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Mercredi 20 octobre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 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 Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a report of the Auditor General entitled Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations. For members' information, these will be momentarily available in the side lobbies.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PENSION REFORM

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledge that about two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension and that providing a secure future for retirement is important. It therefore endorses a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan (CPP), as the majority of provinces and the federal government agreed to at the last federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers' meeting in the summer of 2010, and that the province continue to work with the federal government and other provinces to move forward on the expansion of the CPP.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Phillips has moved government notice of motion number 30. Debate?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I, of course, fully endorse the motion. It is my intent to share the majority of my time with the member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Applause.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Thank you, everyone. It's my pleasure to join in the debate this morning and to follow the deputy House leader in his eloquent remarks. Thank you for that; it was wonderful—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Very in depth.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: —and very in depth. Thank you, Deputy.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Say hi to your mom.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Good morning, Mom. The member from Welland is here, and he sends his sympathies for your broken foot, so thank you for that. We hope you're doing okay.

Our government has become increasingly concerned, of course, especially since the global economic downturn, that many Canadians are not saving adequately for retirement. Recent research, policy work and public consultations have confirmed that although our retirement income system has many strengths, a significant minority of Canadians in the future are likely to experience a material decrease in their standard of living upon retirement, unless changes are made.

As you know, on Monday in the Legislature, my colleague the Honourable Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance, tabled the following motion that we just heard: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledge that about two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension and that providing a secure future for retirement is important. It therefore endorses a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan (CPP), as the majority of provinces and the federal government agreed to at the last federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers' meeting in the summer of 2010, and that the province continue to work with the federal government and other provinces to move forward on the expansion of the CPP."

Pension and retirement income system reforms have been of central importance to this government. The McGuinty government recognized that despite the vital importance of pension plans to the health of Ontario's economy, it had been more than 20 years since there had been significant pension reform in this province. That is why, since March 2009, our government has taken a number of important steps to address employment pension system issues. For example, we introduced a temporary solvency funding relief program to protect jobs and families; we're working to simplify pension division when a marriage ends; we initiated the first-ever actuarial study to examine the financial health of the pension benefits guarantee fund; and we established the Advisory Council on Pensions and Retirement Income. We also initiated technical discussions with the Canadian Institute of Actuaries about funding rules for defined benefit pension plans.

In April of this year, the House unanimously passed Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. It built upon the recommendations of the Expert Commission on Pensions, and it helps the pension system adapt to economic changes while balancing the need for benefit security. Specifically, Bill 236 provides for the restructuring of pension plans affected by corporate reorganizations, while protecting benefit security for plan members and for pensioners. It clarifies the benefits of plan

members affected by layoffs and it eliminates partial windups. It increases the transparency and access to information for plan members and for pensioners. It enhances the pension regulator's ability to oversee pension plans. Finally, it improves plan administration and reduces compliance costs.

0910

This government was clear from the outset that Bill 236 was the first part of a multi-step process to update and to improve the employment pension system. In fact, in the 2010 budget, we committed to introducing further pension reforms, and we were true to our word.

Yesterday, my colleague the Honourable Dwight Duncan stood in the House and introduced Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010. This new bill is a result of extensive consultations, and it builds upon the Pension Benefits Amendment Act. It proposes to make several amendments to the Pension Benefits Act.

Our proposed legislation would strengthen Ontario's pension funding rules by requiring more sustainable funding of promised benefits and stronger funding standards for benefit improvements. It would also provide a framework to permit more flexible funding rules for certain multi-employer pension plans and jointly sponsored pension plans that meet specific specified criteria. It proposes to clarify pension surplus rules and provide a binding dispute resolution process to allow members, retirees and sponsors to reach agreements on how surplus should be allocated on windup. It would also provide a more sustainable pension benefits guarantee fund by limiting exposure to the cost of benefit improvements that occur close to plan windup and reduce risk to taxpayers in the future. Furthermore, this proposed legislation would strengthen the regulator's role and improve plan administration.

Should this new bill pass, the government would have responded to about two thirds of the 142 recommendations in the expert commission's report addressed to the Ontario government. Remaining recommendations would be considered for inclusion in future reforms.

But we must recognize that in order to fully modernize and strengthen the retirement system in Ontario, this government must work with other governments and the private sector. It's said that the Canadian retirement income system, or the RIS, is composed of three pillars. I'd just like to go over and explain each of those three pillars.

Two programs administered by the federal government and financed out of general tax revenues comprise the first pillar: old age security, or OAS, and the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS. OAS and GIS combine to provide a minimum-income guarantee for older Canadians. Most provinces provide income-tested top-ups to the OAS and the GIS.

The Canada pension plan makes up the second pillar. The CPP is a compulsory earnings-related program that replaces up to 25% of average wages and salaries based on an individual's career and average earnings. When

combined with OAS and GIS, the CPP allows a person with half of the average wage to maintain his or her standard of living in retirement. For people with higher levels of earnings, however, additional income is needed from the third pillar to meet this objective.

The third pillar, made up of privately administered employment pension plans and registered retirement savings plans, is extremely diverse. The third pillar is privately administered but receives government support in the form of special tax measures and legislated minimum standards. Employment pension plans may be either defined benefit or defined contribution plans. A growing number combine elements of both plans. Until recently, male employees were more likely than females to be employment pension plan members, but that's no longer the case.

We know that the current three pillars for providing for Canadians in retirement are strong. In fact, according to a 2009 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report, they had this to say: "Old age income safety-nets in Canada are amongst the highest in the OECD, helping Canada have one of the lowest poverty levels" amongst seniors.

We know it's an excellent vehicle for helping Canadians in retirement, but we also know that it can be enhanced to ensure more Canadians have adequate savings. In his recent report prepared for the Ontario government, pension expert Bob Baldwin had this to say: "The status quo is an option. However, it is an option that may leave a significant minority of people ... facing a decline in their standard of living in retirement...."

While governments cannot replace investment losses or guarantee future returns, we do have the tools to make saving and planning for retirement easier, more affordable and more secure. Taking steps now will help Ontarians down the road, both as taxpayers and as future retirees. So while this government has made, and continues to make, steps to strengthen the first and the third pillars, we recognize that we must also be proactive in strengthening the second and third pillars.

Ontario supports a pan-Canadian approach to reforms that will provide tomorrow's seniors with better, lower-cost tools to maintain their standard of living in retirement. Reforms should build upon the strengths and institutions of the existing retirement income system, which has significantly reduced poverty among seniors and currently allows more Canadians to maintain a similar standard of living both before and after retirement.

That is why the Ontario government has been calling for a balanced approach to retirement income reform which would include a phased-in, fully funded, modest increase to the CPP as well as measures to encourage pension innovation. The CPP is a safe and secure means for Canadians to build retirement savings at a low cost. It is a made-in-Canada success story.

This discussion, of course, warrants an explanation, then, of the CPP. When it was created, CPP benefits were considered sufficient to provide an adequate amount of retirement income for most workers when combined with

contributions from the other two pillars. Unfortunately, the CPP may no longer be meeting the income-replacement needs of many Ontarians.

As a whole, we're saving less than we once did, fewer people are taking advantage of voluntary tax-assisted savings opportunities and a smaller portion of the working population today has access to employment pension plans. This means that a significant number of Ontarians could experience a material decrease in their standard of living.

CPP benefits are designed to replace about 25% of a contributor's career average annual pensionable earnings. The maximum CPP new retirement benefit in 2010 is \$934.17 per month, or \$11,210 per year. However, most beneficiaries do not receive the maximum benefit. In 2008, only 12% of the new male retirement beneficiaries and 2% of the new female beneficiaries received the maximum pension. The average new CPP pension paid in January 2010 was \$6,283 on an annualized basis—just 56% of the maximum benefit.

The difference between the maximum benefit and what people actually receive is due in part to the fact that CPP benefits are based on career average earnings. Annual earnings can vary widely over a person's working life, particularly at the beginning and at the end of their career. Average earnings also increase substantially with age. Many workers with earnings significantly above the year's maximum pensionable earnings for most of their career have a number of years with lower earnings. Since CPP benefits are paid on average earnings over an entire career, many contributors do not receive the maximum CPP benefit at retirement.

0920

The CPP provides a secure, fully indexed, defined benefit pension to virtually all working Canadians, as well as survivor and disability benefits, and is fully portable across Canada. CPP does not carry the risk of default that is inherent in private plans due to bankruptcy or insolvency of the employer. CPP administrative costs, which are 2.2% of plan expenditures, are less than half of most employment pension plans. Costs associated with RRSPs are also high compared to the CPP. Many RRSPs have charges of 2% of assets per year or more, which can erode investment gains over time. CPP costs include the cost of administering pensions, while RRSP costs do not. Almost all labour force participants contribute to and will receive pensions from the CPP, or possibly QPP.

The unique attributes of the CPP make its expansion an attractive option for bolstering retirement incomes. That's why the government of Ontario, along with the federal government and other provinces and territories, has been assessing options for expansion of the CPP. Any improvements would have to be pre-funded, inter-generationally equitable and affordable for working people and for employers.

This government has repeatedly called for the federal government and all provinces and territories to work together to amend the CPP. Reforms to the CPP will require the approval of the federal government and of

two thirds of the provinces with two thirds of the population. Compromise will be necessary, and that's why we've said that any CPP increase should be modest. We should also be prepared to phase it in to better reflect the current state of the economy and to ensure a smooth transition for families and for businesses.

Now we must all work together to build an approach to retirement income and pension reform that builds enough consensus among Canadians to make these reforms a reality. Canadians want to see their governments working together constructively to serve the greater good, especially in times of economic challenge. I believe that pension and retirement income reform is a chance to show Canadians that different levels of government of different political stripes, although they may not always agree, can work together to build consensus. Indeed, Ontario's plan to strengthen the retirement income system has been supported by federal and provincial governments of three political stripes: Conservative, Liberal and NDP. Today, our government is inviting opposition members of this House to join in that growing consensus. This House was able to work together in achieving all-party consent for the passage of Bill 236, our first pension reform bill. Our government's hope is that we can build on that all-party agreement with the motion that is before us today.

The economic downturn highlighted the fact that we need to examine the broader issues of retirement income adequacy and pension coverage to ensure our retirement income system meets the needs of a changing economy and changing demographics. As elected officials, we have a responsibility to look out not only for those who have workplace pension plans, but also for the majority of Ontarians who do not.

The economy of our province receives tremendous advantages from a healthy pension system. Our economy greatly benefits from Ontario retirees with adequate and secure retirement incomes, as they can use their incomes to pay for goods and services. So the retirement incomes, in turn, generate jobs for younger Ontarians. When Ontario retirees can pay for these goods and services with their own pensions, it helps to reduce the demand for taxpayer dollars.

Over the coming 20 years, the portion of the population over 65 will nearly double, from 13.4% in 2007 to 23.2% in 2030, and continue to increase to 26.3% in 2050. Thus, the success, or lack of success, achieved in providing adequate incomes to older and largely retired populations will have an increasing impact on the economic and social well-being of the population in general.

As Ontario's population ages and more and more Ontarians reach retirement age, it is critical that we take the necessary steps now to ensure that we do all that we can to preserve the spending power of seniors. This is crucial to the health of our economy. More importantly, we have an obligation to create the strongest environment for the financial security of Ontarians in their retirement, because they have earned that from our government. It is their hard work and their dedication that drive the economy of our province and make it such an attractive place

to live and to invest. Ontario's workforce has built the quality of life, and they have earned the right to continue to enjoy it upon their retirement.

In summary, this government is working to ensure that all Ontarians have the tools necessary to achieve their full potential and to live with dignity. Making changes today to strengthen and improve Ontario's and Canada's retirement income system will ensure that future Ontarians will have a brighter tomorrow. That is why I'm calling for the support of this House in voting for our motion for a modest and a gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan, which will benefit all Ontarians, including the two thirds of Ontarians who do not have a workplace pension and who, therefore, need the additional support of a stronger second pillar.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to be able to speak on the motion this morning, and I would like to begin just by questioning why the government has put this motion forward at all. I'll make a few points on that.

First of all, the government just introduced yesterday a new pension bill, which we are going to be briefed on later in the week; it's a fairly comprehensive, technical pension bill to do with defined benefit pension plans. That was just introduced; I assume that probably next week it will be called for debate. But what the force of this motion is going to be and why we're debating it—particularly when both the federal Minister of Finance and Ontario's Minister of Finance seem to be in agreement on the motion. So I'm not quite sure why we need a motion from the Ontario Legislature to agree to something that they're both agreeing on already anyway.

The motion is a little vague in its wording: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledge that about two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension and that providing a secure future for retirement is important." How can you disagree with that? "It therefore endorses a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan (CPP), as the majority of provinces and the federal government agreed to at the last federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers' meeting in the summer of 2010, and that the province continue to work with the federal government and other provinces to move forward on the expansion of the CPP."

As I say, that's the motion. It's a little vague. I mean, what does "expansion" necessarily mean? I assume that means an enhancement, although I'm guessing on that. Expansion could also mean changing the eligibility criteria to people who don't contribute or to lowering the age, something like that. But I will point out that the finance ministers of Ontario and Canada already agree to this, so I'm not quite sure why the Ontario Legislature needs to debate it. I will be proposing an amendment to this motion as well, just to recognize that fiscal realities have to be taken into consideration in terms of approaching this situation as well.

0930

I have a letter from the federal Minister of Finance on the issue of pensions and what should be done that he

wrote to the Ontario Minister of Finance in June, before they had the June meeting in Prince Edward Island. In it he states:

"I am writing to share with you the proposed agenda for our upcoming meeting of Ministers of Finance and Treasurers on June 13th and 14th on Prince Edward Island.

"Coming out of the meeting, there will be a great deal of attention on our discussions about the retirement income system. It is essential that we continue to work collaboratively on this important matter. I hope we can agree on a course of action to follow and, to that end, I am writing to provide you with my perspective on the way forward on this issue.

"My recent consultations across the country and the work done by our officials since we last met have convinced me that we should seriously consider several specific steps to improve our retirement income system. These improvements would build on the strengths of our system, which includes a healthy balance between government and private sector involvement, with both mandatory and voluntary savings elements.

"There is more that can be done to encourage private savings and broaden coverage by removing barriers that currently prevent some Canadians, such as the self-employed, from participating in registered pension plans. I believe we should work together toward pension innovations that would allow financial institutions and insurance companies to offer broad-based defined contribution pension arrangements to multiple employers, all employees, and to the self employed. This approach will help reduce costs of defined contribution plans for individuals and employers by providing opportunities for greater pooling of savings, without imposing the costs of a new administrative apparatus. It will help enhance retirement savings and pension coverage, without compromising our current system and without passing costs on to future generations.

"These pension innovations would require changes to the federal tax rules as well as federal-provincial-territorial collaboration on modifications to pension standards. I also think we can do more together to help people saving for retirement to make better-informed decisions, including supporting greater financial literacy and disclosure in relation to retirement savings. Actions towards these objectives will build on the work of the Task Force on Financial Literacy which is to report in December.

