respect and gratitude, and we, as Canadians, owe them much.

The important and dangerous role that military personnel fulfill on a daily basis is all too often overlooked in our busy day-to-day lives.

Soldiers of the 23rd field squadron of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment have dubbed her “the Petrolia Cookie Lady,” but I know her as Karen Wilson. Ms. Wilson is a steady baker, and steadfast. On a regular basis, she sends her delicious cookies off to the Canadian personnel stationed in Afghanistan. They are very thankful for her efforts and thank her for sending them a little taste from home.

CHATHAM CAPITOL THEATRE

Mr. Pat Hoy: Nearly 14 years and \$21 million later, our community celebrated the grand opening of the Chatham Capitol Theatre on September 17.

Our government invested \$7 million towards its restoration. In addition, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities joined in a job creation partnership to allow job seekers to develop their skills. They were part of a large crew of professional tradespeople decorating exterior façades, installing ceiling tiles in the lounges, foyers and dressing rooms, and rebuilding and installing the opera boxes.

The theatre is a 1,200-seat entertainment venue in the heart of downtown Chatham. It first opened as a movie theatre during the Depression in 1930. Today it is a first-class venue for live entertainment. I would like to give a special thank you to Bob Fox, the project manager, who donated part of a lifetime toward its restoration.

Congratulations to all the volunteers and corporate and individual donors in helping make this day a reality.

The theatre is a cultural and architectural landmark and will be a vital part of the revitalization of our local culture and tourism opportunities.

Coming attractions include Bill Cosby and Howie Mandel; music acts such as Great Big Sea, Josh Turner and Michelle Wright; and family entertainment such as The Nutcracker, the Vienna Boys' Choir and many more. My wife and I will be taking our grandson to see The Very Hungry Caterpillar in November.

I invite everyone in the Legislature and outside this place to reserve your tickets for this unforgettable experience.

GOODYEAR TIRE AND RUBBER CO.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's certainly my privilege, as the member for Durham, to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Goodyear plant in Bowmanville.

In 1910, the Goodyear tire company chose to locate its first plant outside the United States in the town of Bowmanville. At that time, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. of Canada employed about 150 people. The starting salary at the time was 12 cents an hour, which was considered a good wage in those times.

A century later, the plant is still operating, being run by Veyance Technologies, a division of Goodyear.

Goodyear's record as a corporate citizen is well known throughout Durham region. It has supported many local initiatives, including the Bowmanville hospital, the Skate '88 fundraiser for the Garnet B. Rickard ice rink, and most recently the "Support Our Troops" banners displayed in the town of Bowmanville.

The company was a key contributor to Canada's manufacturing efforts in World War II.

I'd like to congratulate the company's former plant manager, good friend Wally Hicks, and the current plant manager, Roy Moore, on the 100 years of good service to our community. I wish the plant and all those who work there and their families a happy anniversary and continued opportunities for future employment in the community.

ONTARIO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION OPTICAL NETWORK

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'd like to share with my constituents and the House an exciting milestone reached in my community of Ottawa last week. On September 29, I was pleased to see ORION, the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network, adding the Ottawa Catholic School Board to their advanced ultra-high bandwidth research and education network.

With the addition of the OCSB, ORION is now reaching over a million primary and secondary students in Ontario in 25 school boards, more than half of Ontario's kindergarten-to-12 student population.

ORION speeds are 100 to 1,000 times faster than regular Internet. With these capabilities, schools can enjoy enhanced video conferencing and participate in the many distance learning programs offered by leading cultural and educational organizations like the Royal Ontario Museum, the Canadian Museum of Nature, the Canadian Space Agency, and the Virtual Researcher on Call, or VROC, program.

ORION is a not-for-profit organization supported by the government of Ontario and other partners. I'm pleased to congratulate the Ottawa Catholic School Board, ORION and the 35,000 Ottawa students who now have access to this exciting learning resource.

GERMAN PIONEERS DAY

Mr. Frank Klees: Ontario is the first province to officially recognize the historic and ongoing contribu-

tions to our society of Canadians of German ancestry by proclaiming the day following Thanksgiving as German Pioneers Day. This was made possible thanks to the efforts of my colleague and friend Wayne Wettlaufer, the former MPP for Kitchener Centre.

The immigration of settlers of German origin to Canada began with the coming of the first Loyalists at the end of the 18th century. In the 1820s, citizens of German origin made up a full 70% of the entire population as a true founding people of the province of Ontario. The heroic German Loyalist military unit known as the Brunswickers fought many battles in defence of Canada and most notably Quebec.

German Canadians founded Toronto and Markham and constructed Yonge Street from Toronto to Penetanguishene. Many settled in the regions of Kitchener-Waterloo, Niagara, Woodstock and Lake Huron.

1510

Famous German Canadians included Fathers of Confederation William Steeves and Sir Charles Tupper; Canada's sixth Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker; and Governor General Ed Schreyer.

As a proud German Canadian, and on the 20th anniversary of German unity, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our entire German-Canadian community for its ongoing pivotal role in the historic and continuing development of Ontario, socially, culturally, economically and politically.

Happy Oktoberfest and happy German Pioneers Day.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: Following on the good news about the conversion of the coal plant in Atikokan to biomass, I recently had more good news for the community. With the great support of the Minister of Natural Resources, Linda Jeffrey, I was able to announce that our government will be allowing two companies to move forward with an environmental assessment on the former Steep Rock mine site.

There is significant mining exploration and activity occurring in Ontario, and Atikokan is no exception. Approximately 100 people have already found work at the Hammond Reef property owned by the Osisko gold company. This company, along with Bending Lake Iron Group, submitted a joint proposal to use this site to process their ore bodies and/or dispose of their tailings.

If the environmental assessment is successfully concluded and the mine goes into operation, the companies predict that hundreds of construction and long-term jobs will be created as a result of the project. If successful, this initiative could provide a significant boost to the economy of Atikokan and the broader northwest.

As stated earlier, there is significant economic activity already occurring in Atikokan. This activity was further supported by our government with \$150,000 from the northern Ontario heritage fund toward the Sawbill road project. This initiative provided workers with quicker and easier access to the mine properties, and our assistance

leveraged significant investment from the companies themselves.

We continue to lay the foundations for further economic growth in Atikokan.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: For over 60 times I've risen in this House and presented petitions signed by over 25,000 people in the northeast asking for equitable access to PET scanning technology. To this day, the Minister of Health refuses to fund a PET scan for the people of the northeast, yet another indication that the McGuinty government disregards the people of northern Ontario and is telling very ill northerners that they can drive five to 12 hours to get to the closest PET scan.

Could you imagine the reaction if very ill cancer patients in Toronto were told by the government, "Sorry, you'll just have to drive to Montreal or Quebec City to get your PET scan"? This is the same distance that the people I represent in the northeast have to drive to the nearest PET scan.

In Sudbury, in memory of Mr. Sam Bruno, who passed away after a lengthy battle against his cancer, the community has taken up his fight to get a PET scan for Sudbury Regional Hospital. Despite the hard economic times in our community, the good people of Sudbury region will raise \$3.5 million to make the PET scan a reality for the people of the northeast, with a dinner and fundraising gala titled Pulling Everyone Together in the Spirit of Sam Bruno, which will be held on November 18 at the Caruso Club.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Jeff Leal: Our government is serious about protecting the environment and the health of Ontarians, so we're working to fulfill our promise to reduce the number of coal-fired plants in Ontario.

Last week we announced that four more units would be closed. This is the equivalent of taking two million cars off the road. This commitment has been supported by both environmental groups and doctors alike for reducing pollutants and health-related complications.

On October 1, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario supported the closure in a press release. Doris Grinspun, the executive director of RNAO, said, "Nurses are pleased with today's announcement because it will save lives. 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."

Dr. Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence, says, "Ontario can't afford the costs of coal any longer—the smog, human illness and global warming that coal-fired energy brings. Replacing coal with renewable energy is a bargain by any measure."

While previous governments refused to consider closing dirty coal plants, our government is making

investments in a cleaner and healthier energy future for all Ontario families.

ONTARIO LUNG ASSOCIATION

Mr. Dave Levac: The Ontario Lung Association assists, educates and empowers individuals living with or caring for others with lung disease. They do this through lung health programs and services that are available to people and health care providers across the province.

The Ontario Lung Association is among Canada's longest-standing, most respected not-for-profit health promotion organizations. The lung association provides education and support to people living with lung disease in Ontario and relies on the generosity of donors and educational partners across the province.

On October 6, 2010—today—the Ontario Lung Association will be hosting a reception here at Queen's Park to speak to us about the need for a comprehensive smoke cessation system in Ontario. Smoking is an addiction, not a lifestyle choice, and the Ontario Lung Association wants to help Ontarians struggling to overcome their addiction.

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm being heckled.

From the riding of Brant, Walter Gretzky, having fought alongside his wife, Phyllis, who suffered with lung cancer, will be joining the Ontario Lung Association as their guest speaker.

Also joining us at the reception will be Dr. George Habib, the president and CEO; Mr. Kelly Munoz, the chair of the board; Dr. Hans Stelzer, the chair of the Ontario Thoracic Society; Lauren Smith, provincial manager of community giving; and Lorraine LeBlanc, a COPD ambassador, whom I encourage everyone to get to meet downstairs in the dining room from 4:30 to 6:30. Be there to learn what we can do to help people with an addiction.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE AND
ELDERLY PEOPLE FROM ABUSE ACT
(POWERS OF ATTORNEY), 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES PERSONNES VULNÉRABLES
ET DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
CONTRE LES MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS
(PROCURATIONS)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 with respect to powers of attorney / Projet de loi 113, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui en ce qui a trait aux procurations.

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.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll read the preamble here:

"The bill amends sections 10 and 48 of the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 to provide that only one of the witnesses to a continuing power of attorney for property or a power of attorney for personal care may be a relative of the grantor of the power of attorney.

"The bill adds section 42.1 to the act, which requires an attorney under a continuing power of attorney for property to provide an annual accounting of information to the public guardian and trustee and, if required, to the grantor. The information includes the grantor's assets, the grantor's liabilities and the compensation taken by the attorney.

"New section 68.1 of the act requires the public guardian and trustee to establish and maintain a register of attorneys under continuing powers of attorney for property and under powers of attorney for personal care. The register contains the following information if the grantor sends it to the public guardian and trustee: the name and address of the grantor, the name, address and telephone number of the attorney, any restrictions on the attorney's authority, the date the attorney's authority took effect and the persons to whom the grantor authorizes the public guardian and trustee to disclose information. The public guardian and trustee is required, on request and payment of the fee prescribed by the regulations made under the act, to disclose the information contained in the register with respect to a power of attorney to specified members of the grantor's family and the persons authorized in the power of attorney."

I'm pleased to support this bill.

1520

PROTECTING EMPLOYEES' TIPS ACT,
2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION
DU POURBOIRE DES EMPLOYÉS

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to tips and other gratuities / Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les pourboires et autres gratifications.

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.

Mr. Michael Prue: The bill prohibits employers from taking any portion of an employee's tips or other gratuities.

ONTARIO AWARD FOR PARAMEDIC
BRAVERY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE PRIX DE BRAVOURE
DES AUXILIAIRES MÉDICAUX
DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs. Van Bommel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery / Projet de loi 115, Loi prévoyant le Prix de bravoure des auxiliaires médicaux de l'Ontario.

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.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The bill creates the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery.

The award is to be presented annually to paramedics such as Paul Patterson of Kerwood, Ontario, who, in the opinion of the selection committee appointed by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, have performed an act of exceptional bravery to save or protect the life of another person.

An award may recognize an act of bravery that occurred when the paramedic was off duty and may be made posthumously, in certain circumstances.

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM
TOBACCO ADDICTION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 VISANT À PROTÉGER
LES ENFANTS CONTRE
L'ACCOUTUMANCE AU TABAC

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to protect our children from tobacco addiction / Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée afin de protéger nos enfants contre l'accoutumance au tabac.

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.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: The intent of this bill is to protect young people from the dangers of nicotine addiction. We're concerned that the low price of illegal tobacco, a problem of which we are aware, is making it affordable for our young people to experiment with smoking cigarettes. Sale of these illegal cigarettes is largely in the hands of organized crime, and they are targeting our young people. Just as it is illegal for persons under the age of 19 to possess and consume alcohol, I believe the same age group should be prohibited from possessing and using tobacco products.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH MOIS DE LA PRÉVENTION DU MAUVAIS TRAITEMENT DES ENFANTS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise today to recognize October as Child Abuse Prevention Month and to help draw attention to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' annual purple ribbon campaign.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour rappeler qu'octobre est le Mois de la prévention du mauvais traitement des enfants et pour attirer l'attention sur la campagne du ruban violet organisée tous les ans par les sociétés d'aide à l'enfance de l'Ontario.