"Even with such improvements, I am concerned that some Canadians may not save enough for their retirement. In my consultations, I heard strong support for the Canada pension plan and the central role that it plays in our government-supported retirement income system." This is kind of the key part as it pertains to the motion today, and this is the federal finance minister's letter to the Ontario finance minister. "I believe that we should consider a modest, phased-in, and fully funded enhancement to defined benefits under the Canada pension plan in order to increase savings adequacy in the future. Changes to the Canada pension plan require significant

provincial support, and I will be particularly interested in getting your perspective on the possible expansion of the Canada pension plan when we meet in PEI.

“I believe that the types of measures I have set out above represent a targeted, balanced approach to further improving Canada’s retirement income system. I look forward to a fruitful discussion.”

I would say that I agree with most of what the federal finance minister has said in that letter, but as it pertains to the motion before us, he has very clearly stated that he supports “a modest, phased-in, and fully funded enhancement”—he used the word “enhancement,” which is little clearer than “expansion.” I’m not sure why we’re discussing this motion, when it’s obvious the federal finance minister already does support it. Obviously, the provincial finance minister does as well.

I have a letter from him to Mr. Flaherty. I won’t read the whole letter. But he does state in it that Ontario supports—

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: The member from Durham is giving me encouragement over there.

The letter from Minister Duncan to Mr. Flaherty says:

“In the lead-up to the upcoming finance ministers’ meeting in Prince Edward Island, I wanted to take the opportunity to communicate with you about Ontario’s position on strengthening Canada’s retirement income system. I have appreciated the opportunity to work together constructively on this important issue and trust we will continue to have the opportunity to do so in PEI and in the months beyond.

“I have become increasingly concerned, especially since the global economic downturn, that many Canadians are not saving adequately for retirement. Recent research, policy work, and public consultations have confirmed that although our retirement income system has many strengths, a significant minority of Canadians in the future are likely to experience a material decrease in their standard of living upon retirement unless changes are made.

“Ontario supports a pan-Canadian approach to the reform that will provide tomorrow’s seniors with better, lower-cost tools to maintain their standard of living in retirement.” I support that notion that it should be a pan-Canadian approach so it’s more affordable. “Reforms should build upon the strengths and institutions of the existing retirement income system, which has significantly reduced poverty among seniors and currently allows most Canadians to maintain a similar standard of living before and after retirement.

“Ontario supports a multi-pronged approach to reform that would strengthen both the second and third pillars of the system.

“First, I believe we can make regulatory changes to harness Canada’s world-leading private-sector expertise, including financial institutions and others, to provide more efficient, lower-cost retirement options.” I think that is a goal we need to go after. “Current tax and pension rules say that defined contribution pension plans can

only be offered where there is an employment relationship. This limits the retirement savings options available to the self-employed and those who work for small businesses. By changing these laws, we can expand the range of people who can set up pension plans and the range of people who can access them. We could allow large, multi-employer defined contribution pension plans with low administrative costs to provide portable coverage to more Canadians.” The portable part of it is why “pan-Canadian” makes sense. People are moving around to different jobs around the country. Portability is important.

“Second, I believe we should seriously consider building on the strengths of the CPP through a phased-in, moderate increase to retirement and survivor benefits. CPP’s guaranteed benefits are secure, inflation-indexed and portable. The average CPP benefit is about \$6,000 per year, and the maximum is about \$11,000 per year—lower than the public employment-related pensions of most other similar countries. Any improvements would have to be pre-funded, intergenerationally equitable, and affordable for working people and employers.”

That’s the key part of it as it pertains to the motion today, and what he says is identical to what the federal finance minister, Mr. Flaherty, says.

Based on that, other than the fact that the government needs filler because they have virtually nothing on their agenda, I’m not quite sure why we’re debating this motion this morning. As I say, it’s more or less filler. We had the member from Brant two weeks ago, when we had an opposition day motion here, talking about the fact that motions of the Ontario Legislature don’t really mean anything. Yet here we’re talking about a motion this morning on a point on which there’s agreement between the federal minister and the provincial finance minister, at a time when the government has just introduced a pension bill which is much more detailed and will address some of the very specific concerns with defined benefit plans and perhaps—I have to get my briefing on it—deal with some more options for defined contribution plans as well.

There’s no doubt that there is, as the letter has referenced, a minority of Canadians who are not saving enough for retirement. I think if you’re on the lower level of the income scale, with the CPP, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, when you retire, your income will probably be about the same, and I’ve got some facts to back that up. But it’s that middle class that, in many cases, is not saving enough for retirement. We do need to look at mechanisms—private sector and others—and as was mentioned, financial literacy and education, to get middle-income earners to plan ahead and save more toward their retirement.

0940

I would also just like to caution that when we’re looking at something like improving the benefits of the Canada pension plan, you have to be very careful, because it is essentially a payroll tax. Companies will pay more, and individuals will pay more.

We just learned yesterday that the economy is fragile. We saw yesterday that the Bank of Canada decided not to increase interest rates because of the fragile state of the economy:

“Economy Too Fragile for Rate Hike, Bank Says

“The Bank of Canada sees slower growth on the horizon and has no plans to raise interest rates in the short term.”

So I will be filing an amendment to this motion to recognize that the state of the economy must be taken into consideration, and that to raise payroll taxes at a time when the economy is fragile will hurt the economy, and the state of the economy will affect the number of people with jobs, etc. That is something we very much need to be conscious of.

I would like to make an amendment to this motion. I would like to add to the motion, after “forward on the expansion of the CPP,” the words “so long as there is recognition of the fragile nature of the economy and that increasing payroll taxes at a time of economic instability is not advisable.”

I’ll give this to the page to pass on to the Speaker, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Miller has moved to amend the motion, following the words “forward on the expansion of the CPP,” by adding the words “so long as there is recognition of the fragile nature of the economy and that increasing payroll taxes at a time of economic instability is not advisable.”

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Norm Miller: I think that, over time, having modest increases is a reasonable objective, but we have to be very wary of the fact that if you increase taxes, you can have a negative effect on the prospects of the economy, on jobs, job creation, etc. That’s why I put forward that amendment. You need to be very, very cautious, particularly in light of the fragile economy and particularly in light of all the tax increases we’ve seen here in the province of Ontario, huge increases in so many different ways that are affecting the ability of the economy to sustain itself; I won’t go through the list, but the health tax and the eco tax, which is now off the shelf, and many, many other taxes. Workers’ compensation, WSIB, has become a huge, huge problem in the province of Ontario under this government, and that’s another payroll tax as well. Those taxes are a negative for the economy.

I think that WSIB has become a bit of a political football here in the last number of years. We’ve seen the unfunded liability of the WSIB double in the last six years. I believe it’s about \$12 billion; it was roughly \$6 billion before. That’s not reflected, I might add, on the books of the province of Ontario. I think it should be, but at this time, the way the accounting is done, it’s not counted as part of the debt of the province of Ontario. As I say, that’s something that I think should be included.

Currently, the system we have in Canada—first of all, as I pointed out, I think that, with pensions, a pan-Canadian approach is the wiser approach. We have not a bad system right now, in terms of old age security,

guaranteed income supplement and the Canada pension plan. That looks after those people who are at the lower income levels fairly well. But the problem is sort of in the middle class.

I’m just looking for some information I had on that. Yes, here it is: “The Baldwin report says that the public pension programs of old age security, the guaranteed income supplement and maximum CPP retirement benefits together replace 73% of pre-retirement earnings for those earning up to half average wages and salaries”—so that’s the lower level of the income spectrum—“42% of those earning the average wage ... but only 21% for those earning twice average wages and salaries. Baldwin notes that ‘an implicit assumption of Canadian pension policy has been that beyond a certain level of earnings, people should look after themselves.’”

I would agree with that statement. I think that the CPP and those three tiers of our retirement income system shouldn’t necessarily be providing us with a life of luxury, but it should provide a reasonable, modest level of retirement income. There is an obligation—I think it’s the Conservative philosophy—amongst all of us as individuals to plan for retirement. That’s where things like literacy and help in the schools, to get people thinking about saving at a young age, are important. The earlier you start, the easier it is to save large amounts of money for retirement. As soon as you can start saving even a little bit of money over time, you will—it’s a lot easier than if you’re getting towards my age and you’re just starting to think about saving for retirement. There’s not a lot of time to compound the interest and to build up a large nest egg. So it’s important to start at a young age.

As I say, just getting back, I’ve made an amendment to recognize that our party is not in favour of increasing payroll taxes.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: And as the member for Durham—who I know is keen to speak to this, and I will share some time with him—wants to speak, I will wrap up shortly.

As I say, I think this motion this morning is essentially filler. We’ve got a comprehensive bill that’s going to be debated probably next week on pensions. I think this is filler because the government doesn’t have much on the docket.

I read letters from both the Ontario finance minister and the federal finance minister that show they’re in agreement on this, so it doesn’t make a lot of sense for us to be debating this at this time.

With that, I will pass on my time to the member from Durham, who, as usual, has done a lot of research on pensions and is keen to speak to this debate today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m not too sure how much time—how the rotation goes here, but I’ll stick with it.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, our critic for financial matters, has, I believe, put a fair amount of very respectable and balanced comment on the record

with respect to, first, protecting vulnerable people, but also the issue of personal responsibility. So I commend him.

In fact, our leader, Tim Hudak, gave us a bit of a pep talk in caucus yesterday—I shouldn't talk about this—saying to make sure that we look after families in Ontario. That's his main concern. He starts at the kitchen table and says that you have to have a strong economy.

How this thing really fits together is, most of the suggestions that I hear from the government side, Premier McGuinty's side—it's basically like a payroll tax solution. That might not be something that we're really in favour of, at a time when we have a languishing economy in Ontario. A lot of people, and employers as well, for that matter, simply aren't seeing any black ink—mostly red ink.

We say this is Small Business Week in Ontario, and a lot of those people who are working are spending their equity. They financed their corner store, their hardware store, their franchise operation by debt. They're actually creating their own job by borrowing money against capital, maybe taking a mortgage on their house or whatever, to get that franchise operation or the hardware store or whatever it is they're operating, and they don't have a pension.

0950

As has been said by the experts in some of the research done—I think I just want to slow it down a bit here. In the research done by the law firm Osler, Hoskin it's very clear, and even if you look back at the Arthurs report, the expert panel, and I think the minister who started off the debate this morning said it, basically two thirds of people don't have a pension. That would include most of us here. I should say this openly on the record: There is a pension here provincially. It's not the traditional pension; it's actually a defined contribution plan. That's the new type of pension.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's not like the federal one.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, no, it's not like the old one here. The member from St. Catharines, the Minister of Community Safety, does know of what he speaks. He's one of the senior members here, and he knows that the public's support for public sector pensions, MPs' or MPPs', is quite questionable; I don't think there's much support for it at all, given the state of the economy. We live with that, we live under the scrutiny of the public, not even in a partisan way on that thing, because I think public service is a laudable contribution to society and most members take it quite seriously.

But when you look at some of the expert committee reports, especially the Arthurs report—I commend the province for doing that; in fact, I commend the federal government for taking a lead. Finance Minister Jim Flaherty convening the December Whitehorse conference on pensions is a very important first step; that's exactly what it is.

Mr. Norm Miller: Prince Edward Island in June.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, there's another one scheduled, as the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka says. I

think they're on the right track, recognizing that the fundamentals of pensions have gone away; they have changed over time.

Now, we should keep this in mind. Let's put it into a real context this morning. Here is the reality test: What's the biggest issue in the media today? The strikes in France, shutting down the country of France. What is the issue? Pensions.

Interjection: Retirement age.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it's not retirement age; it's pensions.

The way they're dealing with it is extending it to 62 from 60, mandatory retirement. In Canada I think also there's some advice here. I don't believe they're doing the right thing by advancing the CPP. You can now start to collect it at 55, I believe; maybe it's 60. But the key here is, that's spending money ahead. I think what it's being done for is to take people out of the workforce. They've been laid off early; there's a lot of resizing of companies. That may not be on the topic here this morning, but here is the real issue: employment.

Second Career is a good example. What are the jobs of the future? There's no more General Electric, there's no more General Motors, there's no more Nortel. Job for life? Finished. That era is over. I say that sadly, and with great concern, when we look at the pages here. Job for life is basically done, and so the employment forecasts for longevity have changed. Not only that; the whole assumptions around actuarial models are all changed. People aren't dying at 75; they're living to 95. You can't retire at 55 and live to 95 and only work 20 years. It doesn't make sense.

When you see some of the public things here today, they have 70-factor pensions and 85-factor pensions. Let's take, for instance, the 75-factor. What does that actually mean? A fireman might be a good example of the 75-factor. I'm not picking on them. They did not individually choose the rules; the fancy actuaries and pension fund managers figured out those rules. With 75-factor, you start when you're 25. You graduate from college and you're 25 with your training. They are trained; I respect that very highly. You work for 25 years; that makes you 50 years of age with 25 years, so you retire at 50. That's impossible. That simply doesn't work, period. Because you're going to retire at 50 and live to be 90. You worked 25 years and you're going to be off for 40 years? Wait a minute. And it's going to be calculated on your best three years? Wait a minute here. The first contribution to your pension—they are joint contributor pensions—is at 25, and you're making whatever that money is at that time; maybe up to 10% is the maximum you can contribute. Teachers contribute the maximum: 10% of their pay is put into the fund. Here's the issue: When you're 25—let's go back a few years ago.

I've looked at this; when I was a school trustee, it was a huge issue during the era—Mr. Bradley will remember that when Sean Conway was minister, the biggest issue was teachers' pensions. The government at the time tried to straighten it out, and they did a fairly good job

basically. I think they had all parties trying to work to get it solved. It is probably referred to as one of the most successful pension plans today. But by the way, the teachers' pension plan owes \$11 billion, and it's the best one.

Every single pension is bankrupt under today's assumptions. Not some, not just Nortel, not just General Motors, Stelco, Inco—what was the strike at Vale Inco about? Pensions; trying to move everybody from defined benefit to defined contribution. What's the issue in France? Today there's going to be a statement by the new Prime Minister of England, David Cameron. What's the issue? Pensions.

Pension funds have all melted away in the big melt-down in the economy. It's global. I think it's responsible for the federal government to take a lead. I commend the finance ministers from all the provinces—Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, BC. They're all a bit too aggressive on this. I think we need a pan-Canadian solution. It should probably be tied to a joint contribution plan. The joint contribution plan would be of course the general tax revenue, which helps people who aren't even working so that when they are too old to work or unable to work, there is something for them.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Did you send a report on pensions?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Peterborough is quite right. He as a person follows this, I'm sure, as we all do, because this is a community of responsibility that we have here and all members should be trying to do the right thing and respecting the balance. As the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, our critic, made very clear, we can't unduly burden employers to take and shoulder all this responsibility.

If you look at this new bill—in fairness, we have the motion here, and we actually have an amended motion by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. Our critic has moved an amendment which really says, “so long as we have regard for the fragile nature of our economy, it would not be advisable to increase payroll taxes at this time.” I think we kind of agree with that. In fact, the Premier, in fairness, I think reads the tea leaves fairly well. He cancelled the eco tax. Thank God. He should be thinking about cancelling the hydro tax.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He should; people are struggling. The member from Northumberland knows that. You, I'm sure, have different things on weekends and you hear from different people. They interpret their frustration personally on Premier McGuinty.

In fact, this is a huge problem. By listening to people and doing the right thing, I think people will appreciate that. This motion here today is a bit artificial. I put this in the context that, yes, it's an important issue; yes, there have been meetings; yes, Bill 236 was the first stage of pension reform brought in in Ontario. They had the Arthurs expert panel report, which I'll mention briefly. Now, yesterday, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Duncan, introduced a bill, Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act,

which is amending Bill 236. Parts of Bill 236 are not even proclaimed. So let's not move too quickly here and create another mess like the eco tax, which was a bit of a mess. I'm surprised that Minister Gerretsen is still in cabinet.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Oh, come on.

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Mr. John O'Toole: I don't mean this personally. Actually, I think he's happy to be moved. But the fact is, they put the tax of all tax—they put the Minister of Revenue at the time, Mr. Wilkinson, into the environment ministry. There's a lot of changes, in fact, recognizing that the assumptions made by the actuaries themselves are wrong.

What are those three assumptions? The three assumptions that the actuaries make are: first, age and life expectancy. As the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka said, the earlier you start to contribute to a plan for the future—which would be an annuity of some sort; there are different names for them: a RRIF, an annuity; same thing. That's the first one.

The second one is return on equity. What's the assumption, over the long term, for return on equity? Basically, most of the models have a 7% return on equity. If anybody's getting 7% today, they're keeping it a secret, because nobody's getting that. In fact, there might be a negative drag on return on equity. Lots of businesses today are really spending their equity by refinancing and retooling to become modern and efficient.

The third assumption, of course, is the number of people paying. Usually, the whole thing is shaped on a pyramid theory. Speaker, you are aware; I believe you were a financial adviser or a financial planner in your previous life. Companies today are outsourcing, downsizing, resizing, fragmentizing.

I take, for instance, the company I worked for, for 31 years: General Motors. When we were there, Bob Rae was the Premier of the province and Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie had this problem: They wanted to retool to be competitive and they had a so-called surplus in their pension. So they applied to the provincial government—the provincial government at that time of Bob Rae—and they rewrote a rule at that time, in 1993. The rule was referred to as “too big to fail.” “These companies are so big they'll never fail, so we'll allow them to use their surplus or not fully fund their pensions.” Unfortunately, that's when the government's fingerprints were on pensions. They allowed them to take the money out of the pensions, and that means they're guilty. They gave them the keys to take the money.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Did that happen during the Tory years?

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it happened during the Bob Rae years. He's now a lawyer.

Mr. Paul Miller: You didn't change it.

Mr. John O'Toole: We did. No, no. They're barracking now. I want you to listen carefully.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it was a very important study. The issue that I wanted to bring to the table was that the “too big to fail” rule ended up pillaging all the pension funds.

Mr. Paul Miller: Did you pay them back?

Mr. John O'Toole: Just hang on for a second. Algoma used the money. It may have helped and saved jobs, so let's not criticize it. I think there was some merit. Bob Rae is not a stupid man, even though he has changed parties a couple of times. The fact is I wouldn't accuse him. He did it for the right reasons. Who would have known the future would collapse and cause the problem at Stelco? Air Canada is a federal one. Inco, GM—all of them took advantage of not fully funding the pension.

I gave you the three assumptions. We know those are in some need of repair or re-examination. We also know that the old rule of just tinkering around is not a good idea. This resolution is more or less saying Stephen Harper should fix the problem by increasing the CPP deduction. That's not the solution either, because most businesses will somehow avoid it by moving out of Ontario or whatever else because they're already taxed to the max.

Electricity—I was talking to businesses—is killing some of the business. I was at a thing last night where I talked to some business people. These are job creators and infrastructure people, and they were saying that their energy costs are going through the roof. So there's got to be something there.

My point here is that the pan-Canadian solution is the right solution. I think the province of Ontario, being one of the lead provinces, as well as the other provinces that are already moving forward should come together. But here's the deal: No employer today—in fact, most of the young people today will work on contract. They're not going to have a relationship job. They're going to say, “Look, I'm a great graphic artist; I'm a great software developer; I'm a great maintenance programmer; I'm a great tool and die maker”—whatever you are, you're going to be contracted by that employer to provide that service. You'll have meetings as teams once a week or once a month or whatever it is—quarterly, even—to get together and know the direction of that company. That could be a company made up of people with two or three different contracts, whether they're a software developer for a publisher, for a printer or for a small business that's doing some graphic work. Those could be their types of jobs. I know people living and working like this today. They make good money.

Here's the deal: We've got to make it more convenient for the individual to save for their own future. The RRSP rules are prehistoric, and the reason the federal government doesn't do more on the RRSP rules—I think the maximum contribution is \$15,500 a year. That's ridiculous. Somebody in that job that I just described, a software developer today, could be making \$200,000 or \$300,000 a year, working hard, but in five years they may be out of a job because they may not be keeping their skill set up with the new software stuff that's com-

ing online. We should change the rules for people to protect the amount of income they want some time in the future by having tax rules that make it to their advantage to save today.

In fact, today there's no advantage in saving because there's no interest on the money. If you look at young people today—and I've got five of them; they're all well educated and all that kind of stuff and making a lot more money than I do—if you gave them \$500, they would spend \$5,000.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Look, I wish they would. Here's the deal, though: They will have to learn to save for themselves. I really, firmly believe that, and I think the curriculum review is a good place to start. I say they should be aware of this at a level that's appropriate for the grade. I know I'm not an expert on this stuff. I think it should be in high school, though; it should be a mandatory subject.

I would even recommend—many years ago, I took the Ontario securities courses, about 10 courses. My undergraduate degree was economics and commerce courses. I find that kind of an attractive area, so I do pay attention to it. It hasn't done me much good; I'm still here, still working for a living. But the point is, at least I'm aware.

Now, this discussion this morning is about how do we solve this pension problem? It's immature and irresponsible to just throw the issue over the fence and blame Jim Flaherty. I think what our member from Parry Sound—Muskoka said is good, and I've heard it from—in fairness, the minister yesterday said it as well: We've got to get in this together. This is too big, too complicated, and the people of Ontario, indeed Canada, need a solution.

I'll tell you why: Our young people today are going to be more mobile, not just in the types of jobs but where they work themselves. My five children live in Australia, England and the Isle of Man; the oldest boy was in the air force, he was in Nova Scotia—I'm just saying, all over the world. I look at the young people here today. Many of their families came from different parts of the world. That's the future. We've got to have increased mobility and transferability of savings funds that are protected through pension rules. Individuals should be allowed to contribute maximum amounts.

One of the bright things that the federal government has done is the tax-free savings account. It's a small start. There's—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it will have problems in the future because it's deferred tax. And they've capped it by saying that you can only keep up to \$5,000, I think it is.

Mr. Paul Miller: Per year.

Mr. John O'Toole: Per year, which is fine. I wish it was more, but you're at least making money. But it assumes that money itself—where are you going to keep it? A stock? Most of the stocks are going into the tank. But you're taking the risk, not pooling the risk.

What the CPP plan from the NDP does is it pools the risk. That's really what it does. It says that we're going to

guarantee you—they want to double it to \$2,000 a month, I think. Isn't it? You want to double the CPP or something like that? Something like that—\$2,500. One of the panel said \$2,500. That's pooled the risk.

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I'll tell you now—I'm over 65—once you get a CPP benefit, Canada pension benefit, and you have a certain income threshold, it's all clawed back. You don't actually get it. It comes in as income and moves you up to a tax bracket where it's clawed back.

In fact, countries that are pool risks like Sweden—why do Björn Borg and all those tennis athletes move to the United States? Because there these universal benefits are clawed back once you hit about \$70,000 a year of income.

Here's what I did in RSPs: I set up a fund when I was working—all my life—bought shares and all that stuff. My brother is more of a freelance guy, and here I am saving. I didn't have the snowmobile; I bought RSPs. He had the snowmobile; he has no RSPs.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Hang on. So I get older and my universal benefits come in to help him.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a couple of brothers.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: You'd be mad at me.

My point being that the fact is there is a joint responsibility. No one should be left behind, but that does not mean that everybody's going to have cable TV with the movie channels, the extra benefits. Individuals should be allowed—in fact, encouraged—to save for their own future. That sounds a bit coarse, but some people would rather live for today, as I said in my own case. If you give some young people today \$1,000, they'd spend \$5,000. If you gave them \$10,000, they'd spend maybe \$20,000.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Are you saying they're not responsible?

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. Look, I'm telling you; I know. They're capable. They're just aware that today—"Why would I put money in the bank? They're only paying 1%," but the value of their house or these assets they're buying, their Rolex watch or whatever, is going up faster than money itself.

Here's the last thing I'm going to say because I should save some time. Here's the real issue: The problem globally is even bigger than this pension debate. Right now, if you had a lot of assets, money, what would you put it in? Dollars? Bonds? Where would you put it? Say you had half a million or a million dollars or \$10 million or whatever.

I tell you what you wouldn't want to have it in: currency. Absolutely, money itself is the issue. The paper is a temporary store of value; you learn this in Finance 101. Money is a temporary store of value. I cut your grass, you give me \$20, and I take the \$20 and get my car fixed. It's a medium of exchange, money. What's going on today is all about trade, free trade.

Who holds all the American debt, the TARP money, the \$3 trillion? China. How much did the Olympics cost? Somebody tried to do a study. No one knows. They just print it. They just print it on the prospect of 8% to 15% growth. You can increase the money supply as fast as you grow the economy. Well, good luck. I think they have probably more debt than the United States, because if somebody called in all the money, pay on demand, there'd be no money.

When you look at the fluctuation in currencies today, we were at parity a week ago, and now it's down to 95 cents. The people trading money on currency exchange are actually the only ones making money. There is a huge monetary crisis in the world because people are artificially propping up or holding down the value of their currency to create trade. Well, it should be that income from whatever trades should be transaction-taxed.

But the key being here, if you had a lot of money—and Canada was criticized recently, and Ontario specifically, by some of the economists. The pools of pension funds are an example. Our pools are too small. People who want big money for Dubai and all these airports they're developing and stuff like that want large pools of capital. We don't have them. The US is running out of them as well.

Right now, I think currency is resources. That's why China's buying up the tar sands.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Petrodollars.

Mr. John O'Toole: Petrodollars, exactly right. The real issue here is not the pensions. Pensions is because the market fell apart. We're not getting 7%; you're lucky to get 1.5%. If the stuff you're buying is going up faster in cost, like resources, then the money you have in the bank—you're better off to have the resources.

These are big issues. They're not provincial specifically but they're important to every single person in this room today.

We've got to get the federal government to look at the jobs of the future. There's no more job for life; it's finished—maybe jobs in the armed forces or policing or something like that; I don't know. But even pilots today are finished at 45. Athletes who are making \$10 million, they're done at 40. People who are working with skills will be replaced and nanotechnology will make them redundant. Doctors who were trained 40 years ago—with all this robotic medicine, it's changing. There's no job for life.

We've got to face the fact that people and individuals have to be supported. Each one will have a different plan: "My objective is to have income in the future. Here's what I plan to save." Some of that should be protected through tax rules, and individuals and the province should protect the people who can't protect themselves. We have that responsibility collectively.

I have a lot to say on this. I hope we do the right thing and make sure that we don't hurt anyone.

The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka was kind enough to share his time with me, but I know the Speaker is eventually going to rule that I have to stop.

I do look forward to—I've already had a quick look at Bill 120. There are two really good suggestions in it, but they're all where you pay. The two new changes here, I think, are quite interesting too. They're going to have two new types of pensions. These are going to be—where the heck are they here? Anyway, there are two different funds, but it's up to you to contribute into them. They're called "additional voluntary contributions." Basically, that will be handled in definitions.

This resolution this morning, I think, is more talk about something that is kind of saying that Finance Minister Dwight Duncan and Jim Flaherty are working on this issue. I think the House here supports the need to protect people's pensions and we have a collective responsibility to deal with that.

Debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's my pleasure to introduce two constituents of mine from Peterborough who are in the members' east gallery today. Mr. and Mrs. Maloney and their son Frank purchased a "lunch with the MPP" at a charity function in Peterborough in July, so we're very happy to have the Maloney family here at Queen's Park with us today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to recognize Kim Redmond and her grade 5 class from St. Joseph Catholic School in Uxbridge. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce the students from the City Adult Learning Centre who are here with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of page Carina Hochgeschurz and the MPP from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, to welcome her mother, Colleen, her father, Eric, her sister Katelyn, her grandmother Jan Latimer, her grandfather Ric Latimer, her aunt Linda Warren and her cousin Markie Warren, who are visiting her at Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's my pleasure to introduce the Honourable Guy E. Joseph, Minister of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities for St. Lucia.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Acting Premier. Last year, before the auditor reported on the worst scandal in Ontario history, Premier McGuinty

perched on the edge of his boardroom table and made a video confession. He apologized for allowing front-line health care dollars to be used for sweetheart deals with Liberal-friendly consultants, and said, "We're going to change the rules." The auditor's new report reveals he didn't change the rules that allowed hospitals to hand out sweetheart deals to Liberal-friendly consultants.

Today, a year later, the Premier said that he will bring in tough new rules again. Why should Ontario families believe anything will change this time around?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The first thing I want to do is to say thank you to the Auditor General for a very thorough report. He has recommended changes, and I'm very pleased to say that, this afternoon, I will be introducing legislation that responds to all of his recommendations.

Let's just remember that it was this government, in 2004, that gave the Auditor General oversight of hospitals. We were the government that gave the Auditor General oversight. We wanted him to do exactly this job. We wanted to find out what was going on that should not be going on.

We also asked the Auditor General specifically to go in and look at the use of consultants—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: In the Premier's video confession, in his cleansing moment of contrition, the Premier blamed loopholes for Liberal-friendly consultants like Courtyard and Accenture getting rich from money for front-line health care. Then he turned to the camera and said, "We're going to close the loopholes." But the auditor's new report reveals that he not only didn't close the loopholes, he opened the doors so wide that millions more went to Liberal-friendly Courtyard and Accenture consultants.

You say that your new rules will fix this, but Ontario families have heard this all before. Why should Ontario families believe you?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat: We are the government that gave the auditor responsibility that you refused to do. You wanted to keep this information hidden. You would not allow the Auditor General in to look at these very questions.

This government has a strong history of continually improving transparency and accountability. This builds on what we have done before. We gave the Auditor General the power. He went in and did a very thorough report. He has given us recommendations, and we are following each and every one of his recommendations. Indeed, we are going further than the Auditor General has recommended to include the broader public sector in this legislation.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ontario families are smart enough to know that the Premier's video confessional last year was just a PR stunt to deflect attention from the auditor's eHealth report. Instead of learning his lesson

from eHealth, the Premier is still allowing Liberal insiders to be rewarded with sweetheart deals, only this time Ontario families are paying government to lobby government.