I thank the members of the House who are joining me in bringing awareness to this important cause today by wearing a purple ribbon. The purple ribbon campaign encourages Ontarians across Ontario to learn the signs of child abuse, and it reminds us that everyone has a duty to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

But the purple ribbon campaign also reminds us of the positive difference we can make in a child's life through our actions, because by reporting child abuse we can turn a child's life around.

As part of Child Abuse Prevention Month, the OACAS has collected success stories from children, workers and caregivers.

One girl wrote about coming home from school at age 13 to find herself and her brother abandoned by her parents. The CAS stepped in and took her and her brother into care. Her foster parents and case worker encouraged her to follow her dreams and go to university.

She writes: "If it wasn't for children's aid, I wouldn't have a place to go on Christmas or holidays, and weekly Sunday dinners. I would never have met my worker, my best friend and my family. I wouldn't be as happy and strong as I am today."

A foster mother wrote of being asked how it feels when her foster children leave. She writes: "I don't foster for my own self-worth, or not foster for fear of being hurt. I foster because every time I do, I see a positive change that can never be erased. A life lifted up."

Chaque enfant, chaque famille est unique. Certaines victimes de mauvais traitement sont retirées de leur famille et placées dans une famille d'accueil ou dans un centre de traitement spécialisé. D'autres sont adoptées ou placées dans des établissements de soins conformes aux traditions autochtones. Souvent, les enfants peuvent rester dans leur propre famille parce que la SAE est en mesure de fournir des services de soutien précoces pour que les parents puissent s'occuper de leurs enfants avec une attention et une sécurité accrues.

Each child and each family is unique. Sometimes abused children are taken from their homes and live with foster parents or in specialized treatment homes. Others

are adopted or placed in aboriginal customary care. Often, children are able to stay with their families because the CAS is able to provide early supports so that parents can better and more safely care for their kids.

In addition to the purple ribbons, children's aid societies across Ontario are busy creating public awareness about the importance of recognizing the signs of abuse and neglect, and reminding Ontarians that each and every one of us has a moral and a legal duty to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

For instance, here in Toronto, the four child welfare agencies—the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Jewish Family and Child Service, Native Child and Family Services, and Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto—have collaborated once again to launch the month with their Show You Care awareness campaign. Throughout the downtown core of the city, in numerous high-traffic public places, CAS staff and volunteers have placed over 150 donated stuffed animals, each with an identifying tag secured to it, reminding people of the importance of child abuse prevention and urging them to text or call the number on the tag to have a similar stuffed animal donated to a child in care.

CASs all across the province are running creative, innovative and informative awareness campaigns throughout October.

I would like to thank Ontario's children aid societies, their dedicated boards of directors, caregivers and compassionate staff who work every day to care for kids who need us the most.

And finally, I'd like to thank members of the public who have reported concerns to their local children's aid society.

Je veux rendre hommage aux sociétés d'aide à l'enfance de l'Ontario, aux membres de leurs conseils d'administration, aux responsables des enfants et au personnel de première ligne qui, tous les jours, s'occupent avec compassion des enfants qui ont le plus besoin de nous.

Enfin, j'aimerais aussi remercier les membres du public qui ont fait part de leurs préoccupations à la société locale de l'aide à l'enfance.

Reducing or stopping child abuse is a collective responsibility, but it is also an opportunity to make a difference. I urge all members of this House and all Ontarians to learn the signs of child abuse and neglect and to report known or suspected child abuse cases.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I rise in the House today to bring forward a timely update on how our government is transforming Ontario's economy and improving Ontarians' quality of life through record-breaking infrastructure investments.

With our partners, we've completed more than 300 infrastructure stimulus projects over the summer months. Over two years, we plan to create and support over

300,000 jobs with a record investment of about \$28 billion in infrastructure.

Prior to 2003, the simple fact was that much of our infrastructure was old, decrepit and falling apart. During the 30 years of putting things off under the watch of past governments, Ontario was creating a massive infrastructure gap.

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Five years ago, under our ReNew Ontario infrastructure plan, we dedicated more than \$30 billion to updating our schools, modernizing our hospitals, improving our water and waste water systems, expanding transit and repairing our roads and bridges. When the recession hit, we did not cut back. We did not slow down. In fact, we stepped up our infrastructure investments in Ontario communities, and as part of our Open Ontario plan we made record-breaking investments in Ontario's infrastructure in 2009-10. By March 2011, total infrastructure investment by the province since 2005-06 will have totalled approximately \$60 billion. With these investments, we are closing the infrastructure gap.

In total, there are more than 6,800 infrastructure stimulus projects. They include building or improving 230 rinks and arenas; over 500 water and waste water system improvements; close to 400 gyms and recreational centres for our Ontario families to be active; and 40 fire halls to keep Ontarians safe. Our projects at colleges and universities will create 36,000 new spaces to help Ontarians get a post-secondary education; and since taking office, we've built 18 hospitals and have 30 more projects on the way to reduce wait times for Ontario children, families and seniors.

This effort has certainly delivered needed infrastructure. It has also delivered jobs and bolstered our economy. According to the Conference Board of Canada, it added almost a full point to our GDP in 2009 alone.

We need to ensure our infrastructure continues to keep pace with Ontarians so that an open Ontario economy continues to attract new business, industries and the jobs they bring, and so that our cities and towns continue to appeal to the best and brightest. At the same time, we must be aware and respectful of our fiscal reality.

The government's Open Ontario plan demonstrates that when we invest in our infrastructure we're not just investing in bricks and mortar or roads and bridges, we're investing in our economy and in the quality of life of all Ontarians.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus to respond to the minister's statement on Child Abuse Prevention Month. There are many aspects to child abuse, but there are two things in particular that I would like to speak about today: (1) how child abuse is linked to mental health and addictions issues, and (2) how funding shortfalls at Ontario's children's aid

societies are affecting the care that vulnerable children are receiving.

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 70% of mental health problems and illnesses have onset during childhood or adolescence. Young people are more likely to report mental illness and/or substance use disorders than any other age group. As a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, some of the over 200 presentations we received cited a form of child abuse as a cause of mental health and addictions problems in children.

We heard from YouthLink, a charitable organization that offers a range of services that promote mental health and social well-being for vulnerable youth in Toronto. They assist youth living on the street, many of whom have suffered some form of child abuse and have since developed a mental health and/or addictions issue.

As a committee, we know that early intervention in child and youth mental health and addictions care is extremely important. That's why we presented 23 recommendations in our final report that we believe can move Ontario in the right direction. We urge the McGuinty government to implement all 23 of our recommendations.

With respect to the second issue, last year 36 children's aid societies filed for section 14 reviews, asking the government to take a closer look at their finances. They wanted this minister to understand the reality of their budgets and the difficulties they are having in delivering legislated, mandated services.

Last year, Durham CAS, which serves my riding of Whitby-Oshawa, projected a shortfall of \$4.2 million. They entered this fiscal year with a \$3.8-million deficit. Last year, they had to cut 31 positions that assist with vital child protection services. In Durham alone last year, the CAS investigated 4,180 reports of child abuse. Now, fewer people have to carry higher caseloads, impacting their ability to maintain high-quality child welfare services.

The minister repeatedly talks about how this Liberal government has increased funding for the child welfare sector, when the truth is that funding for the child welfare transformation has been cut in half.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank the organizations, their employees and volunteers, who work hard to ensure the safety of our children. Organizations like Boost Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention, Ontario's 53 children's aid societies and the Community Child Abuse Council are all doing a wonderful job at advocating and providing help for children who are victims of abuse. For that, we thank you very much.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees: Today, we have yet one more pronouncement by a minister of a government desperate to divert attention from its record of gross mismanagement and misplaced priorities. But Ontarians won't be fooled anymore. I'm convinced that with every new

government announcement, the people of this province will simply ask themselves, “How much more will this take out of my pocket or out of my till?” and, “How much of this can I really believe?” Whether it was the \$1-billion eHealth scandal, the eco fee fiasco or the mismanagement of the multi-million-dollar 400-series highway service contract, people in this province are fed up.

Rather than seize the opportunity to invest boldly in our transportation infrastructure, this government cowered and cut its investment in what was heralded as the Big Move by \$4 billion. Rather than clear the way for critical transportation projects such as the Highway 407 east, Highway 404 north, Highways 410, 427 and the mid-peninsula corridor, this government pulled the plug on every one of those contracts. Rather than work with the private sector as key partners in renewing and building our infrastructure, it has been working overtime to create roadblocks with its steady stream of new taxes and stifling regulations.

If this minister responsible for infrastructure wants to do something to unleash investment in the province and development of infrastructure, I recommend that his next announcement should be that he appoints himself as a facilitator to level the barriers to investment and streamline the cumbersome and costly approvals process that unnecessarily adds billions of dollars to the cost of infrastructure in this province.

Finally, I can assure you, this House and the people of Ontario that a PC government will not waste its time pointing to the past. A PC government will take seriously its responsibility of leadership. It will work with the people and businesses of this province to renew and boldly build Ontario's infrastructure for the future because we know that that is the key to the economic growth and quality of life that Ontarians—

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

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: Before I start my comments on Child Abuse Prevention Month, I have guests today who came in a little bit late, so I would like to introduce them. They are from CUPE Local 4599: Albert Cruz de Juan, Maria Cuenca, Teresita Dimaliwat and Rocklyn Pearce-Best. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I would also like to thank the members of the children's aid society who are in attendance here today for the great work that they do day in and day out. Across this province last year, they investigated more than 10,000 suspected child abuse and neglect cases. Meanwhile, their agency, the children's aid society, continues to face serious financial challenges, and services are threatened due to budget deficits and inadequate funding.

Children's aid societies are desperately calling for investment from this government. Last year, 37 children's aid societies across Ontario operated under a collective deficit of \$67 million. These are serious and

startling numbers. The government doesn't seem to be taking child protection seriously.

Another form of child abuse that they're not taking seriously is the result of poverty and hunger. In 2009, 38% of food bank users were children. That is more than 140,000 children who were forced to rely on food banks, and this number has not gone down but has gone up under the McGuinty government.

This week, I took on the Put Food in the Budget challenge that was issued by the Sudbury Social Planning Council. I'm eating only the contents of the food hamper that I received at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank in my riding in Val Caron. This diet is void of anything fresh: no fruit, no vegetables, no meat, no milk—nothing fresh. It is not healthy. It is not adequate for the hundreds of thousands of children who depend on it every week.

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In this day and age, in 2010 in Ontario, how could it be that things are getting worse, not better, for children living in poverty? As a New Democrat, I believe in social justice and in sharing in prosperity, but what this Liberal government is doing is not producing results.

My colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Paul Miller, has a private member's bill that would bring back the special assistance to grandmothers who look after their foster kids that the McGuinty government has taken away. My leader has a private member's bill that would require Ombudsman oversight of children's aid societies, but it's not being moved forward.

As a society, we owe it to the next generation to stop all forms of child abuse. Right now, the McGuinty government is failing in that responsibility.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton: To respond to the minister for infrastructure renewal: There must be an election coming, because suddenly this government wants to announce and reannounce and reannounce, and reannounce yet again.

However, in its flurry of reannouncements, it's missing some things. I seem to remember Transit City. This government was going to make a substantial financial contribution to Transit City in Toronto, except after the election, suddenly a major portion of the money disappeared.

I sit on the public accounts committee right now, looking at the state of bridges in Ontario, and there's a big hole in this announcement today, because one of the things we find is that on a number of highways that were downloaded onto municipalities about 10 years ago, the bridges are in dire need of repair and refurbishment. In fact, there are significant safety issues, but there is no plan to provide for the refurbishment and renewal of those bridges.

Just imagine: We saw in Quebec the collapse of an overpass. In Minnesota we saw the collapse of a bridge. And this government, as it stands here today, is in fact

taking real risks, because there are not hundreds but thousands of bridges that were offloaded from the province onto municipalities. Those municipalities have no way of financing the infrastructure and this government doesn't have a plan to help them.

CONDUCT OF HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask you to consider my representation to you relating to standing order 35(a).

I know I don't have to remind you, but if I can, for the benefit of my colleagues, standing order 35(a) reads as follows: "A minister of the crown may make a short factual statement relating to government policy, ministry action or other similar matters of which the House should be informed."

I listened with great interest to the statement made by the Minister of Infrastructure. Specifically, I'm going to draw your attention—I would ask you, actually, to please read Hansard and consider the statement that the minister made. I think you may concur with me that much of the statement and the figures that were included in that statement were not factual. They were either projections—certainly, one case was, in fact, and I have to be careful how I say this, it was not fact. In fact, it was contrary to the fact.

I will read from the minister's statement. He said: "When the recession hit, we did not cut back. We did not slow down. In fact, we stepped up our infrastructure investments in Ontario communities...."

Mr. Speaker, you know full well, and we heard the Minister of Transportation and the former Minister of Infrastructure in this House many times, repeatedly, say that they slowed down their investment in Metrolinx to the tune of \$4 billion. They changed the entire schedule of investment, of infrastructure, through that period of time.

I'm concerned about a ministerial statement that essentially is not a factual statement but that is, perhaps, if I can use the term lightly, propaganda at best.

I'd like to also refer to standing order—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: Yes, thank you.

I'd like to also refer to standing order 35(c), which states that: "Two copies of each ministerial statement shall be delivered to the leaders of recognized opposition parties, or their representatives, at or before the time the statement is made in the House."

This statement to which I, as critic, was expected to respond was found on my desk when I came in here. For us to be expected to adequately respond to a ministerial statement without proper notice is, I believe, just simply not appropriate. It's certainly not respectful of members of this House.

I realize that the standing order clearly allows the minister the right to withhold that statement until the time that he actually makes it. I would suggest, however, that the standing order allows the minister to make that

information available before he makes the statement, and it would be appropriate and respectful if the minister would do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Newmarket–Aurora for his point of order.

I'll start with the timing of the delivery. There was compliance with the standing orders. I certainly would encourage, at any time, any minister who is delivering a statement, if at all possible, to deliver their statement earlier so that the members could have some advance notice, but it was in compliance with the standing orders.

I would say as well, if the member is concerned about that particular standing order, it may be something that he would ask his members who sit on the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly to take up and review at a standing committee meeting.

As well, I would remind all members in this regard that it is not for the Speaker to determine the veracity, the factuality or the correctness of any statements made. It is my role to ensure that all honourable members are taken at their word. If the honourable member takes exception to comments that were made, I would say to him that the ideal time for him to have taken exception to them was during the five-minute response that is allocated.

With that, we will move to petitions.

PETITIONS

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: For the 61st time and at 25,000 names, here I go again:

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with Brigid.

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KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today:

"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 affix my signature to it and give it to page Thomas.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly relating to the 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 diagnosed with MS will have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have been diagnosed with 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.”

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition, having many constituents in the same situation as many MS patients across the province.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from all over Ontario, actually.

“Whereas a company’s resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike” or a lockout “puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

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

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

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

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: Again, I want to thank a constituent in the Peterborough riding, Ken Sharp, for providing me with these petitions. He’s a person who’s on dialysis.

“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 affix my signature to it and give it to page Ioana.

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition that was brought to my attention and drafted by Simone Clarkson. It reads as follows.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many Ontario parents and families have suffered a miscarriage, a stillbirth or the death of an infant during delivery or shortly after birth; and

“Whereas those parents and families deserve and require support and understanding during their time of grief; and

“Whereas promoting awareness of the challenges faced by those parents and families is a positive means of establishing support,” understanding “and healing;

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

“To declare October 15 as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day throughout Ontario.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and present it to page Audrey on her second-last day here at Queen’s Park.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Windsor, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws” have existed “in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed these laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks with Caelan.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: I have literally hundreds of petitions presented to me by RAIN, Representing Animals in Need. It reads as follows:

“Petition 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 ... 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 ... which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature 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’m pleased to affix my signature in support of these petitions.

SERVICES DIAGNOSTIQUES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai cette pétition des gens de Sudbury :

« Attendu que l’Ontario fait de la tomographie par émission de positons ... un service de santé assuré par le régime public pour les patients atteints du cancer et de maladies cardiaques...;

« Attendu que » depuis le mois d’ « octobre 2009 », des TEP sont assurées et « effectuées à Ottawa, à London, à Toronto, à Hamilton ainsi qu’à Thunder Bay; et

« Attendu que la ville du Grand Sudbury est une plaque tournante pour la santé dans le nord-est, qui compte l’Hôpital régional de Sudbury et son programme régional de cancer », ainsi « que l’École de médecine du Nord de l’Ontario;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario d’offrir de la TEP par le biais de l’Hôpital régional de Sudbury, donnant ainsi un accès équitable aux résidents du Nord-Est ontarien. »

J’appuie cette pétition et je demande à Emily de l’apporter aux greffiers.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank Mr. Hopkins of 884 Stewart Line in Peterborough for sending me this petition.

“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. It has been certified, and I will give it to page Caelan.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition that’s about a suggestion in Bill 150: the separation of the functions of charities as well as animal shelters and the OSPCA. The petition reads as follows:

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“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) 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” executed;

“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 Klees 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’m pleased to sign and support this and to present it to Emily, one of the pages, on her second-last day here at Queen’s Park.

OPPOSITION DAY

HEALTH CARE SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government to prohibit all hospitals, local health integration networks, community care access centres, Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario and other publicly funded health care bodies from hiring consultants to lobby government officials, and to require all publicly funded health care bodies to post travel and hospitality expenses publicly. Addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mrs. Elliott has moved opposition day number 2. Debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Today is a rare occasion: an opposition day motion that all three parties support, at least in principle. We all agree that hospitals using taxpayers’ money to hire lobbyists to lobby the government for more taxpayers’ money is simply absurd. What remains to be seen is whether the government members will be allowed to vote to stop hospitals from hiring lobbyists, or will they just play politics?

You see, we know the government supports this motion, because when it was faced with mounting evidence that hospitals are employing Liberal-friendly lobbyists and consulting firms to do their lobbying, the McGuinty Liberals said that the practice is wrong and would end.

The health minister said, “It is not okay with our government to use taxpayers’ dollars to lobby government—that just doesn’t make sense. I am completely supportive of the notion that it is not all right.”

The Premier himself said, “It is unacceptable in Ontario today for hospital administration to employ lobbyists to try to influence our government.”

Despite these statements, we are less certain that the Liberals will vote for a motion that will stop hospitals from using taxpayers’ money to hire lobbyists to lobby for more taxpayers’ money. Why is that? Well, because when the Ontario PCs brought in the Truth in Government bill in May, the Liberals voted against it. When the Ontario PCs called for more transparency and accountability by making all agencies, boards and commissions subject to freedom-of-information requests, the Liberals—well, they voted against it. When the Ontario PCs called on hospitals to disclose their expenses, the Liberals—you guessed—voted against it. And when the Ontario PCs called for disclosure of job reclassifications in contracts and grants over \$10,000 at provincial public sector bodies, the Liberals—well, once again, they voted against it.

Now they’re changing their tune, and we have to ask whether that is because the Auditor General is about to release a report into his investigation into the use of consultants at the LHINs, the Ministry of Health and hospitals across Ontario. Suddenly, the government is looking for a way to act like it supports accountability, but we’ve all seen this movie before. It was one year ago that the Auditor General revealed that \$1 billion had been wasted at eHealth Ontario on Liberal-friendly consultants from the Courtyard Group, Accenture and Anzen.

The eHealth architect, George Smitherman, stayed in cabinet while leaving the member from Don Valley East to resign as health minister following news of the eHealth scandal.

One year ago this month, the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, called for a public inquiry into the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle. Today, we’re still waiting for that inquiry.

Yesterday we revealed that eHealth spent another \$343 million in the last year, hired yet another principal from the Liberal-friendly Courtyard Group, and we still don’t have a working eHealth system here in Ontario.

So I bring this motion on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario PC caucus, a motion to bring accountability into health care and to make sure that every dollar we spend goes to front-line patient care, where it belongs.

The government says it is against hospitals using taxpayers’ money to hire lobbyists, yet under its watch the same players who ran up a billion-dollar tab in eHealth, the Courtyard Group, have done work with the

University Health Network, Kingston hospital and hospitals in Mississauga and West Toronto.

Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga spent \$80,000 to hire lobbyists, Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital spent \$35,000 on lobbyists, and the William Osler Health Centre serving Brampton spent nearly \$78,000 on lobbyists. In fact, according to media reports this week, 14 hospitals across Ontario spent money intended for front-line care on lobbyists.

I ask you and the people of Ontario a simple question: Wouldn't it be great if just once this Liberal government would address a problem before the Ombudsman or the Auditor General tells them they have to? But that's simply not the Liberal way. The Liberal way is to let unaccountable and unelected bureaucracies go wild, waste millions, even a billion dollars, on consultants, get caught and then issue a mea culpa, saying, "Oh, gee, I'm sorry. We'll do better next time."

For many Ontarians stretched to the limit through HST, eco taxes, fees and skyrocketing hydro bills, doing better has to start today. That is why the Ontario PC caucus is proposing a better way, so that when Ontarians go to the ballot box one year from today, they will know they have a clear choice: a choice between the Dalton McGuinty Liberals who take from Ontario families and squander valuable health care dollars on Liberal-friendly consultants at eHealth, the LHINs and now hospitals, or an Ontario PC government and our leader, Tim Hudak, who will put health care dollars where they belong, into front-line patient care.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I don't know whether the Liberals are going to support this resolution. I heard some talk that they might. That made me reconsider whether or not the New Democrats should be supporting it. But I can tell you, without having heard from the Liberals, New Democrats, of course, support this proposition put forward here in the House today.

The NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, has been in this Legislature since Monday raising the issue in question period, confronting Premier McGuinty about his endorsement of public funds being used by hospitals, municipalities and colleges and universities to lobby with this government—and almost inevitably, to almost the final lobbyist, it ends up being well-connected former Liberal staffers, or at the very least, kissing cousins. Remarkable.

Let's canvass some of the taxpayers' dollars that are being spent on lobbying.

Let's understand what lobbying means. Lobbying means some fine wining and dining, maybe down at the Harbour Sixty Steakhouse, the notorious one where coked-up former members of Parliament meet ladies of the night along with various wheeler-dealers.

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The Ontario College of Art and Design: StrategyCorp, \$54,000. Laurentian University, \$102,000; York University, \$31,500, \$271,000 and \$189,000, when your kids

are facing the highest tuitions in all of Canada and tuition rates are increasing—exploding—year after year. Wilfrid Laurier, \$69,000.

They're paying this money to lobbyists to massage and wheel and deal with the government, presumably to get access to ministers: Lambton College, \$54,000; Mohawk College, \$31,000; University of Ontario Institute of Technology—that's the one over in Oshawa—\$130,000. George Brown College is in on the action too, with Capital Hill Group, but they wouldn't disclose how much money they spent on lobbyists. You can draw the inference that you might from their refusal to disclose that it was an embarrassingly large amount.

Municipalities—this again boggles the mind. The city of Brampton: Capital Hill Group, \$129,000. The town of Tecumseh: StrategyCorp, \$25,000. Durham region, \$23,000. Durham region has a couple of MPPs here in this Legislature who, as opposition members, are far more effective than government backbenchers. Mind you, they're not going to argue that during the next election campaign, because they will aspire to be government. The opposition members from the Durham area are going to be telling their voters that they need somebody who's in government. Last time around they were telling their voters that they could be more effective in opposition. But I tell you, Durham's got some very effective MPPs here—opposition members—yet Durham region blows \$23,000 of taxpayers' money on lobbyists.

The city of Niagara Falls—I used to be a city councillor in Welland a long, long time ago. For the life of me, what is the matter with these municipalities? What is the matter with them? What is the matter with city hall in Niagara Falls when it's got a huge staff component? They've got CAOs and CEOs and who knows what other initials. They've got high-priced staff up the yingyang. They've got people who are supposed to know how to form relationships with the bureaucrats, ADMs and DMs, here at Queen's Park, yet the city of Niagara Falls—I don't know what Mayor Salci's got to say about this, because Lord knows he's up here often enough on the taxpayers' tab.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Please, Ms. Elliott. It's not a funny matter. This is deadly serious.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Like the Speaker, I remind the member for Welland that we don't use names; we use positions and ridings.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly.

Member for Whitby—Oshawa, this is a serious matter.

Ted Salci: I don't think he takes the train; he doesn't take Coach Canada, I'm pretty sure. I've never seen him at the bus station, at least not for the purpose of using one.

Salci's up here from time to time. For the life of me, why is Niagara Falls spending their hard-earned taxpayers' dollars to the tune of \$102,000, and more so, why is the government accommodating it?

The town of Oakville—the poor little town of Oakville—\$9,000. Poor, my foot, but obviously the folks in

Oakville—if you’re going to spend \$9,000, why spend anything at all? What is the matter with city hall in Oakville? What’s the matter with them that they would even spend \$9,000? They’ve got senior staff there who are experienced, who have worked with governments of all political stripes, who have worked with civil servants. And when push comes to shove, surely their MPP could arrange for a lunch, a dinner, perhaps a musical downtown with the minister and two or three of his or her staff.