Now the Premier is announcing new legislation that he says will stop the sweetheart deals and expense boondoggles once and for all. Are you the only ones who don't realize that this feigned contrition is just PR?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I find it kind of remarkable that this is now the party that is positioning themselves as looking out for taxpayer dollars. Let's think about what we're doing. We have cut—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The member from Halton, who's not in his seat—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton. The Minister of Community Safety. The Minister of Research and Innovation. The member from Oxford. The member from Nepean.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance. Minister of Community Safety, for the second time.

Minister?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: Last week, we debated a motion that involved sending a memo to hospital CEOs. That's fine, I suppose, but we think we need to go much, much further. That is why we are legislating that hospitals will follow procurement rules. We will put an end to the practice of using lobbyists to lobby government. My question is: Will you support the bill? And if you can't even support the bill, will you post your own expenses?

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again for the Acting Premier: In the Premier's video confessional he promises, "We're going to say no under the rules to certain expenses." But Ontario families still can't see what you've said no to, and here's why: Eleven ministers and 19 agencies haven't posted their expenses for the past year on the government's expense disclosure website.

Now the McGuinty Liberals say they're going to fine hospital CEOs that lobby the government. What is the point of bringing in new rules if the McGuinty Liberals continue not to follow the existing rules?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm sure the member opposite is aware that her leader has not posted his expenses, and that is very regrettable. The member opposite knows the ministers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Community and Social Services will

please come to order, and the Minister of Research and Innovation. The Minister of Municipal Affairs, order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean, you've just asked the question and you still have a couple of supplementaries yet.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are inconsistencies in the questions and in the facts. I know that Ontario taxpayers take those kinds of things into account. What's important is that Premier McGuinty and his government have brought much greater accountability across every range.

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can't; somebody else is.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not my responsibility. We've dealt with that issue once before in this House.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The people of Ontario do understand the importance of the legislation that my colleague is bringing forward to further enhance accountability. We look forward to the debate. We hope the official opposition will support enhanced accountability—something this government has worked hard to provide the people of Ontario for the last seven years.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think there's something very important that the minister needs to know. First of all, he misled this House by saying the leader has not posted his expenses—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member will withdraw the comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw the comment.

Having said that, this minister must correct the record. Our leader's expenses were posted minutes after the Integrity Commissioner reviewed them. They're at ontariopleader.ca. But the reality is, we put forward the Truth in Government Act, which would have led to more transparency and accountability, but that party defeated it.

The auditor confirms what Ontario families already know: The Premier's so-called new rules haven't changed a thing. On page 8 of the auditor's hospital report, he says that the July 2009 directive you brought in to fix the loopholes at eHealth and the feeding frenzy were ineffective. Higher-priced consultants were given preferred treatment.

If you ignored the rules to fix eHealth, then why would you expect Ontario families to believe you're going to fix anything this time around?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, in the interests of accuracy, the member is aware and knows full well that all agencies have submitted their expenses by the deadline. The approvals are with the Integrity Commissioner, who is doing a great job at reviewing these expenses, which will be posted, as I understand it in our conversations with the Integrity Commissioner, when the Integrity Commissioner—and I should point out—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm warning the member from Halton, and I'm warning the member from Renfrew.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That is part of the entire accountability and transparency that we have brought to government since assuming office seven years ago.

We'll have a chance later, in the supplementary, to talk about things that weren't brought to the public's attention in the past. But all agencies are in compliance. The Integrity Commissioner is reviewing them. We've brought integrity and accountability. I hope that member and her party will support the minister's legislation later today.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What I didn't hear was an apology to Tim Hudak, the PC leader, for erroneously telling legislators and the province what he—so falsely accused—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just remind the honourable member that we have a practice in here of not naming individual names. Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Look, in the Premier's video of confessional, he sheds a few crocodile tears, and he says, again, he'll change.

But after the camera is turned off, he doesn't deliver the accountability that he promises Ontario families. Ontario families don't want more PR schemes from the McGuinty government; they want accountability. Instead of a Premier who rewards insiders, Ontario families want someone who will focus on front-line care first. Why can't the McGuinty Liberals understand that it is time for a change?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think the member is absolutely right that people want more accountability. Then why didn't her government put Hydro One under the auspices of the Auditor General? Why didn't you and your party and leader put OPG under the auspices? Do you think it had anything to do with the yachts and the consultants and the hidden expenses? Whatever became of the Hydro One yacht? And why did you not put hospitals under the auspices of the Auditor General? We're doing that. That government concealed its expenses, that party never wanted accountability when it was in office, and out of convenience and trying to get votes they try to undermine—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Lanark will withdraw a comment that I heard.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. For families watching local health services van-

ish, today's report by the Auditor General was a slap in the face. It is a damning indictment of how well-connected insiders made off with thousands and sometimes millions of dollars at the same time as families in Niagara and Hamilton were losing emergency rooms. Why is there public money for this government's friends and insiders, but when it comes to local front-line care, they say, "Too bad, so sad"?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The auditor, at our request, went in to look at the use of consultants in hospitals, in LHINs and the ministries. That is correct. At our request, the Auditor General went in. The Auditor General found practices that have been going on for a long period of time that are simply unacceptable. That is why we are taking action today to put an end to the practices. No longer will taxpayer dollars be used to hire lobbyists to lobby for more taxpayer dollars. That practice will immediately be put to an end. We are also expanding freedom of information to cover hospitals.

This is in step with steps we have taken, since we were elected in 2003, to increase transparency and accountability across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here is just one of many egregious examples of where our precious health dollars have gone: A consultant already being paid \$275,000 a year billed a hospital for \$2,100 for accommodations in Singapore and then another \$355 for drinks at dinner. Meanwhile, breast cancer patients in London were told that nurse examiners that they rely on would be laid off. If this government can't find money to support women dealing with breast cancer, why can they spend \$2,500 to send consultants to Singapore and buy them drinks?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The leader of the third party references one of the most egregious examples in the report. It is unacceptable to her. It is unacceptable to all of us.

Let's just remind that we are the ones who, contrary to the other governments when they were in power, gave the Auditor General the authority to go in. We knew when we did that that the Auditor General would find things that needed fixing. He has not disappointed us. He has found significant practices that we need to put an end to. That is why we are introducing legislation this afternoon: because this is all about getting the best value for taxpayer dollars. It is the taxpayers who are funding this. They expect that money to be spent on front-line health care. That is why we are making the changes that we're making today.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While patients were being told that there was no ER service, consultants were being told that there are no limits. One hospital paid a consultant \$170,000 for two years of expenses, but when auditors

asked for the receipts for those expenses the consultant wanted another \$3,000 just to produce the receipts.

In Sudbury and Thunder Bay, emergency room patients are being admitted to hallways, to closets, to shower rooms. Why are patients waiting for ER services in a closet while consultants are charging \$3,000 simply to write a receipt?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, the leader of the third party has raised issues that the auditor has revealed in his report today. We are absolutely committed to improving health care in this province—and we've come a long way. We've got almost a million more people with access to primary care. We brought down wait times dramatically for surgeries and for procedures, in some cases by more than a year. We've got more than 10,000 more nurses working in Ontario today than when we took office. We have 2,900 more physicians working today than when we took office.

Our health care system is getting stronger. It is getting better. But it is clear today that we need to take steps to further strengthen accountability and transparency in the health care sector, and we are taking that action.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. Across Ontario, people are watching their hospitals cut services left, right and centre. In Windsor, patients lost their pain clinic, nurses lost jobs and surgical beds vanished.

Meanwhile, contracts to consultants were being handed out like Halloween candy. One hospital hired a consultant at a cost of \$163,000, and the firm got six untendered follow-up contracts worth another \$1.1 million. Another contract grew magically from \$51,000 to \$675,000.

Why are patients in Windsor losing surgical beds while consultants are watching contracts grow and grow and grow without any oversight by this government?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said, the Auditor General has been very, very clear that we've got some work to do. We accept that responsibility and we are moving on that today. This afternoon, I will be introducing legislation. If that legislation passes, we will tighten up the rules and enhance accountability and transparency in the health care sector and well beyond the health care sector.

This is just the latest in a series of steps we have taken to increase and improve transparency and accountability. Think back to 2003, when we were told by the previous government that there was no deficit in the province of Ontario. That will never happen again because we have given the Auditor General the responsibility of signing off on our books before the election. That was the first step we took. We've expanded—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hospitals in Ottawa have slashed nearly 100 nursing positions. This summer, one

woman arrived at her hospital rape crisis centre looking for help, and she was turned away because supposedly the hospital is in tough times—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'm warning the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The woman was turned away from a rape crisis centre. Why? Because supposedly the hospital was in tough economic times and they had to cut some services. Today that woman is going to hear about a hospital consultant collecting \$210,000 for a four-day workweek.

What does this government have to say to that woman and thousands like her who are dealing with health care cuts while hospitals hand millions and millions of scarce and precious health care dollars to well-connected insiders?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What that woman is going to hear, and what people across the province are going to hear, is that that is not acceptable, that the practices of the past are no longer acceptable. I have spoken to the hospital CEOs—

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are making the changes that the Auditor General has recommended and we are going far beyond that. I do hope that all parties in the House support this legislation that will take us to a higher level of transparency and accountability.

But I simply must take issue with the premise of the leader of the third party's question that health care services are getting worse in this province. They are significantly better. Let me tell you how. In your own community, in Hamilton, we have reduced wait times at Hamilton Health Sciences for hip replacement surgery; we've taken 277 days off that wait. We have taken—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government has been in power for seven long years in Ontario, and for seven long years they have watched as well-connected insiders have billed our hospitals more and more. For what? For trips to Singapore, for writing receipts for expenses, for six- and seven-figure salaries. They ignored patients who desperately needed investments in emergency rooms and in front-line care.

This government can't solve the problem. They are the problem. Why would any patient at all in Ontario believe that the government today can actually solve this problem when they have no solutions to the mess and everybody in here knows it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I take issue with the premise of the question. We know what the problem is because we gave the Auditor General the responsibility to go in and look. We specifically asked him to look at

the issue of consultants in this province. He was asked to go in; he went in. He did a very thorough job. He has come back with recommendations. We are going to implement every single one of his recommendations and we are doing it today.

This builds on a long history, a history since 2003, of improving accountability and transparency across government. We have expanded freedom of information to cover OPG, to cover Hydro One, to cover universities, to cover Cancer Care Ontario. Local public utilities were brought back under freedom of information in 2004. Today, we are adding to that list. We are—

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

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The question is for the Acting Premier. The last time that the auditor reported, Premier McGuinty reacted with PR schemes and bluster. In the PR video that he made before the auditor's report on the billion-dollar eHealth scandal, the Premier said, "Expenses for OPS senior management, cabinet ministers, political staff and senior executives at Ontario's 22 largest agencies will be posted online." It is a year later and 85% of your agencies have yet to post any of their expenses online.

Why would Ontario families believe what the Premier is promising to do to stop Liberal-friendly consultants from getting rich this time around?

1100

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I responded to this question in a previous question.

My understanding is that these agencies have in fact submitted on time. Those expenses are with the Integrity Commissioner, who does an outstanding job in reviewing these. I imagine that that office is quite backlogged.

We're very proud of the fact that we brought this level of accountability and transparency to those expenses. I look forward to those expenses being posted and look forward to working with all parties in this Legislature to enhance accountability. And I look forward to that member supporting the Minister of Health's legislation later—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again, it's his understanding, but the fact remains that 85% of his agencies haven't posted online. That's a fact.

The Premier made a second video apologizing for eHealth on September 14, but he's taken it down from his website. It could be to make room for a new video confessional about Liberal-friendly consultants getting rich off of hospital contracts.

But Ontario families have heard Premier McGuinty promise new rules before. Eleven of your cabinet ministers have not posted their expenses online since he said they would.

The Premier once said that the buck stops with him, but we all know it really stops with his press secretaries,

Jane Almeida, Michele Wong and Jennifer Beckermann, because it is through them where he buries his own expenses.

If the biggest scandal in Ontario history won't stop Premier McGuinty from skirting accountability and transparency rules, then why—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member, and I'd like her to withdraw the comments because it was appearing to me that you are imputing motive on the part of the Premier. I'd just ask you to withdraw that comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Acting Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Had the regulations we're putting in effect been put in by that government, we would have found out some really interesting things. We would have found out that former Premier Harris received almost \$20,000 in consulting fees from Hydro One. We would have found out that Paul Rhodes collected \$1,074,000 through contracts with Hydro One, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Health and the LCBO. We would have found that Michael Gourley collected \$3.7 million in untendered contracts to provide advice on hydro privatization. We would have found a lot more.

We will be revealing that party's record of not providing transparency, not providing accountability, not respecting taxpayers, not respecting a brighter future for Ontario, not investing in health care, not investing in education.

Your record is dismal. Your arguments are pathetic. We're cleaning up—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I appreciate the comment from the honourable member who talked about the children who are sitting here watching this.

New question.

CONSULTANTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Acting Premier. Trust is at the core of care. You can't have quality care if you don't have trust. This government's actions have shaken the confidence of every Ontarian about our health care system. This government's actions have fostered this culture of entitlement to taxpayers' money, and the consequences of it are in the auditor's report for everyone to read. I must warn you, reading this report is hazardous to your health. It will make you sick.

How does the Acting Premier feel about his government having single-handedly destroyed a key pillar of our most cherished government program, our health care system? How does it feel?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that I think the member opposite is misreading the report. What I mean by that is, I'm saying that the Auditor General has shone the light on practices that are completely unacceptable and do not reflect respect for taxpayers' dollars. We are changing that.

But what I do think the member opposite needs to understand is that it is part of what we have done in government, since we got elected, to continually improve transparency and accountability. There is nothing in this report that makes me—I am completely determined to clean up the problems that the Auditor General has raised.

We are taking action. We are taking action today. I am hoping that all parties in this House will support this legislation to—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The government is blaming hospitals, but accepting no blame for themselves when Ontarians expect their taxpayers' dollars to go towards front-line care services, to build an excellent health care system for all. The minister claims there is no use for hospitals to hire consultants, yet it was this very government that fostered that culture where hospitals felt they had no choice, that there was no other way. If they wanted a result they had to pay for lobbyists, and that was the way business was done with this government. How can the government expect Ontarians to have faith in our health care system when we saw the eHealth scandal, and once again, we're seeing high-priced consultants living the high life—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will withdraw the comment he just made. Even over the noise I can still hear some of those things.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is simple: How can the government expect Ontarians to have faith in our health care system when, just like the eHealth scandal, once again we're seeing high-priced consultants living the high life while health care services suffer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do expect Ontarians to have faith in their health care system, and the reason they have faith and confidence in their health care system is that every year, health care is getting better in this province.