Hospitals: This is probably the one that really rots your socks; this is the one that drives you right crazy. While this government is shutting down emergency rooms, while hospital services are being cut back, while waiting lists are as long as ever, at least down where I come from and in the experience of the folks I talk to—hospitals, wow. Credit Valley Hospital, an \$80,000 contract with StrategyCorp; Tillsonburg, a small community—I know Tillsonburg, I know those folks down there—another \$35,000; William Osler, \$77,000. Do you know what the other interesting thing is? These are the same hospitals that have those grossly high-priced CEOs and top dogs.

You’re talking about six-digit-income people—and it’s not like \$101,000; it’s more like \$201,000 or \$301,000—hospital top dogs who are among some of the best-paid officials in the province of Ontario.

Poor little Tillsonburg spending \$35,000 with Strategy Corp.; William Osler, \$77,000. Oh, my. It’s just amazing. The fact is that the government now and the Minister of Health—you see, the fact that it’s the Minister of Health who makes this announcement to the press, to the media, saying they’re going to do something about it, perhaps—I don’t know what they’re going to do. We don’t know because they haven’t stated it explicitly. But they’re going to do something. Who knows? At least they had the media release. They’re trying to do some damage control. That’s what they’ve done so far.

So maybe the Minister of Health—I don’t know what she’s doing, but we haven’t heard from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, we haven’t heard from the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We have heard from taxpayers across this province who find that this kind of exploitation of taxpayers’ dollars is outrageous. One, it’s inevitably Liberal insiders who are the paid lobbyists and who are no doubt touting their services, convincing municipalities—and again, for the life of me, when you look at some of these municipalities like Niagara Falls, how could they be so naive to buy into this? How could these high-priced CEOs be so naive, unless—think about this—it’s all part of a quid pro quo system, a wink-wink, nudge-nudge, “I’m talking care of your guy,” in other words, your former Liberal staffer. “Does that buy me,” as a hospital or a municipality or as a college or university, “some largesse from this government?” I don’t know. I’m not saying it does, although I’m saying that question certainly begs to be asked; doesn’t it? That’s one of the inferences that could obviously be drawn by any rational person.

What we want is for this government to state clearly that public funds—there should be no publicly funded institution hiring any lobbyist to lobby with this government, bar none, across the board; prohibited, forbidden. That legislation could happen very easily, very quickly, but that’s not what we’re going to see forthcoming and that’s not what anybody from the government side has even dared mention.

Gosh, I note that the resolution makes reference to LHINs. It’s my view and my view only—I’m not sure if my colleagues in the NDP necessarily agree, but as far as I’m concerned we shouldn’t have to worry about LHINs hiring lobbyists because we should simply abolish them. Hospital boards, I don’t know. You know I’ve always been an advocate of publicly elected hospital boards. I can’t understand, for the life of me, why we have that largest single expenditure of health care dollars in our given municipalities, yet those hospital boards are little backroom cabals, little secret clubs, skull-and-dagger-type operations, that operate behind a veil of secrecy in the darkness of privacy and with no public scrutiny and no public accountability.

I’ve had private member’s bills here before in this Legislature that call for publicly elected hospital boards. We could be doing it right now as we elect municipal councils and school board trustees—very easily done. Oh, but the criticism. What’s the phrase? We need skills-based boards. That’s wink-wink, nudge-nudge for “The board will decide who is going to be on it.” They’ll do their own little recruitment process.

For the life of me, I don’t hear anybody talking about skills-based Parliaments. Think about it. Whoever gets the most votes gets elected to Parliament, regardless of what their skill set happens to be. We don’t have skills-based city councils. Why, maybe the people who advocate skills-based hospital boards—which means they’re unelected—are advocating city councils should have the right to select the next two new members based on whatever skill set the majority of that council wants to see on their particular council. That’s not democracy, and it’s not accountability, and it’s not transparency.

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I should mention that the other day, Saturday, I was in the market with Malcolm Allen and Peggy Allen, Malcolm’s wife, and after doing the market out there, we went over to the Fireside on Southworth Street and had breakfast there. Charlie came out of the kitchen. He had cooked our breakfast, and he was very gracious and sat down with us. Charlie and Mary, his wife—Mary was upstairs; she wasn’t feeling quite well that day—had come to Canada in 1958 and settled over in the Ossington and Bloor area, which is where their daughter Sophie was born. Of course, she’s now the Minister of Revenue. But Charlie was so gracious, and, by God, if it wasn’t 11:30 by the time we had finished our breakfast and Charlie treated us to a round of ouzo. As I say, the clock had struck 11:30, so we were fine; we were legal. But Charlie was just so gracious.

And I don’t know—I didn’t ask Charlie Aggelonitis about this proposition, but I’ve got a feeling that when a

hard-working guy like Charlie Aggelonitis and his wife, Mary, read the news about hospitals and city councils and colleges and universities using these huge sums of money to lobby the government when they could have—I mean, if any one of them went to the Fireside, Charlie or Mary would call up their daughter on the phone, on her cell, and say, “Hey, these people need access to the government.” They don’t need lobbyists. What the heck’s the matter with them? They’ve got Charlie and Mary to lobby for them, if need be, at least folks down in Welland.

As I say, I didn’t speak about this with them, because we didn’t start this particular campaign until Monday, this exposure of the gross rip-offs of public funds. But I’ve got a feeling that hard-working people like Charlie and Mary Aggelonitis would shake their heads in dismay at the expenditure of public monies on lobbyists in this way, just shake their heads, because they’d have Sophie on the cellphone in a New York minute if anybody was in their restaurant eating some mighty fine sausage and eggs and a side order—I get a side order of feta cheese, because if you’re in a Greek restaurant, you’ve got to get that with your breakfast; or for the hot beef sandwich I had the Saturday before, gravy on everything, of course, which Mary had made in the kitchen. I regret not having—I was under the impression that she wasn’t there. The serving woman didn’t indicate that Mary was there or I would have stuck my head in and said howdy.

So we support this resolution. We’re fearful that the government may say all the right things, but at the end of the day do none of the right things to address this disgraceful, shabby scenario. People are shocked. People are awed and shocked by these revelations that Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats have been making over the course of this week.

But look, the problem the government has really is about having 86% of Ontarians say that they’re worse off now than they were two years ago—that’s the real problem—and 76% of Ontarians saying that they want to see another party in power. Holy moly. If you think that there’s maybe, on a good day, a 60% voter turnout—I don’t know; the people who do these stats know better than I do. So 60% of 24% is around 14%. That could leave the Liberals with 14% of the popular vote come October of next year. Hmm. I don’t know which of my friends I’ll see here in opposition, then, after the next election. It’s a tough one. It’s tight, it’s really tight: 76% of Ontarians say that they want to see another party in power. Now, there could be a margin of error of, let’s say, four points, so it could only be 72%, but think about it: It could also, then, be 80%, because that margin of error works both ways. Hmm.

Almost 86% of Ontarians say that it’s harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago, and when they see their tax dollars being spent on cigar-smoking, Rolex-wearing, Prada-shoed, Montblanc-writing lobbyists, wearing \$3,000 suits from who knows where—from Harry Rosen, I suppose, because that’s where lobbyists buy suits. I don’t know; I’ve been past there a couple of

times. It’s just not my style. Or maybe Holt Renfrew—yeah, what the heck; drop in at Holt’s.

When taxpayers who already know that they’re being squeezed learn, as they have over the last three days, about this gross misuse of public funds and about the fact that this government has endorsed it, entertained it, accommodated it—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Take that back.

Mr. Peter Kormos: There’s howling coming from the government benches—literal howling and squealing. I understand why. It’s one of those matters of, “Nurse, administer some novocaine. We’ve hit a nerve.”

Seven years in power—we’ve got the most recent numbers, and there’s nothing to suggest that this hasn’t been going on for seven years. And it is Liberal lobbyists, by and large. It is former Liberal staffers. Connect the dots. Draw the logical inferences, because the taxpayers are going to, the residents of Ontario are going to.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Only if you keep fibbing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Research and Innovation may want to consider withdrawing that.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw it, Speaker.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker.

So there we are. We’re supporting the resolution; let’s see if the Liberals do. But far more important—they’re the government—let them legislate a complete prohibition, an absolute ban, on publicly funded institutions: schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, municipalities, and half a dozen other institutions. Prohibit them from using their funding to hire lobbyists to work with this government, or any other, for that matter.

Ms. Gélinas will be speaking to this bill, of course—I’m sorry; the member for—it’s hard to overcome long-held habits, but I’m trying. I’m doing my best, Speaker. I’m trying really, really, really, really hard. I’ve got perspiration, I’m trying so hard. The member for Nickel Belt is going to be speaking to this resolution in due course. I want people to listen to the wise things that she has to say.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I’m pleased to have just a few minutes to speak to the opposition motion today.

The member from Whitby—Oshawa and I shared a boundary on our ridings until the redistribution in the last election. Now our riding boundaries are separated a little bit more, but we still share a lot in common, in the context of health care in our communities. Certainly we’re well aware of the work that is being done by the Rouge Valley Health System, and I know how desperately she would like to see the Whitby hospital reopen to its fullest extent. She spoke to that before. That was a dire situation that occurred some years ago under a former government, when they closed that hospital during one of the mandates. So I know she brings forward an opposition resolution with all the best intentions.

I know that during the course of our debate we’re going to hear lots of rhetoric today, particularly from the

opposition benches, about how terrible things are. But I think sometimes we need to get a little bit of context in where we were on some issues, so that when people are looking and listening and hearing, they can see the fuller picture.

My predecessor in this office was a minister of the government of the day, the Ernie Eves government at that time, as the Minister of Finance. I'm sure it wasn't her idea that she be put in a position of having to take her budget to Magna, but she did, and I think that was certainly under a direction from the Premier of the day. I expect he got some advice from his predecessor, the past Premier at that time, Mike Harris. I think Mike Harris gave Ernie Eves some advice about where to hold the budget, and I think Janet Ecker was a pawn in that regard, so she was forced to take it to Magna. I know in my heart of hearts that the former member from Whitby–Oshawa would never have taken his budget to the Magna headquarters. I know that he would have stood up to Ernie Eves and Mike Harris and said, "That's not the way we should spend public dollars." But the reality is, that party, members on that side who were there then, sided with their then Premier and allowed that budget to be taken out to Magna.

Let me just give you some context, when we talk about consultants' expenditures and all those kinds of things, about the kind of money that was being expended at that point in time on one event, so that we have the context when they stand up and rail against what's happening in health care in some venues.

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Some \$98,500 went to a private production company for putting this show on. It was a show. That included necessary costs, because when you put a show on at Magna, you have to have makeup artists. So, that included makeup artists for the Premier and the then-finance minister, who was forced in that situation.

Interjection: Makeup for a finance minister?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Yes, and the Premier.

There was some \$3,200 for 35 dozen cookies and rental chairs and coat hangers, just about \$25,000 to a Tory party strategist, Scott Munnoch, as the project manager for that little event. And we know the outcome of that event; we know what happened in this place following that. That doesn't include the about \$3,700 for tea and cookies for those invited guests who were allowed to see the budget from select locations around the province.

We're going to hear a lot today about what is happening with the consultants and the like. Let's remember, though, the context of where we were not all that long ago.

I think we're going to hear a lot on this side about the need for the kind of restraint that the member opposite is talking about. I'm not convinced that it's articulated as fully as it could be, and I'm certainly not necessarily convinced that there's not more we can do in this regard yet.

I'm anxiously looking forward to the opportunity for members on our side to speak to the opposition day

motion. I'm particularly interested in the kinds of things we can do to ensure that every tax dollar that needs to go to health care for the purpose of providing health care to patients ends up in that location. That's my particular concern, and I'm looking forward to debate around that. But I'd like people to keep the context, as we hear the rhetoric about what has been happening, about where we've been, not just where we might be today.

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a point of order, Speaker: I'm listening to the member for Pickering–Scarborough East, and I fail to connect what he's saying with the motion that's before the House. Would you rule on that?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): If the member listens carefully, he may hear some connection between the two.

The member for Pickering–Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the interjection from the member opposite, the point being that we're talking about expenditures on consultants, and in this instance we're talking about expenditures on the opposition side, particularly as it relates to hospitals today. I was trying to point out that we need that kind of balance to understand where expenditures were made in the past.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to join the debate on the motion that has been put forward by my colleague, the deputy leader of the PC Party, health critic and member for Whitby–Oshawa. I want to congratulate her on her excellent remarks, and I also obviously want to congratulate our leader and party for having identified the fact that we have a huge problem in the province of Ontario when it comes to lobbying. We've certainly seen lobbyists run rampant under this Liberal government, and for the past few years we have been emphasizing the need for this government to recognize that there is a need for accountability and there is a need for transparency. Although they say they're getting it, we still haven't seen any evidence of the fact that they are going to take any decisive action.