I was very pleased to recently announce 30 new family health teams across this province, bringing us to a total of 200 family health teams. That means better access to better care right across this province. The people of this province know that they are waiting less time to have key procedures done. We have more than 10,000 more nurses working in this province.

Health care is stronger and we are turning our attention now to quality of care. It is a concept that has been embraced by the health care community. I know that I

can speak on behalf of the health care community. We need to do better when it comes to transparency and accountability. We are doing better.

CONSULTANTS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, my constituents rely on front-line health care services. Especially in these tough economic times, we know that every health care dollar should be spent to improve patient care. This government has made significant investments in our health care system. We have increased access to doctors and reduced wait times. We need to ensure we're getting the best quality and value for our money.

The practice of spending public dollars to hire lobbyists to lobby the government for more public money is something that has been going on for decades, by former governments of all parties. My constituents find this use of taxpayers' dollars totally inappropriate and would like to know if the minister believes this practice is acceptable or not.

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very glad to have the opportunity to speak to the issue. Let me be very clear: No one should be using taxpayer dollars to hire a lobbyist to ask for more taxpayer dollars.

This morning I spoke to the hospital CEOs and I put them on notice. Change is coming, and in fact, change is here. This afternoon, I intend to introduce legislation that, if it is passed, would ban the practice of using taxpayer dollars to hire a lobbyist to get more taxpayer dollars. This is a practice that has been in place for many, many years. It has been a practice under three different parties in power, but it is time for that practice to end.

In fact, during previous government years, over 150 lobbyists were hired on behalf of organizations that received public funds—

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Minister. I'm glad to see that this government is taking the necessary action to address this problem.

When it comes to accountability for public dollars, I know that the Auditor General released his report today raising concerns around the use of consultants. Ontarians expect their tax dollars to be properly invested in good government policies and services, and so do I. I know that our government needs to set a higher standard for everyone with more transparency, more scrutiny, more responsibility and more accountability.

Can the minister tell the House what you are doing to take action on this particular issue?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have made significant progress, since we were elected, in increasing accountability and transparency in government. One of the results of that is that we have cut in half the number of consultants that were working for government. That's right:

When this party opposite was in power, they were spending twice as much as we do on consultants.

This afternoon, I will be introducing legislation that, if passed, would authorize me to implement new accountability measures for hospitals and LHINs that would require the public posting of expense claim information. It would require reporting on the use of consultants. It would require attestations about each organization's compliance with the requirements of the proposed legislation. It would enforce potential reductions in compensation should executives fail to comply. It would permit ministry audits of the operations of LHINs and hospitals.

We're going even further. We are mandating public—

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

CONSULTANTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Acting Premier. I hope he has had a moment to regain his composure and catch his breath after the last one.

Ontario families will pay \$5 for KFC's double-down sandwich, and it looks like Ontario families will pay a lot more for Premier McGuinty's double downers. The auditor's eHealth report exposed a billion-dollar boondoggle of sweetheart deals being handed out to Liberal-friendly consultants. Now the auditor's hospital report exposes sweetheart deals being handed out to those same Liberal-friendly consultants.

Acting Premier, what makes you think Ontario families can afford it and you?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I will simply reiterate what we have said from the beginning of question period. Bringing in increased accountability and transparency to government and to the broader public service has been at the core of the mandate of this government.

Later today, the Minister of Health will bring legislation to address the challenges raised by the auditor that have occurred under governments over the course of the last number of years. What we're doing is moving forward. I look forward to that member and his party supporting the enhanced accountability that the Minister of Health is bringing across the public and broader public sectors.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again, the McGuinty Liberals say that tough new rules are needed to stop them from handing out money to their Liberal-friendly consultants. They can't help themselves.

But he backtracked on the rules he introduced after eHealth. Premier McGuinty has backtracked so often, he has broken every record. Yesterday before lunch, the Minister of Health Promotion said KFC's double-down sandwich is something the McGuinty Liberals could investigate banning. A little later, after lunch, before the first unlucky bird could hit the fryer, the minister's office issued a statement backtracking on the double-down ban. How long will it take for Premier McGuinty to break the

record of backtracking on his so-called new accountability rules?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If the kind of accountability rules we're putting in place had been in place some time ago, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition wouldn't have expensed \$12.25 for his fishing licence, or perhaps the Leader of the Opposition would not have expensed \$575 for a television. To the point about fast food, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition wouldn't have expensed his chicken McNuggets on his taxpayer-paid trip to Rio de Janeiro 10 years ago. Then, to add insult to injury, the Leader of the Opposition expensed his most recent order of chicken McNuggets. At least he's consistent.

We are bringing openness, accountability and transparency that will prevent the kind of abuse of public tax dollars that happened when that member's party was in office to give—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I'd say to the honourable members that with all this talk of food right now and with the clock delayed, your lunch may be a little late today.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Acting Premier. As of November 1 this year, the winter time-of-use rates are going to be put in place. We know that electricity rates will double between 5 and 11 at night and 7 and 11 in the morning. The government is asking people to shift their habits so that they do things off peak, presumably between 11 at night and 7 in the morning. My question to you is, when do you expect students to do their homework—after 11 o'clock at night?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've talked many times about the importance of time of use and how it's going to encourage people to move off of peak. As we move into the winter months, nothing has changed, and we will continue those efforts.

I guess what I want to talk about a little bit today, as well, is why the third party continues to oppose our efforts to make the important investments in our energy system. Let's focus on job creation. Our Premier was in Guelph yesterday, where he announced that 380 direct and indirect jobs were being created. This is what the steelworkers of Ontario said:

"Today's announcement is doubly good news.... More new jobs in Ontario are just what working families need, and helping build a cleaner tomorrow is just what workers want for their kids too...."

"From steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels"—I could go on, and I think I will in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, what students would like to know is, when are they going to do their homework? You're going to double the electricity rates from 5 in the

afternoon to 11 o'clock at night and you're going to double the rate from 7 in the morning to 11 in the morning, at the time kids are home. Heating has to happen, electricity has to go in, and the computer has to be plugged into the wall. So why don't you answer the question? Why don't you at least admit that your time-of-use survey does nothing to help students or families with their high hydro bills? When do you expect them to study?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I have answered the question; I've answered it many times. But I think what those students also want to know is why the NDP is abandoning our efforts to create clean energy jobs in this province. And, frankly, I think that the steelworkers of Ontario would want to know the same thing, so I'm going to quote once again from the national director of the United Steelworkers, Ken Neumann:

"Today's announcement is doubly good news. More new jobs in Ontario are just what working families need, and helping build a cleaner tomorrow is just what workers want for their kids too...."

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He goes on to say: "From steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels, workers can support their families by working in clean energy.... Workers in other countries know this is the economy of tomorrow.... More Ontario workers know clean energy will power our economy too."

Why don't the NDP know that? Why don't the NDP stand up for the steelworkers across this province? Why don't—

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

GROWTH PLANNING

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Communities in the Barrie and Simcoe area face unique challenges when it comes to growth, unique challenges that this government faced head-on with the release last spring of Simcoe Area: A Strategic Vision for Growth.

My constituents recognize the need to protect agricultural lands and green spaces in the Simcoe area. Yet although the Simcoe strategy was released for public consultation more than a year ago, the government still hasn't followed up with the draft amendment to the growth plan. There is a real sense in my community that the wait has been long enough and that it is time for the government to move forward.

Can the minister advise if he is considering a growth plan amendment for the Simcoe area, and, if so, when will he be ready to release it?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First off, I'd like to thank the member for Barrie for her advocacy on this issue. I appreciate this opportunity to answer her questions publicly. I'd like her constituents to know that she has been constantly in touch with me and my staff on this matter.

In answer to the question, yes, we'll be moving forward with a consultation on a proposed amendment to the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe, just as our Simcoe vision to promote strong and sustainable communities across the Simcoe region anticipated.

We very carefully reviewed the more than 100 submissions we received in response to our vision paper and used them to develop a draft amendment. We are currently finalizing the details, and I look forward to releasing it for public consultation very shortly, within a few weeks.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: Thank you, Minister. I know that my constituents will be pleased to hear that the draft amendment is on the way.

I'm glad that more Ontarians are discovering Simcoe county and moving to the region to enjoy our unique quality of life and our strong sense of community. Continued growth is vital for our economic development.

Simcoe county has a proud agricultural heritage that we need to promote and ecological treasures that we need to protect. How will the minister's proposed amendment balance these competing priorities, and what will the proposed amendment seek to accomplish in terms of growth in Simcoe county?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In vibrant communities, balancing growth with the protection of agricultural lands and natural areas is what our award-winning growth plan is all about.

The overarching goals of the amendment we intend to release shortly for consultation will be to help all Simcoe area communities flourish by focusing growth in areas where it can be best accommodated and by reducing development pressure on natural areas and agricultural land.

It will enhance the area's economic competitiveness and encourage efficient use of new and existing infrastructure, and it will complement and support the Lake Simcoe protection plan and the greenbelt plan.

In sum, our proposed amendment will provide communities in the Simcoe area with the framework to achieve livable, compact communities and a clean, healthy environment.

HOME CARE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: My constituent Mrs. Marion Avard is 87 years old. She chose to convalesce at home rather than accept her doctor's advice that she stay in hospital for a month and in a convalescent care facility for another three months. By doing so, she and her family saved the health care system literally hundreds of thousands of dollars.

But when the family asked to be reimbursed for a mere \$500 for the cost of renting equipment such as a hospital bed and a wheelchair, they were advised by the CCAC that equipment rental is only covered for 28 days.

Can the minister tell us how this policy squares with her recent announcement of an expansion of the aging-at-home policy of this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member opposite for the question, and I think it's a very good question. We are very much putting our focus on improving the array of services that are available outside of institutions, be they hospitals or long-term-care homes. That community care is the future of our health care system. We simply must better support people to age at home, to convalesce at home and to recover at home. We are, I can tell you, looking very closely at what we need to do to further strengthen supports for people in their own homes. I will undertake to keep this in mind as we move forward to strengthen supports for people outside of hospitals and outside of long-term-care homes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: This is a practical example of how disconnected this government is, from its announcements and professions to its practical delivery of policy. I appreciate the minister's undertaking and I look forward to seeing what will happen on this particular file.

It's interesting that on the same day that I got the advice of the decline of the coverage of this benefit, I received an announcement from the Central LHIN that it is expanding its bureaucracy by an additional two senior staff. I would ask the minister: Why on the one hand is there no money to pay an 87-year-old for a \$500 rental fee, but there are thousands of dollars to increase the bureaucracy at the local LHIN?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said earlier, this area of supporting people in their community is exactly the direction that our government is going in. There are others who say the solution is to just build more long-term-care homes. Our solution is, let's really invest where it can make a difference for people: in their homes and in their communities.

Aging at home is undertaking that work through the LHINs for the first time. We are focusing on integrating that care and providing supports for people.

The Central LHIN—the member opposite's riding is in the Central LHIN—has got projects, for example, that provide housecleaning services to vulnerable low-income seniors in Markham, in Richmond Hill and in North York, helping people stay at home longer. They have a program that provides caregivers to individuals from east Asia who are suffering from dementia. The program provides access to personal support—

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

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. The Auditor General found that eight hospitals blew more than \$1.1 million of our precious health care dollars on lobbyists in the past three years alone. One particular hospital squandered \$675,000 on lobbyists over the past eight years. Why are the McGuinty Liberals only responding now, when high-priced, wasteful lobbying of their government has been going on since they were first elected, seven long years ago?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As we've discussed throughout this question period today, we have taken several steps and today we are taking an additional step to improve transparency and accountability.

I think if members of this House from all parties were being honest with themselves, they would know that every party, for the past many, many years, has participated in lobbyists. This is a practice that has gone on for too long. That is why today we are banning that practice. If the legislation passes, we will be banning that practice.

I have spoken to hospital CEOs and board chairs today, and I've made it very, very clear that this is a practice that has to stop immediately; that it not wait until legislation is passed. I have also instructed people in my ministry that this is no longer a practice that is acceptable to us, because we do need—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General found that one hospital recently—recently—hired two lobbyists to get their issues on this government's agenda. Another had a \$50,000 deal with a lobbyist without any documentation whatsoever. How can the health minister claim to be surprised by these findings when the Auditor General has shown that well-connected lobbyists have been lining their pockets with public health care dollars in this province for years and years under this government's watch?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me go back: Ours was the government that brought in the power for the Auditor General to look at hospitals. That did not happen when the NDP was in power; it did not happen when the Conservative Party was in power. We were the ones who said, through the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, "Auditor, please go in and take a look and give us some advice." We asked for this advice. We asked for these recommendations.

And today, the day of the release of the Auditor General's report, I will be introducing legislation that not only responds to all of the recommendations in the report, but goes much further. This is another step in the right direction.

1130

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. On October 15, I was proud to be in attendance as the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation held a remembering, honouring and thanking gathering to announce the start of their healing process and to unveil a monument in honour of Dudley George.

I took my eight-year-old grandson Martin and we started early in the morning with the traditional sunrise ceremony in one of the teepees at the former Ipperwash park. Martin learned that it took many years to bring about the Ipperwash inquiry so that we could discover the truth of what happened that tragic night. He had an opportunity to meet Justice Sidney Linden, who released the Ipperwash inquiry report in May 2007.

I know that the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is currently working with other ministries affected by that report's recommendations. Minister, how is this government taking action on the recommendations of the Ipperwash report?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It was a very emotional day and a very emotional ceremony last Friday at the unveiling of the Dudley George memorial. That day came about as a result of a terrible tragedy. The Ipperwash recommendations that my colleague references came about as a result of an inquiry—an inquiry that took a number of years to call, an inquiry which recognized that the heart of healing begins with understanding what actually happened and facing the reality of what actually happened. Everybody at that day, everybody at the ceremony recognized that that very painful recognition began with confronting the truth about what happened. That was the heart and the beginning of the ceremony, and I'll address some of the other matters in the supplementary.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I know that we are well on our way to implementing many of the recommendations in the Ipperwash report, with many provincial ministries working directly with First Nations and Métis people of Ontario to review and implement those recommendations.

The agreement to transfer the Ipperwash park lands to the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation is an important example of this. My constituents in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex know that our government committed to transferring Ipperwash park, even though it was not one of the 100 recommendations in the report.

The process started with the signing of the transfer process agreement by the former Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the chief of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation, Liz Cloud. Can the minister tell my constituents more about this process?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: What her constituents and the members of this House will want to know is that the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has been chair of a working committee that brings together the First Nations and the surrounding communities for healing, recognition of joint opportunities, and how to move from those events—not forgetting, but remembering—into a very positive future. It's a result of her very hard work and the work of all those others that my predecessor was able to make the signing ceremony that committed the government of Ontario to transfer the park, and the ongoing work at identifying a better economic future for the First Nations and for the surrounding communities as a result of an inquiry that would never have been called but for the Premier and my colleague Minister Phillips's dogged determination—

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

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The federal-provincial agreement

dated March 2, 2007, and signed by the member from Vaughan in his capacity as finance minister, obliged the federal government to complete several transportation projects with respect to the Flow initiative in the GTA.

Similarly, the agreement obliged the provincial government to complete several projects, and I quote from the agreement: "As part of the Flow and directly related to the commitment of federal participation in the above GTA transit project, Ontario agrees to complete the construction of three important highway projects to improve traffic flow in the GTA within firm and accelerated timelines." One project was the extension of Highway 407 to Highway 35/115.

This agreement is crystal clear, Minister. Why are you choosing to renege on it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not. We are going ahead with the extension of the 407.

I think the member opposite, who has access to a lot of information on this file, understands that the first 407 was built in stages. This part of the 407 is being built in stages. We're moving ahead right now, and we're moving ahead despite the fact that we had an economic downturn that was not envisioned when that agreement was signed. In spite of that, we're going ahead. The 407's next stage is in the works right now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: A couple of things here: One is, there was a firm commitment to complete this highway to 35/115; and secondly, despite the economic downturn, somehow the federal government managed to live up to their requirements.

Last night, I attended a public meeting in my riding, specifically, in the hamlet of Columbus. Your decision to renege on the Flow agreement is having a catastrophic effect on this community. You're proposing now to stop Highway 407 at Simcoe Street, right in the middle of Columbus. This makes no economic sense, no sense from a traffic perspective and, most importantly, it's going to totally destroy the social fabric of this important historic community.

Minister, at the very least, will you please revisit this ill-considered decision?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to challenge the member opposite on the contention that we're not living up to the agreement. We're going ahead with the Highway 404 extension, we're widening Highway 7 and we are extending the 407 to 35/115—but we're doing it in stages, which is a responsible approach to extending this road.

On the exit, which is the Simcoe road, we're meeting with the mayors of the area. I have had many conversations with Roger Anderson and with other political leaders. I know that there are issues around traffic circulation, and we will be dealing with those with the community.

But I remind the House again that we're going ahead. We are purchasing properties between Simcoe road and 35/115. We are committed to that entire area. The environmental assessment has been completed on the entire

corridor. We're building it in stages and we're going ahead despite an economic downturn that no one anticipated.

CONSULTANTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The orgy of extravagant, high-flying spending on exotic trips, gourmet meals and alcohol for consultants paid for by our hospitals is absolutely disgusting. Reading it made me sick. This information would have never seen the light of day if I had not moved the motion in public accounts calling on the Auditor General to do this work. Liberal backbenchers in committee—

Interjections.

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

Member from Nickel Belt, please continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Let me tell you that Liberal backbenchers on that committee tried to derail my motion, but they were embarrassed into voting for it in the midst of the eHealth scandal.

My question, Minister: How could you allow this disgusting waste of precious health care dollars to occur under your watch?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: History is interesting. Let's just remember that it may well be that the member opposite introduced the motion, but that is a committee that does have a majority of Liberals on it. We did ask the Auditor General to go in and find out what he found out.

I said earlier today that it's kind of like pulling the fridge out, you know? Certainly I think most of us have had the experience where you don't really want to pull that fridge out to see what's behind the fridge, but when you do, it's your responsibility to clean it up. So what we have done: We've given the Auditor General the power. We've asked him specifically to go in and look at these issues. He has reported back, and now our job, collectively, is to clean it up. I do ask the member opposite—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The auditor, in his report, makes reference to funnelling of money from the Ministry of Health through hospitals. We see agencies that were given close to a million dollars from the Ministry of Health to pay for two single-sourced consultant contracts to do work for the ministry. Last October, at the same time as I moved the motion that led to today's report, I put forward a second motion calling for the auditor to investigate this very practice. The Liberals on the committee voted it down.

With the minister's newfound love for transparency, can I suggest that she not only clean the fridge but clean the stove? Is the ministry ready to let the AG examine the compensation of senior executives?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do confess that I had a little bit of difficulty hearing the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I hope all members had the opportunity to hear the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It is important, when questions are being asked, that the minister to whom that question is being directed—so I hope that we can all learn a little lesson from the experience that the Minister of Health has just had.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

I will answer the question that I believe I heard, and the question is, will we end the practice of having the ministry pay through a third party? Yes, we will. That meant that practice is over. We do not do that anymore, and we will not do that in the future.

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

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: This morning I introduced a class from St. Joseph Catholic School in Uxbridge, and I named a teacher, Kim Redmond. In fact, I met with the class, and it was Kate Evangelista. They were here, and they really appreciated meeting the Speaker and touring Queen's Park. Thank you, Speaker, for introducing them as well.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would like to introduce to the House a civically engaged constituent of Mississauga—Streetsville, Benita Grist, and her sister-in-law Linda Johnston. They are in the east members' gallery. I'd like members to welcome them to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: As you know, Monday, October 25, is election day in all municipalities across our province, so I rise today in the House to encourage eligible voters to exercise their vote in the upcoming elections. People will be making their choices for mayor, reeve, deputy reeve, deputy mayor, councillors and school board trustees.

Historically, a range of 17% to 35% of eligible voters vote in municipal elections. I think that this is very alarming, as it represents a very, very low turnout. I can assure you that every vote does make a difference and that everyone has a personal responsibility to exercise their democratic right.

The decisions made by local municipal councils have a huge impact on our day-to-day life. By taking the time to vote, we are ensuring that we're voicing our opinions on the visions in our municipalities for services like transit and garbage and police and fire and ambulance. Those are just to name a few.

Whether you decide to vote on October 25 or in one of the advance polls, I strongly encourage every eligible voter to take the time to make this important contribution as a citizen of our great nation.

CO-OP WEEK

Mrs. Liz Sandals: This week is national Co-op Week, and tonight is the Ontario Co-operative Association's 10th annual conference and awards gala. This is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the successes of co-ops throughout the province and to highlight the ways in which the McGuinty government is supporting the co-op sector in Ontario.

There are currently 1,300 incorporated co-ops, credit unions and caisses populaires operating in 1,900 locations in 400 communities across Ontario, serving more than 1.4 million members.

In terms of economic impact, the co-op sector in Ontario has more than \$30 billion in assets and employs more than 16,000 people. In Guelph alone, there are more than 40 co-operatives providing services such as housing and insurance, as well as dairy processors, credit unions and daycares.

Co-ops are owned and operated by their members to build sustainable communities by fostering local economic development. Recognizing the importance of the co-operative business model in Ontario, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has recently undertaken some initiatives to support the sector. There is now a ministry staff person dedicated to working with co-ops. A representative from the co-operative sector will have a seat on the Small Business Agency of Ontario and information about the co-op business model will be provided in ministry information and small business enterprise centres.

Congratulations to our co-operatives in Ontario.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to commend the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills for his efforts on behalf of the Nortel retirees. We should all support his request that the government's promised review of the thoughtful proposal of the Nortel retirees be open and transparent.

Since the very beginning, the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills has been right to oppose the absolute requirement that Nortel pension plans be wound up into annuities, which would have meant hardship for many thousands of Ontarians. He raised this matter with the Minister of Finance in estimates some 15 months ago, he proposed an alternative in a private member's bill last year and this fall, when the finance minister said he opposed the Nortel retirees' proposal, Norm Sterling continued to ask questions during question period and estimates until the Premier finally agreed to review that decision.

My constituents are very grateful for his active support. Peter Welling, my constituent from Georgetown,

writes the following: "Norm Sterling has certainly done a great job. He has been relentless."

I agree. Nortel pensioners couldn't have a more effective MPP in their corner. This government must ensure its review is open and transparent. It must hear the concerns of Nortel retirees from across Ontario. They deserve nothing less.

Again, I want to thank and congratulate the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills for his work on this issue.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, the Consumers Council of Canada and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, which represents low- and modest-income Ontarians, have all written to the Premier and to the Minister of Energy demanding that the government review the flawed decision of the Ontario Energy Board.

This recent flawed decision will add \$240 million a year to the hydro bills of hydro consumers in Ontario. But as these three organizations point out in their submissions, this decision by the Ontario Energy Board to increase hydro bills by \$240 million a year has absolutely no evidence to support it. This is taking \$240 million out of the pockets of ordinary Ontarians who are already having a hard time paying the bill, and giving \$240 million to large corporations who are already doing very well, thank you. The refusal by the McGuinty government to review this flawed decision by the Ontario Energy Board shows once again that this is a government that doesn't care about the fact that people have a hard time paying their hydro bills.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: The world has just gone through—and some would say we're still in—the greatest recession since the Great Depression. It's estimated that roughly 30 million to 40 million jobs have been lost around the world.

In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and in the surrounding area we've had a series of good-news announcements. Lac des Iles mine recently reopened, calling back approximately 200 workers, and I'm told that there's the potential for further major investments there and that this site has years and years of production left in it.

1510

The Atikokan generating station will remain open and be converted to biomass, retaining jobs at the plant and leading to construction jobs for 200 to 300 people for a period of two to three years. The conversion may also lead to a new forestry-based biomass pellet industry in northwestern Ontario.

In Thunder Bay, Bombardier has hired back hundreds of staff and will be hiring a further 200 to 400 very soon. This plant is secure for years to come, in no small part

due to our government's investment of billions of dollars in mass transit.

The Terrace Bay mill has recently hired back 340 workers, and that's resulting in even more jobs in the woodlands.

Work building Thunder Bay's new provincially funded long-term-care home and new consolidated courthouse will begin soon. These projects have a combined value of approximately \$250 million. That's on top of unprecedented investments in roads, bridges and infrastructure.

As well, the northern Ontario heritage fund has been increased from \$60 million to \$100 million next year, creating more private sector jobs and drawing huge investment into northern Ontario.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John O'Toole: Last night in the community of Columbus, there was a meeting about the 407 and the backtracking and failed promise of the McGuinty government to deliver on the 407.

I have with me a document which was signed by the member who was the Minister of Finance, Mr. Sorbara. He signed the 2007 document with Jim Flaherty and Lawrence Cannon, the federal minister. What he said on it was, "I completely agree." "I concur," he said.

What this is all about is the government's failure to live up to its promises. It's sort of like the eco tax and the electricity issue. All of the issues today—they say one thing and do completely the opposite. It's unacceptable behaviour.

The 2007 agreement was signed by Cannon, as I said, and Jim Flaherty. Greg Sorbara, in his letter, laid out to the minister the details of the Flow agreement between the federal and the provincial government for transportation in the GTA. As part of the agreement, the Ontario government was required to complete two highway projects: first, the widening of Highway 7 in Durham region, and second, the extension of the 407 from Brock Road to Highway 35/115.

At the end of the letter, Mr. Sorbara said, "I concur," in handwriting. It wasn't something typed in the letter. He had read the conditions and agreed. Now they are failing to keep their promise.

I don't want to relate it to everything else. The government has fully three ministers on record committing to the Highway 407 extension—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

LITTER

Mr. Bob Delaney: I rise to support and to voice the concerns of my constituent Benita Grist.

Benita was inspired to act after driving in Mississauga and seeing a passenger in a car toss a disposable cup out of the car window. Since that day, Benita has been the driving force behind a grassroots anti-litter campaign.

During the past two years, she has been featured in Reader's Digest and the Mississauga News and has spoken before the region of Peel's waste management subcommittee, among others.

Benita uses her motto, "Litter affects all of us, even you," when she visits churches, mosques, synagogues and community centres to spread her message, citing the problems that arise from littering: an increase of pests; consumption of tax resources; property value decline; and a poor showing of places, particularly like historic Streetsville, to the hundreds and thousands of tourists that pass through our western Mississauga community each year.

Her simple request: Hold on to your garbage until you can dispose of it properly; secure recyclables on garbage day to avoid windblown debris; and pick up all litter you see, regardless of who dropped it.

Benita Grist saw a problem in our community and has a workable and constructive solution. Meadowvale, Lisgar and Streetsville offer her our congratulations and our thanks.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: A few short weeks ago, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable Deb Matthews, announced the latest round of family health teams. These announcements bring the number of family health teams in Ontario to 200. This fulfills the government's commitment for this mandate.

Among the 30 new family health teams were two additional teams for Algoma–Manitoulin. Minister Matthews announced a family health team for Blind River and a family health team on the Batchewana First Nation at Rankin. She also announced a family health team for the city of Sault Ste. Marie, the Superior Family Health Team.

Family health teams are groups of doctors and/or other health care providers that can include nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers, dietitians and others who provide primary health care.

This announcement will provide service to thousands of my constituents through the other eight family health teams we have in Algoma–Manitoulin at Manitowadge, Wawa, Chapleau, Elliot Lake, Espanola, Little Current, Manitowaning and Mindemoya. When all 10 of these family health teams are fully operational, the vast majority of my constituents will receive their primary health care through family health teams.

On behalf of all those who have now or will soon have primary health care through the family health teams, I want to thank the Minister of Health and Premier McGuinty for their interest in rural northern health care, which this announcement demonstrates in a very tangible way.

HANA'S SUITCASE

Mr. Ted McMeekin: In late May 1944, a boy who had just turned 16 arrived in Auschwitz. He was still

there five months later when, on October 23, Hana arrived. She was 13.

The boy's name was Elie Wiesel, who, as you know, survived the Holocaust to become one of the most brilliant, compassionate and hope-filled writers our world has ever known.

In his book *Night*, Wiesel writes, "I decided to devote my life to telling the story because I felt that having survived I owe something to the dead, and anyone who does not remember betrays them again."

Hana did not survive Auschwitz. She was never able to write of her experiences. She was never able to realize her dream of becoming a teacher. Yet her moving story, told through the award-winning book and new film *Hana's Suitcase*, has become a very powerful teaching and learning tool, a vivid instrument to help us remember.

I want to thank two great Hamiltonians, Madeleine Levy and Marnie Flaherty, for their involvement in developing this wonderful education program. Madeleine and Marnie's efforts in the *Hana's Suitcase* project are a reminder that it is not only the survivors who have a duty to the dead; it is all of us who desire to live in a world where prejudice and hatred can find no soul in which to take root.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on unspent grants from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

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

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'll open the debate, and perhaps I'll adjourn the debate.

This report is one of nine reports which the public accounts committee produces each year on different sections of the auditor's report, which is usually released in December. This particular report deals with a section of his report of December 2009 on unspent grants.

This report focuses in on how the government, in the recent past, has flowed millions and even billions of dollars at the year-end—that is in the month of March, prior to the financial year-end—for activities that are taking place in future fiscal years. This was criticized by the auditor in two or three of his previous reports because normal accountability controls over these kinds of transfers are very difficult to implement.

The committee called forward the Ministry of Finance and came up with four different recommendations. Those recommendations included comments with regard to infrastructure funding, particularly stimulus spending infrastructure funding. It suggested that, in addition to what the finance minister is putting on his website, he should include, as the American government has in-

cluded in their stimulus spending infrastructure funds, the people who are receiving the contracts, the number of jobs created and the progress of that particular project.