What this motion does is call upon the government to prohibit all hospitals; all local health integration networks, more commonly referred to as LHINs; community care access centres, more commonly referred to as CCACs; Cancer Care Ontario; eHealth Ontario; and other publicly funded health care bodies from hiring consultants to lobby government officials, and to require all publicly funded health care bodies to post travel and hospital expenses publicly.

The problem we find in the province today is that despite the efforts of our party to point out the misuse of public funds, this government has refused to take action to ensure that taxpayer money is not being spent for lobbying.

I think my colleague asked the question as to whether or not the government today is going to support our motion. If they don't, then, obviously, everything that the Premier and the Minister of Health have been saying about promising to crack down on the use of lobbyists, saying that, yes, they understand our concerns about

scarce health care dollars being wasted on trying to influence the government—despite all the words and all the rhetoric, nothing is going to change.

In fact, the Premier said that he condemned the practice, but again, he has not indicated what he is prepared to do about it. He has known about this for a long, long time now, because we identified this problem with eHealth. We identified the fact that there was a \$1-billion boondoggle, with a tremendous amount of money having been wasted and spent on lobbyists. That happened during Health Minister Smitherman's term, and, of course, it continued in Mr. Caplan's term. Nothing has changed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd just remind the members that we use positions and ridings when we refer to members. Thank you.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that reminder.

I think it's really important to note, then, that despite what we hear from the Minister of Health, despite what we hear from the Premier about getting it and understanding, there's a problem: They have still not done anything or taken any decisive, concrete action on their long-overdue promise to act.

So we find ourselves here today, and we have learned about the fact that there were 14 hospitals that have hired lobbyists. We see that Mississauga's Credit Valley spent \$80,000; Brampton's William Osler, \$78,000; and, of course, Tillsonburg, \$35,000.

Most of these lobbyists, when we take a look at the firms, are Liberal-friendly firms. So, again, this has certainly enabled the supporters of Liberal government to be the beneficiaries of many, many dollars which really should have been diverted to pay for doctors. We still have a tremendous shortage of doctors in the province of Ontario. In fact, our Vital Signs report that was released in Waterloo region this week indicated one of the big problems facing our region is the lack of access to family doctors.

The other very shocking statistic, but one that certainly we've known is there, is that we now have about 2,000 people on a waiting list for long-term-care beds. Of course, the whole problem of the number of people waiting for long-term-care beds is worsening year by year because this government has no plan.

The money that is going into paying for lobbyists, which is public dollars, taxpayer dollars, should instead be spent by this government on making sure that people have access to doctors, that they have access to long-term-care beds, that they have the appropriate community services in place.

Today, we will discover whether or not this Premier, this health minister and this government are really serious about making sure that tax dollars go into front-line health services for patients or whether they are going to allow this situation to continue in the province of Ontario without taking any action.

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Today, we will see what's going to happen. They have a choice to make. I think people in the province of

Ontario recognize that there is a choice. In fact, if today they see that this government doesn't support the motion that has been put forward by my colleague, our deputy leader and the member from Whitby–Oshawa, they will know that, a year from today, they will have a choice. They can either vote for the government that is squandering precious health care dollars and not investing in front-line care, but instead on friendly consultants at eHealth or at the LHINs or at the hospitals or Cancer Care, or they can vote for the Progressive Conservative government and our leader, Tim Hudak, because we have made a commitment. In fact, that commitment was made when we uncovered the \$1-billion boondoggle at eHealth. We will take all precious health dollars and we will invest them into front-line patient care.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up and speak on this motion. I think it's an important issue to talk about. Of course, I support the essence of the motion because, as has been mentioned by our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and our Premier, it's not acceptable to allow lobbyists to use taxpayers' money at the expense of the taxpayers. It's unethical; it's not correct; it's not right.

That's why we are in great support of heavier and stronger legislation to come to this place to outline those issues and also to protect the taxpayers' money, because we're not going to stand up and support a motion—just talk for the sake of talk. We want some kind of law and regulations to be put in place to manage and organize the taxpayers' money, because it's very important for all of us.

No one from anywhere in the province of Ontario wants his or her taxpayer's money to be invested to get taxpayers' money. Also, those people who are making the money, the lobbyists, enjoy it at the expense of taxpayers. Those taxpayers work very hard to save those dollars and to give those dollars to the government to be invested in health care, education, infrastructure and communities. That's where we want this money to go, not to a lobbyist.

That's why our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is coming out with a strategy, coming out with strong legislation to manage this practice in the province of Ontario. This will be the first time ever in this province that we'll introduce a bill to manage those exercises.

We have to talk about the opposition party which brought this motion to the House. I was listening to the member from Newmarket–Aurora. He said, "Don't judge me on my past." The people of Ontario cannot judge the Conservative Party on their past? Because when they were in government, there were lobbyists all over the place. We have a full record, sheet after sheet, talking about ex-MPPs or ex-ministers who used to come, day and night, and lobby ministers and get contracts.

Not a long time ago—I was watching the news this morning—a lobbyist from Quebec, actually not a

registered lobbyist, convinced the minister of infrastructure for the federal government to get the contract to fix the House of Commons, a \$1-billion contract, and he got more than \$400,000 as his fee. He was not registered as a lobbyist.

That party has a great record of allowing people to come and benefit from the friendly environment, from friendship with ministers in power, when they were in government, to give them contracts at the expense of taxpayers.

I listened carefully to both speakers from the opposition party speaking about our record on this side. We are saying to all the people of Ontario that we are on the side of the taxpayers. We want to organize this exercise, because it's not acceptable to allow lobbyists using taxpayers' money to come lobby us, because we believe that as elected officials we are the original lobbyists. We were elected to lobby on behalf of the people of Ontario. We are lobbyists on behalf of the people of Ontario. That's what we, when we ran for office, decided to do: to come to this place to speak on their behalf, to advocate on their behalf, to deal with their issues, whether health care, education, infrastructure or community issues. That's our job. We are the lobbyists on behalf of the people of Ontario. That's what we get paid to do, that's what we run for and that's what we get elected to do.

In my riding of London—Fanshawe, on a regular basis, with my colleagues Deb Matthews and Chris Bentley, we meet with the hospital boards to address their issues and listen to their concerns; we meet with the education boards to listen to their concerns and to be advocates on their behalf; to listen to the community leaders and the many stakeholders who come to our offices without any lobbyists to explain to us what they want. As elected officials, we consider ourselves working for them. We are the workers of the people of Ontario.

Also, when we have an issue, we don't have to go anywhere else—a hotel or a lobby room—to do business. They can come to this place. We have a lot of offices in this place, because we consider this place the place of the people. It's the people's place. People can come to it any time, can talk to us any time. They can also meet with a minister any time to deal with their issues, to listen to their concerns. We've been open about it since we got elected in 2003. We don't hide anything. We're an open government. We meet with the people on a regular basis. We invite the people to come here. We organize meetings with the ministers, with the Premier, with everyone on our side to meet with the stakeholders, to meet with the hospital people, to meet with education people, to meet with infrastructure people to address their concerns directly without any lobbying, without any intervening from the third party, because we believe we are working for the people.

I guess I want to leave some time to my colleagues, my friends, to speak to this issue, because this issue is very important to every one of us in this House, not just to me.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise and participate in this debate. As the orders of the day state:

“Mrs. Elliott—That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government to prohibit all hospitals, local health integration networks, community care access centres, Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario and other publicly funded health care bodies from hiring consultants to lobby government officials, and to require all publicly funded health care bodies to post travel and hospitality expenses publicly.”

This is just a common sense request of the Legislature to enact this requirement. I think the people in our ridings would expect that this would already be the case. I'm sure that many people, when they realize that their hospital, their health care facility, their community care access centre or their LHIN may well be taking scarce health care dollars and using those to hire a lobbyist to help them convince the Ministry of Health that they need more money, are going to put their hands up high and say, “Please stop the madness.” That's what my colleague is attempting to do by bringing this resolution forward.

I want to, before I go on, provide the Legislature with a clarification. I know that my colleagues in the New Democratic Party recently issued a list of organizations that are publicly funded and that employ lobbyists for the purpose, I believe well intended, of letting people know who some of those organizations are. Unfortunately, that list published by the NDP included the Vaughan Health Campus of Care. I want to clarify that the Vaughan campus of care is not a publicly funded organization; it is not an organization of the government. It is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that is seeking to build a hospital in Vaughan. That is a very different set of circumstances. I believe, in fact, that that organization doesn't have anyone but local community members who are dedicating a great deal of their time—personal volunteer time—to this cause. They have taken it upon themselves, through private dollars, to hire a lobbyist to help them convince this government of the need for a hospital in Vaughan.

1650

I believe the fact that this motion is before us today speaks to a far greater underlying problem that we have in the government of Ontario and in fact in this Legislature, and that is that the role of the MPP has been undermined to the point where, quite frankly, people feel they have to go beyond us to lobbyists who have greater access to the Premier or to ministers than members of this Legislature do.

That is fundamentally wrong. Anyone should be able to come to their member of provincial Parliament and expect that they will be heard. Unfortunately, what happens all too often is that when we, as members of the Legislature, write to a minister of the crown, appeal to the minister of the crown, we don't get our calls returned. We don't get the kinds of results that, unfortunately, lobbyists often get because they happen to know someone personally; they happen to have the access. And that's wrong.

I believe what we really do need is a reform of this place and a reform of how ministers of the crown do their business, and it begins with respect for the roles that we play here as members of the provincial Legislature. Then, quite frankly, the Vaughan campus of care wouldn't have to hire the lobbyists. They could go to their local MPP, Peter Shurman, the member from Thornhill, and say, "Here is what we would like to do to have the message get through to the minister," and he would be treated with respect.

I'm glad that I was able to make that clarification on behalf of the Vaughan campus of care. I was asked to do so by my colleague the member from Thornhill.

I trust, as this debate goes on, that we remain focused on what the key issue is here, and that is an unresponsive government. That is why people across all sectors, not just health care, have felt that they had to resort to hiring the friends of this Liberal government to get them access to decisions that take place in ministers' offices.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm happy to support the opposition day motion today that calls on this government to prohibit all hospitals, LHINs, CCACs, Cancer Care Ontario and eHealth, in addition to any other publicly funded health care bodies, from hiring consultants to lobby government officials. Additionally, we are calling on the government to require all publicly funded health care bodies to post travel and hospitality expenses publicly.

I know that Ontarians across this province agree when I say that our health care dollars cannot afford to be wasted. Sadly, this government does not have a good track record when it comes to ensuring this.

Today, 46 cents of every dollar spent on provincial government programs is spent on health care. If this growth in health care spending is left not properly managed and unchecked, this amount could rise to 70 cents by the year 2022. Even the McGuinty Liberals acknowledge that this is not sustainable and tried to provide for some solutions in their most recent budget.

This is fine and good, but they omit mentioning having mismanaged spending because they have failed to properly oversee their agencies' expenses and fees paid to the long list of consultants that are contracted with this government.

Just recently, we learned that hospitals have been hiring lobbyists to try and influence these government officials to advance projects. This is totally unacceptable. At least 14 hospitals were found to have firms registered on the province's list of lobbyists. Although we don't know the final costs, we do know that Mississauga's Credit Valley Hospital spent about \$80,000, William Osler Health System spent about \$78,000, and Tillsonburg, a little hospital, spent about \$35,000. These are some of the same hospitals that had to make cutbacks for services such as operating room services, emergency services, physiotherapy and dietitian services. However, they still felt the need to hire lobbyists to further their

communication and to access these government officials. That money could have gone to a long list of things, such as additional front-line care. Why couldn't hospital administrators just pick up the phone if they wanted to talk to government officials?

The McGuinty Liberals have said that they are looking into ways to stop hospitals from hiring lobbyists, and that some hospitals have already been spoken with. However, this doesn't go far enough. This government has made itself so remote, so out of touch, that they are forcing hospitals, universities and others to hire professional lobbyists in order to reach the ministers and their staff. Let's be clear: We're talking about public officials trying to talk to public officials.

And you know what? The ministers and their staff knew they were meeting with lobbyists. This wasn't just some new surprise to this government. They knew, and they did nothing about it until it was made public. Why didn't they stop this practice long before it was exposed? That is the way this government works. They only ever make changes once their scandals are exposed. This is a track record of this government and a pattern they have formed. As usual, the McGuinty Liberals are moving at a turtle's pace in stopping public bodies from hiring lobbyists to meet with government officials.