1520

As well, so that the public know how their money is being spent and, in fact, there is some kind of accountability to it, the committee is recommending to the Ministry of Infrastructure that even though the stimulus infrastructure fund will be over in the very near future, that in the future, all projects exceeding \$25 million should be put on their website so that the public have a knowledge of what major projects are going ahead, who the contract is going to, what the nature of the project is and whether it's on budget or over budget. We would like to see what the finance minister has started with regard to the stimulus fund continue on to the future in normal infrastructure spending when we finish the stimulus plan.

As well, all members of the committee, all parties in the committee, are concerned about the March 31, 2011, deadline on the stimulus infrastructure program. Therefore, we are asking the minister to estimate how many projects would be affected if the federal and provincial funding lapse on that deadline. We think it's very important that that number get out early and perhaps can be used to encourage the federal government to extend that particular deadline. We also included another recommendation of a minor nature.

At this point, I would move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill Pr38, An Act respecting Big Bay Resort Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public

sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

TONY WONG

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Tony Wong.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to pay tribute to Tony Wong, the MPP for the riding of Markham from 2003 to 2006.

Tony Wong was a man who was comfortable wearing many hats. He obtained his undergraduate degree in mathematics from the University of San Diego and a master's degree in science from the University of Missouri. Not content to just work as a computer professional, Tony also obtained a law degree from the University of Toronto and had a successful legal career with his firm of Wong and Wong.

Throughout his life, Tony demonstrated a strong and enduring commitment to his community, a community I know well as I raised my kids in Thornhill, Markham, which I now represent in part. In 1996, he created Markham's Give-a-Gift Project, which provided more than 1,000 wrapped Christmas gifts to children in need.

Born in Hong Kong, Tony was dedicated to ensuring that the Chinese Canadian community received the assistance they needed to integrate and access language and social services. He was a founding director of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic and acted as an adviser to a large number of community groups, including the Asian business networking group, the United Way of York Region and the Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation.

In 1997, Tony took his commitment to public service to a different level and was elected to York regional council. He was elected again in 2000. It was during that time that his special interest in social services and housing shone through. While he served on a number of committees, he is perhaps best known for serving as chair of the Markham Task Force on Affordable Housing and the York Region Homelessness Task Force. Tony's dedication and commitment to housing issues was recognized at the ceremony on July 6 last year, when a 120-unit housing project sponsored by the Markham Interchurch Committee for Affordable Housing was named Tony Wong Place in his honour.

As York region chair Bill Fisch has noted, Tony Wong wanted to ensure that everyone had the right services. In

2003, Tony Wong ventured into provincial politics and was elected as the MPP for Markham. During the three years that Tony served as Markham's MPP, he served the people of Ontario in many capacities. While here at Queen's Park, he was the parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and in the Ministry of Research and Innovation. But Tony was lured back to municipal politics and was re-elected to Markham council in 2006, where he continued to pursue his commitment to the residents of Markham. Throughout his time in public office, Tony was known for his quiet, steady and well-considered opinions, with a strong commitment to seeing a job done.

Despite his passing at the early age of 60, Tony Wong's list of accomplishments in business, in law and in public service underscore his strong passion for community service. To his wife Ellee and to his daughter Daphne, on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, we thank you for the life of Tony Wong. He was a leader and a role model in his community of Markham, in the Chinese Canadian community and, indeed, in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP caucus, to pay tribute to the memory of Tony Wong, a former colleague of many of us here today and a person I had the honour and pleasure of working with.

As members, we all understand the pressures of being a voice for our constituencies. We're here because we have taken on the responsibility and the privilege of navigating the mosaic of concerns and issues that come with a blending of thousands of distinct communities, cultures and experiences. But for some of us who have the honour to serve, these pressures are magnified by the simple fact that our presence here signifies more than our time-honoured duty of representing our official riding. Some of us are not only the elected representatives for a geographic constituency but take on the role of being a face and a voice for communities that span the width and breadth of our province.

Ontario has made incredible strides in valuing the strength of our diversity, but it's no secret that our elected bodies and our society as a whole still have quite a way to go in reflecting the mosaic that is our province. A simple look at the makeup of our chamber confronts us with the challenge that remains. Our colleagues who hail from one of our most underrepresented communities often have the doubly tough task of being the face and voice for people both within and far beyond the borders of their constituencies, a challenge that Tony capably and admirably embraced. Tony never shirked the responsibility of being a role model and advocate for both the riding of Markham and for Ontario's Chinese community. Whether it was here at Queen's Park or in his role on municipal council, he embraced the responsibility of sharing who he was, of doing his part to ensure that the diversity of our province remained one of its greatest strengths.

Although he was officially a public servant through his roles as an MPP and councillor, his life had long been

defined by public service before his name appeared on a ballot, and my colleague Peter Shurman made reference to a number of those contributions. In looking back at his accomplishments—and there are many—it's clear that Tony knew that compassion was the key to building a strong Ontario. Whether it was his earlier career as a lawyer, who took on pro bono cases to ensure that clients had representation regardless of the size of their bank account, or his Give-A-Gift program, which made sure Markham's underprivileged children also experienced the joy of Christmas, it was clear that he believed that caring only mattered if you are willing to do something to make a difference.

1530

Today, we have the privilege of being joined by Tony's wife, Ellee, his daughter, Daphne, and family friend Alex Yuan. On behalf of the Ontario New Democratic caucus, I welcome you this afternoon.

Regardless of the side of the aisle a member sits on, we know that our success, both here and in our constituencies, is largely due to the support and sacrifices made by our families and our expanded network of family and friends that we depend on for support.

Today's tribute to Tony is equally applicable to those here with us and the many others who travelled with him on his journey. Thank you for sharing Tony with the people of Markham and the people of Ontario and for the investment of his time, energy and passion that was made possible by your generosity.

Tony's legacy as a leader, role model, mentor and cherished friend lives on in Markham and Ontario because he cared enough to make a difference. Thank you, Tony, for your commitment to making Ontario a better place for all.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: On behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House and the Premier, I too would like to rise and say a couple of words in memory of our colleague Tony Wong and to welcome his wife, Ellee, and his daughter, Daphne, to the Legislature in the gallery.

I'll never forget my first meeting with Tony Wong—our first sit-down meeting. I had a purpose in mind. My job was to try and convince him to leave municipal politics and join us in the Ontario Legislature. I was really, really impressed with this man. He represented the very best of what happens to people who come to this country to put new roots into this great soil.

He was born in Hong Kong, studied as a young man in the United States—San Diego and Missouri—and then came to Canada, not as a child but as a young man, got a law degree and began to practise law. What he brought to Canada was a very bright mind and a huge work ethic. He just knew how to work very, very hard. But what set him apart from others in that category is that he brought a very high degree of concern and commitment to the public good, and that wasn't just for the Chinese Canadian community but for the broader community.

He got a law degree and immediately became a founding director of an organization called the Metro

Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, and we've heard about his pro bono work.

Over the course of his life, of course, he served on numerous public service boards. It was not surprising that he ended up being urged to enter the political arena and in 1997 was elected as a regional councillor in the town of Markham and re-elected in 2000. In October 2003, we were able to get him on a Liberal ballot and he won in the riding of Markham, beating, by the way, a very popular, very effective, very well-known incumbent by the name of David Tsubouchi, a former colleague of ours here.

When I was recruiting him, I felt a little bit of reluctance. I think it was that he kept wondering, "What's the best way to serve my community?"

As I said, he won that riding handily, and he served in this Legislature diligently. One of the things I remember best back in that time of 2003 to 2007 was, we were having a debate, and we finally had a resolution of the way in which to best regulate traditional Chinese medicine, which is now well established in Ontario as a practice of medicine. It was Tony whom we asked to lead that debate and those issues and bring them to a resolution.

But do you know something? His heart remained in the town of Markham. So, in 2006—I think with some regret—he decided to resign his seat here and return to municipal politics, was on the ballot in 2006 and was re-elected to regional councillor in the town of Markham.

Sadly, in March 2009, he took ill, and within a few months, he passed away.

Physically—those of you who remember—he was a wisp of a man, but he had this enormous spirit and a huge and dedicated heart. I think Tony stands as a shining example of the Canadian immigrant experience: coming to this country and then dedicating oneself to making this country better and better. He did that, I think, as well as anyone who has travelled that route.

So to his wife, Ellee, his daughter Daphne and to all his friends, I say you can be justly proud of your husband, your father, your friend, because he made a terrific contribution. His life ended too early; 60 is very early, particularly for a man of such dedication. You can be justly proud of the work that he has done for his community, his province and his country, and I want to tell you, sir, and the family, that all of us in this House are justly proud of having served with him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mrs. Wong and Daphne, please accept our deepest condolences on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We will ensure that a video of today's proceedings and copies of the Hansard are kept with you so that you can continue to be reminded of the memories and the services of Tony. Thank you very much.

VISITORS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I was not here earlier today to introduce some very special guests of page captain Carina Hochgeschurz. Here today in the west members' gallery are her parents,

Colleen and Eric, and her sister Katelyn, as well as her aunt Linda Warren. Welcome to Queen's Park. You have a wonderful daughter.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONSULTANTS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today I'm introducing legislation that, if passed, would raise the bar on accountability and transparency for hospitals, for LHINs and for broader public sector organizations.

Last year, we asked the Auditor General to look at the use of consultants and external lobbyists at hospitals and LHINs. He released his report earlier today. What he found, particularly in hospitals, is unacceptable and very disappointing.

I'm here to tell you that the government fully accepts the recommendations of the Auditor General. We are implementing each and every one of them; indeed, we are taking further action to set even higher standards. We are going further than he recommends. We need every dollar possible going toward front-line health care and delivering the public services that Ontario families rely on.

In his report, the Auditor General mentions that there have been improvements when it comes to procurement of consultants at the ministry and at LHINs, but it is clear that there is much more work to do. When it comes to the use of consultants at hospitals, the status quo is not working, so we're changing the rules—something that previous governments failed to do.

I think it's important to remember this government's record when it comes to increasing transparency and accountability, and let me give you examples. We have introduced strict new procurement rules for all ministries and agencies and are publicly reporting expenses. We expanded the powers of the Auditor General to review hospitals, colleges, universities, school boards and crown corporations. We've added Cancer Care Ontario, universities, Hydro One, OPG and local public utilities to freedom-of-information requests. And today I'm introducing legislation to raise the bar and bring a higher level of accountability and transparency to public sector organizations.

1540

We are proposing to ban the practice of hiring external lobbyists with taxpayer dollars in hospitals, other large public sector organizations, and publicly funded organizations that receive more than \$10 million in government funds.

We're proposing to require large broader public sector organizations to follow tough expense and procurement rules.

We're proposing to require all hospitals and LHINs to report on their use of consultants and to post online the expense claim information for senior leadership.

We are proposing to require that all hospitals and LHINs sign attestations that they are in compliance with the new procurement requirements.

We are proposing to make hospitals subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, effective January 1, 2012.

The Personal Health Information Protection Act will continue to govern all files containing any type of personal health information. No identifying information would be released by hospitals through freedom-of-information requests.

Finally, if senior executives of hospitals or LHINs fail to comply with these tough new rules, their pay can be reduced.

These measures are necessary to protect the interests of taxpayers and to strengthen the government's accountabilitys for the organizations it funds.

I have spoken with hospital and LHIN leadership and I have told them that the Auditor General's findings are unacceptable and that I am extremely disappointed. The bottom line is that this is all about respecting the people who are paying the bills. That's why I'm focused on getting the very best value for our health care investments. It's why we fought so hard to cut the price of generic drugs in half, and it's why we're raising the bar for accountability and transparency today.

As leaders, we have one goal: to ensure that we are doing everything we can to improve public services for all Ontarians.

I urge all members to support this proposed bill.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm happy to be speaking to the minister today on behalf of our leader, PC leader Tim Hudak, and our caucus.

The minister would know, because she does sit in this chamber, that had she voted along with her colleagues for the Ontario PCs' Truth in Government Act, a lot of the problems that the auditor talked about today would have been avoided.

This past May, this chamber voted on our bill that contained a series of taxpayer accountability and protection measures that would have expanded freedom of information across government. It would have ensured the disclosure of hospitality expenses, job reclassification and contracts, and contributions over \$10,000—on a government website.

The Ontario PC caucus, at that time, sought all-party support because we believed, and we still do, that it's a sensible plan that could be done at no cost, effectively and immediately.

The Liberals, at the time, not only whipped their vote; they actually had members like the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, who stood up and said greater accountability is actually just added bureaucracy. The Liberals, at the time, continued to ridicule our efforts to create greater taxpayer protection in our government agencies.

Now, after major scandals like those at eHealth, Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., and this most recent scandal, where hospital dollars intended for front-line patient care have actually been used instead on Liberal lobbyists lobbying the Minister of Health, we have now seen a change of heart.

But let me tell you something: This is only a half-hearted change of heart. The Liberals have had seven years but only acted, as they always do, when they got caught with their hand in the cookie jar.

They opposed the Truth in Government Act that I personally brought forward, that could have caught many of the abuses cited in the auditor's report of today. This new legislation—let me say this—stops well short of what the Progressive Conservative caucus would have enacted last year.

This bill only opens hospitals to freedom of information, not all provincial public bodies. It only requires expenses to be disclosed at hospitals and LHINs, not all provincial public bodies. And it only requires reporting on consultants, and not all contracts for goods and services at all provincial public bodies.

So this stops well short of what we feel in the official opposition would be acceptable transparency and accountability measures. In addition to that, it is coming months too late. Again, this is a crowd that only acts once they've gotten their hand caught in the cookie jar. What's very offensive, and what my colleague from Nickel Belt would say—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The implication of having your hand in the cookie jar is that some members of this House financially benefited by a transaction. That is not only wrong, it's insulting and shameful, so I would ask that the member opposite withdraw her comment, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I listened carefully. Certainly, we've had lots of discussions about impugning motive within this House, and it was not directed at any individual member. Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is characteristic that, of course, they would want to interrupt our speech while we're trying to hold them accountable yet again on something that they've done wrong, which is act too slowly.

My colleague from Nickel Belt this morning said that you've made us sick, based on this piece of legislation and based on this Auditor General's report. Ladies and gentlemen, we all know that this is an election year and they still haven't lived up to the commitments that they have promised to make on accountability.

These so-called reforms are only here because the Auditor General has yet again exposed this Liberal Party for what it is. Ontarians will have an opportunity to vote against them in the next election. My goodness, that Liberal Party had an opportunity in May to take a strong stand on accountability measures by voting for the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Peterborough will please come to order. I'm finding it difficult to hear the honourable member. They were courteous when the minister was speaking, and I would ask that the same courtesy be extended to the replies.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is that the Liberals don't want to hear from the MPP for Nepean–Carleton or any other Progressive Conservative MPP because we've been holding them accountable for their mismanagement, their neglect and their ill-advised schemes, whether it's at eHealth or Cancer Care Ontario or the OLG. The reality is, they should be ashamed of themselves.