This is a government that never seems to learn. Under the McGuinty Liberal watch we seem to see one health care spending scandal followed by another, including the mismanagement at eHealth Ontario, Cancer Care Ontario and, most recently, the LHINs. Each time the McGuinty Liberals say that changes are on the way, but with each new scandal that hope begins to diminish.

This government has become very good at keeping their agencies away from public scrutiny. What are they hiding? It wasn't until the billion-dollar eHealth scandal was exposed that the McGuinty Liberals finally agreed to make health agencies like Cancer Care Ontario subject to freedom of information. We have learned from experience that if this government can hide mismanaged spending, they will.

Evidently this government has some major oversight problems, and it is time that they got serious about the wasted health care dollars. If this government is serious—really serious—about making our health care system more accountable, more transparent, they will be voting in favour of this motion today.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add my voice to the opposition motion that the member from Whitby-Oshawa has brought forward: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government to prohibit all hospitals, local health integration networks, community care access centres, Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario and other publicly funded health care bodies from hiring consultants to lobby government officials, and to require all publicly funded health care bodies to post travel and hospitality expenses publicly."

The motion is quite simple, and I think it is something that everybody can agree to. The mere fact that we

presently have in Ontario a government that funds transfer payments to agencies such as hospitals—we all have hospitals in our communities and we all know the important role that they play. Those hospitals have found it worthwhile to invest scarce dollars into paying lobbyists that are connected to the McGuinty Liberals. Why are they doing this? They're doing this because it is an investment that pays dividends. They're doing this because if they give money to people who are close friends with the Liberals, their agency gets something in return. This completely flies in the face of a democracy. This completely flies in the face of good government and good governance. It shouldn't work like this.

1700

I don't know this man, David MacNaughton from the Strategy group. Why was he paid \$80,000 by Credit Valley? Why was he paid \$102,000 by Laurentian University in Sudbury? Why? Because it pays off. Because hospitals, universities, municipalities and many other transfer payment agencies of the government have found out that if you give money to friends of the Liberals, you get more money back. The whole thing stinks, doesn't make sense and should be stopped, and this is what this motion is talking about.

In my area, the Sudbury Regional Hospital is so strapped for cash, it's just unbelievable. They do everything they can to make their budget stretch, but they still have a deficit. They have a deficit, and it shows in patient care, because that is what a hospital does. Anybody who read the Sudbury Star last week would have seen the story of a man who, after waiting a long time in the emergency room, was admitted into Sudbury Regional Hospital. Was he admitted in a room? No, not at all. He was admitted into what one could only call a bathroom.

When I first visited the hospital, it had just been renovated. The site is beautiful, the new rooms are beautiful, and the beds are all angled so that everybody has a beautiful view. Sudbury Regional Hospital is located close to the shore of Ramsey Lake, which is a beautiful lake right in the middle of our city, a lake that people swim in, we get our drinking water from and you can fish from. I row on this lake every morning that I'm in my riding. So people have a beautiful view, the rooms are beautiful, everything is high tech, everything works well, everything is state of the art, and we should be really proud of our hospital.

But what are the stories that hit the paper? The stories that they don't have enough room; stories that nurses are now developing best practices for hallway nursing—because people are not admitted into rooms; they are admitted into hallways. And this poor gentleman—I had visited the unit that he was on before it was open, and they have this beautiful hot tub room. It's a Jacuzzi tub where they can bring patients in to basically have a very nice bath. It's easier for some people to have a bath than a shower, for people who can't stand, people who are very weak. The nurses had called it the spa room just because it was something nice, something that people deserved, and if you needed help to have a bath, well, you might as well have it in a nice tub.

But the spa room is no more. Now we have people who have been admitted into those rooms. He had his bed with the head of his bed right next to the toilet. I don't know about you, but I couldn't really sleep with my head next to a toilet. I couldn't really eat my meals with my bed next to the toilet either. But this is what we're down to, because Sudbury Regional Hospital, like many of the 157 hospitals in this province, is so strapped for cash.

So what do they do? They talk to one another. One said, "Well, I gave money to Mr. McGuinty's campaign organizer. He was able to get me in. He knew his cell-phone number. He knew his private BlackBerry. He knew how to get me in. Money well spent, wasn't it? And then we were able to get money back for our hospital."

Then it went on and on. The lobbyists, people who used to work for the McGuinty Liberals, quit their work and then sell their connections. This is what lobbying is all about. It is wrong, and our taxpayers' money should not go to do things like this. Every hospital in Ontario, except for the tertiary care ones, are struggling with alternate level of care. They are trying really, really hard to meet the quotas that have been set out for emergency room wait time targets, but right now what we see is just a numbers game. The wait times are so high in the emergency rooms, if they still haven't got a bed to admit you to, they will admit you to the hallway, they will admit you to a bathroom, to a closet, to a TV room. If you have any doubts as to what I'm saying, I will show you the rooms, the closet, the bathroom, the TV room where people at Sudbury Regional Hospital get admitted so that they can meet their wait time targets, which they have no way of meeting.

Do we have a problem? Absolutely. And this problem is not being helped by taxpayers' money paying lobbyists who can be friends with members of the Liberal government. This is wrong.

Whenever we brought it—and our leader, Andrea Horwath, the member for Hamilton, brought this—forward, we started by bringing forward cases of hospitals that have been doing this. A number of my colleagues read off the number of hospitals that are doing this that we know of. Those are the ones that have actually talked to our researchers because we all know that hospitals are not FOI-able, so if you want freedom of access of information to hospitals, you cannot do it. They don't have to give you any information.

This is our tax money that they spend. Billions of dollars of it goes to hospital budgets. Some of the big hospitals in Toronto have budgets of over \$1.2 billion—for one hospital. But if we ask them, "What are you doing with our money?"—we're not allowed to ask. They'll tell you if they feel like it, and if they don't, they don't.

Well, 14 of them agreed to talk to our researchers at the NDP caucus, and we put the list together of hospitals that voluntarily told us that they had hired lobbyists. They had paid lobbyists, they had paid people who are well-connected to the McGuinty Liberals, because their colleagues had told them, "It's an investment that is

worth doing. You will see that your agency will get more money if you do that.”

This is a sad state of affairs. Not only the hospitals are doing it, but we can see—we have the list; the same thing. The researchers at the NDP caucus picked up the phone and got the list from colleges and universities; the same thing with municipalities that are doing it. All of those agencies get transfer payments from the government and then use the taxpayers' money to hire lobbyists so that they can get more. This practice has to stop, and this is what the member from Oshawa—I always forget—Whitby—Oshawa is suggesting that we do with her motion.

There are things that hospitals can do to try to deal with the wait times in the ERs. We've heard that St. Michael's Hospital has been very successful in decreasing wait times. Frankly, they were one of the worst, where people had to wait for a very, very long time in their emergency room before they had access. They are now close to one of the best—maybe not every month, but their stats come out really good.

1710

They've done this with what they call the SOAPEE method. “S” is for safety: Make sure that, at the basis, you don't hurt anybody. It's a safety issue. When you look at all the hospitals that have high rates of *C. difficile* or MRSA or other hospital-acquired infections, this is not safe practice. This has to be improved.

“O” is for outcome: It should work. If you go into a hospital to get a knee replacement, it's not because you want a new knee; it's because you want to be able to walk and you want to be able to do stairs, you want to be able to sit down and you don't want to have pain. So, make sure that the outcomes are there but that they're outcomes through the eyes of the patient.

They talk about access. Access should not be access to a waiting list. It should be access to a service.

They talk about the patient experience. In my view, the patient experience is—when they come in contact with the health care system, the health care provider should be kind. Everybody who works within our hospitals should be kind to the patients that they see day in and day out.

In SOAPEE, the “E” is for equity. I, with eight other colleagues in this Legislature, spent 18 months on the Select Committee for Mental Health and Addictions, and I can tell you that we don't have equity in this province. I often talk about equity of access for the people in the northeast; we want equity of access to a PET scan. But there's also equity of access for people with mental health and addictions, who are so often discriminated against when they try to gain access.

The other “E” of SOAPEE is for efficiency, so that you spend your dollars wisely.

I wanted to show that when an agency is so strapped for cash, they need dollars to be able to maintain their mandate, to do what they set out to do for a hospital to provide quality care, to provide access, to provide good patient outcomes, to provide patient experiences that the

patient is happy with. When they don't have the budget to do this, they will turn to anything. What they have been turning to is paying lobbyists, people who used to work for the McGuinty Liberals, people who used to run their campaigns, people who used to do their fundraising, people who know them, know their cellphone numbers, know their BlackBerrys, know their dogs, their wives, their children and where they take Pitou to the vet. They are close to them; they get into their offices; they get results, and this is wrong. This is not the way it should work.

The member also talks about the need to post travel and hospitality expenses publicly. Those are also important. We talk about being in a recession. We talk about being in a time of restraint. But when you see publicly funded agencies being a little bit too lavish when it comes to hospitality expenses, it irks people. People don't like this.

Make it more transparent. Make it that health care agencies have to open up their books, that they have to show how they spend the billions of dollars that are transferred to them from the taxpayers so that the taxpayers can have a say and the taxpayers can also have knowledge of what is going on. Just the fact that those data would become public will have an impact.

As my colleague from Welland has said, the NDP will be supporting this motion. We think that the use of lobbyists by the hospitals, the universities, the colleges, by whoever receives money from the provincial government, is wrong. It should stop. It shouldn't have been there in the first place, but it shouldn't have been allowed to continue during the seven years that the McGuinty government has been in power. So we will be supporting her motion.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in the discussion on the motion before us today from the member from Whitby—Oshawa. I want to say that it's a motion, and I'll come back to that in a minute.

We've been hearing some information that's been provided to us in this debate by all members, mixed with some rhetoric. So here's my rhetoric: It's not okay to use money intended for patient care on lobbyists. I'm on record. It's not acceptable.

I have a choice, and my choice is between a piece of legislation—a law that is very difficult for anyone not to follow—and a motion, which you can clip out and pin to your refrigerator as a reminder that you're supposed to do some nice things. I choose the law. I choose a law that says it's not going to happen.

Let's talk about where this has gone and where it has come from. If you hear the opposition, they're going to tell us that no history took place before we became government. So let's take a little journey to what happened before.

Let's talk about the partisan government advertising, found by the Auditor General, to the tune of \$400 million—just on that. And guess what? We put a law in

as soon as we became government that said, “No more.” Who voted against it? The Tories.

In the complexity of a modern world of communications and the financial upheaval that we’re experiencing, the increase for demand of transparency, which I agree with, and the consultants who are the experts in finding information that’s valuable to us—they need to be left out of this discussion, and talk about what we’re doing.

It’s interesting that the Tories have found religion in opposition. Why do I say that? Well, let’s take a look at some of the numbers.

In 2001-02, \$656 million of consultant money was used by that government, and then it was \$595 million the next year. What’s it down to now? Because our government has made the commitment in a bill that they did not vote for, consultant fees are down to \$389 million, and creeping down lower. That’s the difference between what an actionable piece of legislation is and the action of a motion that simply says, “I found religion. It’s time for me to start bringing it to the attention of the electorate because there’s an election coming.” Holy mackerel.

Let’s talk about some of the things that happened previously. Terence Young served as the Conservative MPP for Oakville from 1995 to 1999, in a mandate. Guess who he was lobbying for and which government he was lobbying on behalf of health care? South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in 2002-03—he made money doing that; Grand River Hospital in 2003-04; Hamilton Health Sciences in 2001-03. Whoops. I forgot. There is no history before 2003. It didn’t happen.

Charles Harnick, a member of Mike Harris’s cabinet—who did he lobby for? For the member from Kingston: Kingston General Hospital, the Hospital for Sick Children—oh, my goodness, money spent. Where was the indignation? Where were the motions then? Where was the legislation? It didn’t happen.

This is what the Tories did. They voted against the 2009 Public Sector Expenses Review Act. Where’s the religion? It didn’t exist; it still doesn’t. They voted against the Good Government Act to put measures that will increase the effectiveness, clarity and accountability of government. What did they vote for? Not that one.

I’ll tell you what else: The PCs and the NDP voted against banning partisan government advertising.

I want to suggest to you respectfully that I believe the religion they’ve found is not a strong religion. I have a sneaking suspicion it’s got a lot to do with getting a vote.

I want to pass a law that says they can’t do it. They want to put a motion on the refrigerator with a magnet that says, “Let’s make sure we talk about this, and let’s mark them up.”

So that my friends in the NDP don’t feel as if I’m just picking on the Tories, let’s take an example of what they did when they were in government—another history lesson. My rhetoric: Put it on the table. Starting in 1999, a well-known Conservative lobbyist, John Matheson, was hired by the city of Hamilton on a variety of projects

including arranging meetings, presentations and phone calls—as I said, spending money to be hired by this previous Tory insider. In 2001, they hired a city of Hamilton report to be written, the strategy of planning sessions—

Interjection.

1720

Mr. Dave Levac: Just a minute. You’re wrecking my drama. Let me get to it; I’ll tell you in you a second.

John Matheson, himself a chief of staff to the Harris-era Conservative Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, now the Strategy Corp. principal—and guess who was on Hamilton city council during that time, from 1997 to 2004? I have to tell you—and I’ll tell you straight, because my rhetoric does have a little truth to it. I don’t know how she voted, but Andrea Horwath was on that committee.

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Levac: Excuse me, Speaker. I will—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You’ll be careful, I know.

Mr. Dave Levac: I will rephrase that. The leader of the third party, who has been railing against a bunch of cities—except she forgot to include Hamilton.

I want to make sure that people understand that the Auditor General also found a couple of other interesting points. The interesting point that has come out in the rhetoric that has been spoken and the catchphrases that are being used by the opposition—it’s rather interesting that they talk about the “billion-dollar boondoggle.” But for the record, and you can test my rhetoric, \$400 million of that eHealth money was from previous government—the Tory government—expenditures on consultants, a little-known fact that seems to have been buried in the underbelly of rhetoric. I just thought I would bring it up to make sure that people understand that it was \$400 million that the previous government already started to spend on the reincarnation of e-health.

When I talk about why I said, in my first sentence—I want to come back to you and make it very clear: It is not okay to use money that was intended for patient care to hire lobbyists. I agree with that 100%. I can bet you dollars to doughnuts that if there’s anybody in this room who does not vote for the legislation that’s coming forward, I am going to be the first to stand up and to ask why not.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I am pleased to be able to join the debate this afternoon on the resolution introduced by my colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa.

This resolution shines light on the outrageous practice of publicly funded hospitals and other health agencies spending money provided to them by Ontario’s taxpayers to lobby the government of Ontario. Money that could be going to front-line health care is going to lobbyists and to pay for unnecessary and wasteful travel and hospitality. My colleague’s resolution would require that all of this

expense money be published publicly. Let's put it on the Internet where all taxpayers can see it.

Why do we need these changes? Let's review some of the history of health agency waste under this government.

The first one that comes to mind is Cancer Care Ontario. An audit noted that Cancer Care Ontario spent just less than \$75 million on consultants in two years, between March 2007 and March 2009. The audit took particular aim at nearly \$20 million worth of work that Cancer Care Ontario paid Courtyard Group Ltd., starting in April 2006, on its wait times information strategy. The firm collected another \$20 million in contracts between eHealth and the ministry between 2004 and 2009.

Another example is eHealth Ontario. Let's remember what the Auditor General found. One consultant was employed for seven years, and his firm was paid \$2 million. Another was employed for six years, and the firm he worked for got \$2.4 million. EHealth Ontario contracted, without a competitive process, a recruiting firm to hire 15 senior managers, paid upfront and asked for no money back when only five positions were filled from 15.

One favoured firm of eHealth Ontario submitted a bid for work that was more than five times higher than another qualified bidder but was allowed to rebid. The company then got an extra \$594,000 to hire more of its staff. One consultant awarded five contracts worth \$1.3 million to a consulting firm with which he was associated.

More than 40% of staff at eHealth were consultants, including one in four senior management positions. Consultants were paid at high rates to review voicemail greetings, thank you letters and seasonal party communications. While professional editing services can be acquired on contract for \$50 to \$60 an hour, eHealth was paying \$300 an hour. Two consultants were effectively paid at a rate of more than \$700,000 annually before expenses until their contracts were terminated when the media published that information.

Local health integration networks are another area where government waste has been uncovered. Seven million dollars discovered in untendered LHIN contracts is one example. There was nearly 200 million in health care dollars wasted on LHIN salaries and administration. The LHINs failed implementation of the aging at home strategy.

As most members know, the LHINs were set up by this government to act as a buffer between government and the people generally, to make it look as if the Minister of Health was not responsible for hospital cuts and other difficult health care decisions. They have certainly acted as a buffer between taxpayers and their money.

Overall, a terrible record of waste and a complete lack of accountability; every one of these health agencies should be transparent and accountable for how they spend the taxpayers' money, and then none of them would need lobbyists.

I also think it's a sad sign that these agencies think they need to hire lobbyists for the government to listen to

them. It comes to a comment made by earlier supporters of this resolution in questioning this practice, particularly for agencies that are dependent on government dollars talking to ministries also dependent on taxpayer dollars. It opens up the question of, what is the role of the MPP?

The member for Newmarket–Aurora spoke earlier in debate about this and the fact that, as I tell my constituents, I'm there. My door is open. I'm there at a phone call, an appointment, to provide that kind of conduit. That is the role of the MPP. It is the role of the MPP to represent the community and all of the agencies that operate within that community.

I think it's also a sad commentary on the importance of the democratic system. Democracy rests on the individual. It rests on respect for the individual. One person, one vote, not decision-making by lobby groups. I'm afraid that some of what we are discussing here today is exactly that: government by lobby groups. I think that it's a very sad situation when there is such a reliance on the part of government to have to have this conduit to hear these voices.

So I encourage all members of this House to support this resolution. If the minister says she will introduce a new law to deal with lobbyists, then she should show her good intentions by supporting our resolution today.

1730

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to rise today to comment on this motion that's on the floor, which has to do with the issue of hospitals hiring lobbyists. I want to start off by making myself very clear: We agree it is not okay to use money intended for patient care to hire a lobbyist. It's not okay to take money from the taxpayers and to turn around and use that to hire a lobbyist to lobby for more money from the taxpayers. That's not how we are supposed to use taxpayer money in Ontario; we agree. In fact, the Minister of Health has made it very clear that if a hospital or a CCAC or the management of a LHIN wants to talk to the minister, they can call the minister's office directly; they don't need to have a lobbyist intervene. There's absolutely no reason that any health organization in Ontario needs to go out and hire a lobbyist to do this. They can talk to the ministry; they can talk to the minister's office.

The motion from the member for Whitby–Oshawa—in fairness to the member, she did suggest that we do more with the motion than just tack it up on the fridge. She suggested that if the motion passed today, it would be appropriate to send a memo to the various organizations and tell them that they shouldn't have consultant lobbyists. We don't think that's good enough. We think that what we need to do is actually have legislation and put it in law that you cannot be using taxpayer money to hire consultant lobbyists. We really do believe that we need to get this in law, not just send the memo. That's what I want to see happen, and it's what the minister has committed to doing.

Quite frankly, this government has had a very good record in terms of looking at the issues of transparency

and accountability. Let's give a little bit of a history here. We have eliminated sole-source contracts so that all new Ontario government consulting contracts must follow a competitive hiring process—

Interjection: We're the first government to do that.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: —the first government to do that. Consultants will not be able to bill for hospitality or for food expenses or incidental costs. This includes things like management, information technology, technical services, research and development, policy development, communications consultants—a lot broader than just lobbyists. All these consultants must go through a competitive procurement process. Not only does that apply to the ministries, it also applies to the all the major agencies of the Ontario government.

In addition to that, because we do want to be careful about expenses, starting this year we are posting expenses for all the OPS—that is, the Ontario public sector—senior management, cabinet ministers, political staff, senior executives, again, at Ontario's 22 largest agencies—all of these. Now, I'm not sure whether all the opposition leaders have posted their expenses, but we are having a requirement that people post their expenses.

We're increasing the number of random internal audits that will be done to make sure that if people are fudging on their expenses, we're going to find out. The Integrity Commissioner, when looking at the senior expenses, will have the power to demand that if people have not followed the rules, they will have to repay out of their own pockets. So there has been a significant commitment.

If we look at the whole of access to information, freedom of information, interestingly—and it goes back to what my colleague the member from Brant was saying—some sort of corporate memory seemed to click off before October 2003. But if you go back before that, it's interesting that the previous Conservative government actually brought in legislation to remove freedom of information for hydro and for OLG. They actually made it less transparent. But what we've done is made Cancer Care Ontario subject to freedom of information. We have made publicly funded universities subject to freedom of information. We have brought Hydro One and OPG, Ontario Power Generation, back in. We have brought local public utilities into freedom of information. We actually amended the Auditor General Act so that the Auditor General, for the first time ever, has the authority to look at all those transfer agencies—the major transfer agencies and the major agencies of the Ontario government.

So I've got to tell you that as somebody who sits on the public accounts, I think we actually spend about half our time now looking at transfer partners like hospitals, school boards, Hydro One and a whole host of places where a lot of the money goes; we're actually spending a lot of time looking at them now on public accounts. You could never do that before the McGuinty government extended the legislation and made that possible. So we make apologies to no one in terms of our transparency and accountability.

I must say that I do think I understand why it's the member from Whitby–Oshawa, and not the leader of the official opposition, who has brought this motion forward. I think it goes back to that old proverb that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones, because I'd like to go back before that sort of history block that the opposition has and look at what their practices were.

When they had people leaving government, it's interesting to note what happened with Guy Giorno, who in fact was Premier Harris's chief of staff—more recently Harper's chief of staff. When he stopped being chief of staff, he became a consultant, a lobbyist for Bridgepoint Health. John Capobianco, perennial federal Conservative, also a ministerial assistant here to Conservatives—I think maybe something to do with Ford's campaign. I don't know. Anyway, he was a lobbyist for the Hospital for Sick Children, for West Lincoln Memorial Hospital and for the Shouldice Hospital. Leslie Noble, senior Harris adviser—senior Eves adviser too, actually—we'll come back to her later. She was a consultant for the Rouge Valley Health System and the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital.

So there's a lot of the pot calling the black here, because in fact this practice of hiring former Conservative operators to act as consultants and lobbyists is something that went on all the time when there was a Tory government around here. And maybe that's why they just want to sign the memo and don't actually—we're not sure yet whether they really want to see the legislation.

But if you really want to see people running up taxpayer money to Conservative insiders, you need to go and look at some of the other really big bills, not just hospitals, because they couldn't afford to pay the big bills. The Tories spent \$662 million on consultants in their last full year of office, and from what we know, it looks as though six particular Tory insiders took more than \$10 million of taxpayers' money, interestingly, starting with Mike Harris, who actually didn't get as much as the rest of the crowd.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: He probably doesn't need it.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I don't know.

Anyway, he got \$18,000. But look at some of these others. Paul Rhodes, Harris's communication officer, got over \$1 million. Tom Long, another senior Tory—oh, this is going up here—over \$3 million. How about Michael Gourley, an Eves adviser? Over \$4 million.

1740

Anyway, we have no apologies to make to anyone. I think perhaps the reason we're not sure about whether or not the opposition will support our bill when our bill comes in—we'll have to wait and see how they land on that. We don't know that yet. But we want something stronger than just sending a memo. We want legislation, because there is this long-standing practice here that doesn't quite pass the smell test. We're willing to really stop it.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I didn't know I'd have this opportunity to speak this afternoon. I had planned to be in the House and support the resolution when the vote takes place, but I do have this opportunity to speak briefly, and I'm glad to have that chance.

I just want to inform the House of a situation that took place 20 years ago in the first few months of my first term in office. I guess it was in December 1990. There was a hospital in my constituency at that time called the Louise Marshall Hospital in Mount Forest. Right after I was elected, we had a crisis in the hospital in Mount Forest in that a number of doctors decided that they would refuse to cover the emergency department at night, and so effectively the emergency department was closed in the evenings. It was a community crisis, as a matter of fact. What I did, of course, was approach the Minister of Health of the day. The New Democrats were in power, and the Minister of Health of the day was Evelyn Gigantes. I asked her to meet with the hospital staff to discuss the issue. We had a meeting in her boardroom. She listened to the concern that we were expressing, she pondered the issue and she solved it. That was an experience I'll never forget because it was my first big crisis in the riding.

The fact is, the hospital board and the hospital staff did not need to hire a consultant. They came to their MPP, and their MPP took action. Their MPP made sure that a meeting could take place, facilitated it and the minister responded. That's the way it should work.

There is absolutely no need in my mind for a hospital to hire a consultant to access the provincial government, and there should be no need. The fact that some hospitals believe they must hire consultants should trouble all of us. The fact is, many of them believe that they have no other choice, that that's the only way they're going to get a satisfactory resolution of their problem. Again, that should trouble each and every member of this House, and we should resolve to ensure that there is no need, that we do our jobs as MPPs to ensure that those issues are coming forward and that the government is giving suitable and proper consideration.

Now, I've heard two government members—the last two speakers, actually, the member for Guelph and the member for Brant—imply that they're not going to support this motion because the government may have a bill forthcoming and they'd rather vote for a bill or a law as opposed to a resolution, even though the resolution calls for something that they would, I think, acknowledge needs to be done and that they would say that they support in principle.

It's also interesting and important to point out that on September 9 this House and members in this chamber voted across party lines to support both a motion and a bill to give farmers a tax credit for donating to food banks. That day we were consistent. Members of the House voted in favour of the principle of the bill and voted in favour of the principle as articulated in a motion. So I think that the government, using that excuse, will not really be able to convince people that they're sincere in that respect.

I would call on all members to support this resolution today, and I would again give credit to our member for Whitby–Oshawa for bringing it forward.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to spend a few minutes this afternoon to talk about this resolution.

I recall when I was a young student attending St. John the Baptist elementary school on Jane Street in the south end of Peterborough. Sister Gervais was the principal, and she always drilled into us the famous gospel of John, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." That is an interesting Biblical backdrop for my remarks this afternoon.

I note today that there was a great article in the National Post. John Ivison has an article entitled, "NDP Happy to Dance with 'High-Priced, Well-Connected Insiders.'" I just want to quote from the article. It says:

"Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath has been leading the charge against the use of lobbyists by public institutions like hospitals and universities. 'Something is very, very wrong here,' she said yesterday at Queen's Park, the provincial Legislature.

"'Why are universities spending money on high-priced, well-connected insider lobbyists?'

"Premier Dalton McGuinty has been spooked, so he has agreed to introduce legislation to ban public institutions from using tax dollars to hire outside consultants.

"Score one for the whiter-than-white knights in the NDP and none for those lobbyist weasels. Obviously, the dippers have no time for such dubious practices.

"Except, of course, when it comes to fundraising time. Then the 'high-priced, well-connected insiders' become 'dear friends' and are invited to take out \$9,300 'sponsorship opportunities' at the Leaders' Levee event—a ritzy 'window into a bygone era of big music, style and elegance' at the Palais Royale ballroom in Toronto," on November 27.

Rest assured that Harry Rosen and Holt Renfrew will be doing a hell of a business during that week if everybody gets out there to get the tuxedos and the fancy gowns.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: At an NDP event?

Mr. Jeff Leal: At an NDP event. In fact, the leader, the president of the NDP, our good friend Sandra Clifford, said that it promises to be "a wonderful evening," with a cash bar and tickets at \$1,000 a crack." That is from those great, sanctimonious socialists who are always standing up for the disadvantaged of the province of Ontario.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Will the member from Welland wear a suit?

Mr. Jeff Leal: We're looking forward to that one, but let's get digging here a little further. This is really interesting.

Let's look at the facts here. The McGuinty government has reduced reliance on consulting services from what the Tories had of \$656 million to \$389 million in

the fiscal year 2007-08. But look at the Leader of the Opposition's expenses—there were some real gems here: In 2001, during 145 days between April 1 and August 23, 2001, the Leader of the Opposition and the staff racked up over \$23,000 in expenses ranging from meals, hotels, plants—must have been very nice plants; geraniums, I suspect—gum, doughnuts and napkins.

There was also a visit for a room at the Kittling Ridge winery, which I know is down on the Niagara peninsula. There were also events charged up for a fishing licence when he was Minister of Tourism. When he was Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Mr. Hudak travelled to Las Vegas. He was probably down there to see the Wayne Newton show, and all expenses were paid. He even expensed \$1.54 for a cup of coffee and 93 cents for a doughnut while in Vegas.

It gets better than that. I could go on and on and on. There was a nice little trip to Rio de Janeiro, but we don't want to get into that one.

Here's a good one: Mr. Gourley hit the jackpot when he was a lobbyist for the Conservatives. He was a former adviser to Ernie Eves during the \$5.6-billion deficit, and was given a \$3,700,000 untendered contract to provide advice on the privatization of hydro. The contract broke Hydro One's rules by paying Gourley before the contract was even signed. Gourley left his job as CEO of the Ontario Financing Authority in November 2003 and, as was stipulated by his contract, he received \$917,699 of taxpayers' money in salary and expenses.

It's interesting. As I said, I go back to John: "He who has no sin cast the first stone." I can tell you that on this side it's my view that no hospital, no community college and no university should ever use any of their precious dollars to hire lobbyists. We believe that we don't need to have a memo; we need to have solid legislation that we can put into place, and we know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will be bringing in a bill later this month to make exactly that happen.

There are some others. We have Leslie Noble. Who else do we have here, I say to my friend, the member from Guelph? Paul Rhodes, Tom Long, Leslie Noble, Jaime Watt—and the list goes on and on.

In fact, it's disgraceful the way all these people were up to the trough for so many years and collecting all this money. You know one of the first things we did when we came into power? We banned partisan advertising, those great information bulletins that were prepared by all those Conservative consultants, year in and year out, to provide partisan information that no one was particularly interested in receiving. We cleaned all of that up.

We're on record for bringing in legislative initiatives that have never been supported by the opposition and never supported by the third party, and we know why. When we bring in our bill at the end of this month, we'll show clearly to the citizens of Ontario that we mean business and that there will be no lobbyists receiving money from public funds. This is the way we need to go, and I take no lessons from anybody opposite on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Elliott has moved opposition day number 2.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Elliott has moved opposition day number 2. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Martiniuk, Gerry	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Hoy, Pat	Moridi, Reza
Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Oraziotti, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Chiarelli, Bob	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Sousa, Charles
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Gerretsen, John	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Gravelle, Michael	Mitchell, Carol	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 14; the nays are 41.

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

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We have some business to carry on with a late show, so as long as you're quiet—I would appreciate your co-operation.

The member for Beaches–East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and

the minister or parliamentary assistant has five minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I called this late show, as I intend to do each and every time in the future when I get answers like I got on October 4 concerning my question.

I asked what I thought was a sane and sensible question. I asked whether the Premier and, by extension, when he passed it to the minister, would support the Put Food in the Budget campaign. What they were clearly asking for was whether members of this House would participate and try to live for up to one week off a diet which is given to people at any of the food banks in Ontario. The inadequate response of the minister caused me to call this, because it's quite clear. When I spoke in my question, I talked about the inadequate rates that don't allow people to have healthy meals that would keep them healthy and their families healthy.

Every single government member on the Liberal side who participated in the Do the Math exercise, as the minister said she did, acknowledged that there were not sufficient funds in the budget. The average member said that at least \$1,350 would have to be in the budget, not the 500-plus dollars that are given to a welfare recipient.

I asked if the Premier would participate on the diet for one week. The diet consists of bread, one litre of milk, one potato, one onion, one can of tuna, two packages of Kraft dinner, some rice, some soup, one small jar of peanut butter, three juice boxes and a can of beans. That's what's in it, and I asked the Premier and, by extension, the minister whether they would participate.

The minister questioned me. She talked about, first of all, the good job the Daily Bread Food Bank does, and I have no umbrage whatsoever with the good job they do. But that's all she answered in the first question. I thought, "Maybe she's saving it for the supplementary," so I went back to living on the diet for one week. I asked the Premier and the minister again if they would participate in the program. I advised them that the social assistance rates—which is correct—are down 30% since 1994. I talked about the clawback, which continues. Then I asked—I think, clearly and nicely—whether or not they would try the diet for a week.

I was very disappointed with their response. The minister went on a bit of a tirade, talking about all the things that I had voted against. I don't remember any of those things ever coming up for an individual vote. It was, in fact, a whole bunch of stuff related to various Liberal budgets over the years. And quite frankly, when you are in this House, you have a chance to vote for a budget or not vote for a budget. For me to have supported some of the measures she was talking about, I would have had to have voted for the HST. If she thinks that this party is going to vote for such a hare-brained idea—I don't know where she thinks we're coming from. We will not support a budget in its totality which actually harms people. If there are some sweeteners in that budget, we have to learn to live without those sweeteners. This is nothing but nonsense to talk about parties and opposition

members voting against your hand-picked little programs that you think are so wonderful.

This same budget included the HST; it included rates in a whole bunch of things, including hydro; there was a lack of dollars for those who are on ODSP, and especially those who are on ODSP and general welfare who are childless. They are actually worse off today than in the deepest, darkest days of the Mike Harris government, because the funds that have been done to increase the budgets for those on ODSP and Ontario Works who in fact are childless are actually 1% or 2% lower today than they were when the Harris government was removed from office in 2003.

I don't know of what the minister is so proud. But she concluded the whole thing—which makes me angry—she asked me to support this. She asked me to support a government that is doing virtually nothing to help the poor. She asked me to support her when neither she nor the Premier would answer the question, nor would they go on the diet for one week to see what it's like to live on such meagre things, to eat food which I'm sure she would find inferior and that she wouldn't feed to her own children.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Children and Youth Services and the minister responsible for women's issues.

1810

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to one of the most important challenges in Ontario.

Poverty is a complex issue. No one community, no one level of government can tackle it alone. So I want to begin by thanking, as I did in the answer to the question, community organizations that work day in and day out to support people living in poverty and who advocate on their behalf.

Just last week, we saw the community foundations across the province come out with a local Vital Signs report that looked at the progress that all levels of government, the private sector and communities are making to address issues like housing, employment and inclusion.

The member opposite has been talking about the work of community organizations, another community organization that's looking to bring attention to the issue of social assistance rates. That work is also important.

The issue is so important that our government has recognized the need for change. We have taken action, and I am proud of that action. Since we were elected, we've increased social assistance rates every year, for a total of 12%. What does that mean to a real family? A single mum, for instance, receiving Ontario Works with two children aged five and seven has seen an increase of \$7,230, or 42%, since 2003.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. You're out of your seat.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Are we where we need to be yet on social assistance and on poverty reduction in general? Absolutely not. That's why Ontario has the coun-

try's most ambitious and aggressive poverty reduction strategy, with a target of reducing child poverty by 25% by 2013. We have a plan to reduce poverty, and we're making progress on that plan.

Our government recognizes that social assistance is far from perfect. In fact, our own Premier said that the OW and the ODSP rules stomp people into the ground. So as part of the poverty reduction strategy, we're undertaking a social assistance review, and we're looking forward to announcing it in the fall of 2010. The review also makes social assistance programs easier to understand, more transparent and financially sustainable.

To facilitate this, we created the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council, chaired by Gail Nyberg of the Daily Bread Food Bank. The Ministry of Community and Social Services is proceeding with policy work required to effect a number of changes based on the recommendations from the social assistance review council. This is important work, and it will make a real difference in the lives of low-income Ontarians.

We've taken a number of critical steps, as we've moved forward, to reduce the number of children living in poverty by 25% by 2013. We're helping kids succeed in school so that we can break an intergenerational cycle of poverty. We're stabilizing families financially and giving them the tools to improve their economic well-being.

This fall, 35,000 four- and five-year-olds started full-day kindergarten in nearly 600 schools across Ontario. This is one of the most important things that we can do to give every child an opportunity to succeed, and we are investing \$200 million this year and \$300 million next year.

We've nearly quadrupled funding to the student nutrition program so that our kids are ready to learn. We're providing healthy, nutritional meals and snacks so that kids can concentrate and get the most out of their

day. We've created 700 new breakfast programs and expanded 300 existing ones in high-needs communities.

We've stepped in when the federal government stepped away and invested \$63.5 million to save 8,500 child care spaces and create 1,000 child care jobs.

We've increased the Ontario child benefit to \$1,100 per child—that's almost \$92 per month—two years ahead of schedule. This one action, the introduction of the OCB, marked a transformation in our social assistance. For my colleague opposite to call it a hand-picked little program I think is embarrassing.

Individuals like Rabbi Arthur Bielfeld, the co-chair of the June Callwood campaign, said that the creation of the OCB shows that the McGuinty government is on the way to keeping its platform promises and keeping faith with the anti-poverty community.

Michael Oliphant, from the Daily Bread Food Bank, has said that the OCB marks a significant turning point in Ontario.

I applaud and encourage all communities who are active, who are engaging us, who are pushing us to do more. We've developed this strategy here at Queen's Park. We believe in the expertise of voices like Pat Capponi, of Voices from the Street.

We're moving in the right direction. On this side of the House, we have a clear commitment to reduce poverty. It's clear and it's consistent. It's not about photo ops, politics and rhetoric. It's about getting real things done for real families in Ontario, and I'm proud of what we do every single day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, Thursday morning, October 7.

The House adjourned at 1815.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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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
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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	
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Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
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
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) O'Toole, John (PC) Oraziotti, David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Durham Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Kitchener–Conestoga Elgin–Middlesex–London Scarborough–Agincourt	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP) Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Beaches–East York Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London–Fanshawe Timiskaming–Cochrane Northumberland–Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton–Mississippi Mills Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB) Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Perth–Wellington Simcoe–Grey	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
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Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Steve Clark, Helena Jaczek
Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
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Jim Wilson
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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des comptes publics**

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France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
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**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
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Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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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
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