When they had an opportunity to vote for strong accountability measures to protect taxpayers in this province, do you know what they did? They whipped their vote and voted against it. They don't stand on conviction. They stand once they've been caught not acting, and all they can do is blame someone else. Well, I can tell you something. On October 6, 2011, there will be one group of individuals blamed for mismanagement in this province by government, and it will be the Liberal Party of Ontario, led by the Premier of this province.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham, the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Renfrew. We are now at an opportunity for the third party to reply to the statement from the minister. Let's all collectively have the courtesy to give the member from Nickel Belt the opportunity to reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I guess it is my turn to respond to the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010. I want to place it in context a little bit. In response to the special report by the Auditor General, Mr. Jim McCarter, called Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is introducing this bill, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010.

Let's remember that the minister and her government, by their collective action, have shaken every Ontarian's confidence in our health care system. The minister should know the value of trust and confidence. Every health care provider in this province—in this country—knows that in order to be able to provide quality care, you need a relationship of trust to convince people to undergo painful treatment, to change the way they do things. You need trust; trust in your providers, trust in your agency and trust in your system. Without trust, you cannot have quality care. You cannot have the excellent health care system we want.

1550

Last year, after the Auditor General, Mr. Jim McCarter, released his special report on eHealth, the people of Ontario's confidence in our health care system got shaken up, not to mention their confidence in our government. The auditor put down on paper for all of us to see \$1 billion spent on eHealth with very little to show

for it. He showed us top bureaucrats being paid out of hospital budgets to circumvent provincial rules and regulations; that was done by our government. He showed us expense accounts that were so out of this world it was hard to believe that it was happening right here in Ontario, and he also showed us untendered consulting contracts that were so lucrative that every money-hungry Ontarian considered becoming a health care consultant. There was just so much easy money to be made. The list went on and on.

In the midst of eHealth I put forward a motion for the Auditor General to audit consultant use in the LHINs and hospitals. I'll read you the exact wording of my motion. It goes as follows: "I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts immediately request that the Auditor General conduct spot audits on the use of consultants by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the 14 LHINs, and Ontario's hospitals."

After a little bit of an attempt to have it derailed, it actually passed. Our Auditor General went to work and we have this report.

Here we have once again a special report of the Auditor General, and what you will read in this is disgusting. The report reads like an orgy of extravagant high-flying spending on everything from exotic trips to gourmet meals to alcohol, all on the taxpayers' dime. It actually made me sick to read the details, that taxpayers' money can be used that way. No wonder people in Ontario have lost trust. This government has single-handedly destroyed one of the pillars of the most important and cherished programs of this government: our public health care system. It is a real shame. If the destruction of our health care system does not ring a five-alarm bell, then what will?

So what does the government do in response? We get this bill, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. It sounds even worse in French: la Loi de 2010 sur la responsabilisation du secteur parapublic.

What is in this bill? Well, this bill is a quickly-put-together series of half measures that will not give Ontarians what they want: the assurance that hospitals will not spend money on lobbyists. The minister said it herself: The bill will not give Ontarians the assurance that hospitals will not spend money on lobbyists. After the bill passes, hospitals will still be able to spend money on lobbyists. What does she answer to this? We won't answer the phone if the lobbyist calls.

Well, we will have to trust her, but you see, if we have this issue of trust after seven long years, we can't trust them to solve the problem. They are the problem.

PETITIONS

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

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

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

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

I agree with the petition and will affix my signature.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under certain conditions ... ; 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" services "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 page Soumiya.

VETERANS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to read this petition on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas with turmoil and fighting around the globe, what better time to remember the price our veterans paid for freedom than the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II; and

"Whereas we also remember and honour our present-day veterans and all who have paid the ultimate price fighting for the freedoms we enjoy in this great nation;

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

"That the Dalton McGuinty government declare November 11 a provincial holiday to honour our veterans of past and present; as well as all the soldiers of today who currently fight to defend our freedoms."

I agree with the petition and I will sign my signature to it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a series of petitions on behalf of my constituents in Durham. These are primarily from people and families affected by community living. It reads as follows:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 80;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment" in the 2007 election "to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to" and including "2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

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

"That the" Dalton McGuinty "government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector" in Durham.

I'm pleased to sign and support this, about lack of keeping commitments.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

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

"Whereas a company's resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike 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" or a lockout.

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

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

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

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

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

"Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario province 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."

1600

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

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

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

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

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

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents of Wellington-Halton Hills have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

“Whereas whatever one-time money that has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province.”

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA.

“Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“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 at 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 by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, 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 support this petition, affix my name to it, and send it down with Ffion.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

“Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

“Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

“Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to

agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

“Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

“Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

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

“That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector.”

I sign this, as I am in complete agreement, and give it to page Bridget.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present another series of petitions from my riding of Durham, and I thank people like Veronica McLachlan for participating. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which would mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for some of us in rural Ontario;

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

“Stop further cuts to front-line health care, especially at our pharmacies now.

“By signing this petition, you are authorizing the coalition of CACDS, OPA and IPO to use the personal information you have provided to us”—this is just a declaration.

I support this petition on behalf of my constituents and present it to Haadiyah.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario’s economy and deserves investment;

“Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need; and

“Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario’s fields each year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey’s private member’s bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay.”

I certainly agree with this petition and will affix my signature.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas the McGuinty government is pushing ahead with the installation of so-called smart meters and mandatory time-of-use billing by June 2011 despite the flaws with the program; and

“Whereas 21 energy distributors, including provincially owned Hydro One, said that the rush to make time of use mandatory by June 2011 doesn’t give them time to fix all the problems with the meters, fix bugs with the software to run them, and to fix the inaccurately high bills they produce as a result; and

“Whereas the Ontario Energy Board, in a letter of August 4, admitted that energy distributors ‘may encounter extraordinary and unanticipated circumstances during the implementation’ of time of use, and said that these matters need to be addressed;

“Whereas relying on computer technology that the energy industry says is not ready, isn’t reliable and is making families pay too much on their hydro bills;

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

“To call upon the McGuinty government to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program.”

I agree with the petition, and I will affix my signature.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a third petition today—a different one—and it reads as follows:

“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 killed;

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank 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”—bifurcation, actually—“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 present it to Harnameh, one of the new pages here.

1610

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINE
GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 19, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I’m pleased to be able to join the debate on Bill 110, the Good Government Act. This House has, as the minister pointed out on Monday, a history of this type of bill, which enables changes to legislation that do not justify individual pieces of legislation. I’ll make some specific comments about changes to areas in my critic portfolio later, but I would first like to address the theme of reducing red tape and regulation, which bills like this are supposed to accomplish.

Let me first offer my congratulations to the Liberal government for its tremendous success in cutting red tape. Of course, I mean the Liberal government of British Columbia, led by Premier Gordon Campbell, which has cut more than 42% of that province’s rules and regulations since 2001, a reduction that adds up to more than 151,000 needless regulations eliminated. If each regulation was represented by a single sheet of paper, it would make a pile 54 feet high. Contrast this record with that of Ontario’s Liberals: They do not even know how many regulations we have in Ontario, much less have a plan to cut a significant number.

Now, to be fair to the government, the Liberals did announce a plan to cut regulations in 2009. They are very good at announcing plans for things that never happen or passing legislation to make a symbolic point without providing action. The Poverty Reduction Act and the “status of the artist” act are two good examples of this government’s symbolic yet meaningless legislation. This, as I have referred on many occasions, is called gesture politics: You make an announcement as a gesture to some segment of the population or interest group so that you look like you care.

Their regulation-cutting announcement is another good example of gesture politics. On March 6, 2009, the then Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced a 25% cut in Ontario regulations within two

years, i.e., less than five months from now. Does anyone in this House think that this government is anywhere near achieving this goal, particularly when they don't even know how many regulations Ontario has? The minister who made the announcement in March 2009 was Michael Bryant, so maybe he took the promise with him when he left politics.

I point this out not just because it demonstrates how little this government's promises are worth, but because cutting red tape for citizens and businesses is so vitally important to the economic health of our province.

A Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey found that 26% of new business owners would not have set up operation if they had known the red tape burden they would face beforehand. This is the number amongst current business owners, current members of the CFIB, and so you're left to wonder how many potential entrepreneurs didn't even set up a business after they found out the financial and the time burden of red tape.

I want to digress for a moment, because sometimes there's a bit of confusion about the question of interpreting reducing red tape as a matter of not reflecting important regulation. I want to just stop for a minute and remind members that regulation—we all agree that health and safety are, as two examples, the important areas for regulation, and they do a number of things, one of which is to create a level playing field for all of the businesses. They know the rules, they know that everyone else has to follow them and they know that there is a penalty attached to not following them. All of that builds consumer confidence, and it is the kind of business environment that people want to participate in.

What happens, then, is that government, and this government particularly, is imbued with the whole importance of layering and layering more regulation than now, we would agree, becomes red tape. It's overlap, it's duplication, it's onerous; it's why that 26% of the members of the CFIB would say that if they had known what they know now, they wouldn't have taken on their entrepreneurial responsibilities. So what has become onerous, with overlap and duplication, now encourages people to avoid. It diminishes consumer confidence, and the only part of the economy that grows is the underground economy. So I think it's really important for people to understand that everyone benefits when you have thoughtful, supportive regulation. No one but the underground economy grows when you have red tape.

My colleagues have outlined a number of our concerns about this legislation. To me, its chief fault lies not in its contents but its brevity. There is so much more that should have been included, so many other changes this government could have made over the last seven years that would have encouraged prosperity and assisted the creation of small businesses. Businesses will have to wait for a PC government to see any of these done.

Let's take a quick look at one section of the bill that has prompted criticism in the consumer services section. Proposed changes to the Travel Industry Act are raising concerns among the travel industry. Bruce Bishins,

president and chief executive officer of the Association of Retail Travel Agents, or ARTA, told my office that "neither of the two amendments to the act were discussed with registrants, and no public comment was solicited" by the government. I think that this is the kind of precedent that certainly doesn't bode well for any kind of industry where they're not consulted. Mr. Bishins told us that "as a matter of principle and fairness to stakeholders, these two amendments to the Travel Industry Act, 2002, should be refused until comments and discussions take place with travel agencies and travel wholesalers."

ARTA, the association, has had many problems with the practices of the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, or TICO, the arm's-length government agency that regulates their industry. Regarding the amendment to change the definition of "travel services," ARTA believes the following: "The proposed change appears to redefine 'travel services' so that non-transportation, non-accommodation travel product and service components are not included in the definition unless they are combined with transportation or accommodations. The term 'travel services' appears throughout the act and regulations, and impacts everything from fund contributions to claims. This change would create a significant amount of product/service categorization in each sale, which would be burdensome for the travel agent, confusing for the consumer (as to protection or not), and overall, in our opinion, reduces consumer protection."

1620

Retail travel agents are also concerned about the proposal to change the approval process for the requirement to file financial statements. I quote: "Removal of 'approval of the director' concentrates too much unchecked authority with the registrar.

"It is always wise to assure that the director (the statutory legal director) has approved an action of the registrar."

Repeatedly, through this act and the previous so-called Open for Business Act, the government is pushing responsibility for approvals down the bureaucratic chain.

Earlier in this debate, my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke noted that the government is moving certain approvals from the cabinet level to the ministry level, eliminating full cabinet scrutiny. A number of presenters on this bill and its predecessor have noted the downgrading of approvals, from directors downwards in various ministries. Is the government not concerned about moving approvals down to less-expert levels of decision-making? Are they not concerned about accountability? It is ironic that a government that is so willing to shut down all appeals and debate on the peaker plant in my riding now wants to distance itself from so much of the ordinary day-to-day decision-making. Is this a deliberate strategy by the government to evade public responsibility for decisions or is it simply indifference to the decisions that are made? Either way, it is a failure of leadership.

I want to see it made easier for citizens and businesses to get decisions from government. I want unnecessary

approvals to be eliminated. But, equally important, approvals need to be made properly. Perhaps the only thing worse than red tape is government making a bad decision. This is becoming all too common, and the arm's-length agencies of government are one of the greatest offenders. The Travel Industry Council of Ontario is obviously raising the ire of many in the travel industry. I have also heard many complaints about the operation of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. These agencies need to be properly supervised by government, given clear direction and priorities. Unfortunately, we hear repeated examples where the McGuinty government is not maintaining a watch on these agencies. The government is simply not good at governing.

Regardless of a governing party's ideology, principles, plans or strategies, it has to know how to govern. You have to understand what is important and what needs to be done. Holding power for its own sake is not enough. Many of the scandals of this government—eHealth, the LHINs, the OLG, and the list goes on—are not the result of deliberate policies of the Liberal government, but an indifference to governing properly. We saw this with the new propane regulation. You introduced it without proper consultation, found it would not work, and now have to go back and rewrite it. The same thing for the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act: The government has pushed it through the House, but admitted in the committee hearings that it would be delayed for two years because more legislation has to be changed to put it into effect.

This bill is just another indication of this fault in the government. If they had understood what business needs or why red tape is a problem, they would have taken action seven years ago. That's what Gordon Campbell did and that's what a Tim Hudak government will do. We know that red tape stands in the way of our economic success. If people grant us the privilege of forming a government next year, we will take action to cut red tape and build prosperity for everyone in Ontario.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened intently to my colleague from the Conservative Party. While as a New Democrat I would disagree with her on a number of the recipes that she has put forth, let me say this: I agree with her that this legislation is very thin gruel at best.

The government promotes this as legislation that's going to create jobs, that's going to put people back to work. I wonder if the government notices that another 27,000 Ontarians lost their jobs last month alone. This legislation and the promise of this legislation is going to do virtually nothing in terms of creating jobs in this province or in terms of restoring to employment people who now, unfortunately, find themselves unemployed.

If anything, this legislation—and I think the member correctly identifies this—is an attempt to paper over a very serious problem and a very serious jobs crisis in this province. I think it demonstrates once again how out of touch the McGuinty Liberal government is with what is

happening out there, how out of touch it is with the fact that literally hundreds of thousands of low- and modest-income families, for example, can't afford to pay their hydro bill and that seniors, for example, are having to choose between paying the rent, paying the hydro heating bill and putting food on the table.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is part of a package of reforms that this government has been advancing in bills that are digestible and understandable. This removes 1,000 pages of regulation. This ranges from restaurant ventilation systems that would require almost the same environmental review as opening up a chemical plant right on through to the building trades and to the requirements of professionals and tradespeople. The entire content of this regulatory reform was driven by trade unionists, small business owners and regulated industries, and when I knock on doors in my constituency, I hear this.

I was in the member for Cambridge's constituency the other day and I heard about a business leader who talked about how this reform is saving that business \$45,000 a year. The HST is saving his business \$550,000 a year. He is adding four employees annually a year and keeping a data centre and 200 jobs in that constituency. He did not have to fill out a paper.

He's voting Conservative federally because the Conservative government not only supported this agenda; it also reduced the taxes on imports. He is perplexed at the incongruence and inconsistency and wonders whether the Conservative Party was really a Conservative Party because of its attack on this kind of reform in the House. He kept on asking, "Where are you people? Have you forgotten how long it is since any of you ran a business?"

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I thought that the purpose of these two-minute responses was to comment—in this case on the member from York-Simcoe—as opposed to pushing your own agenda. You'll have your time. I'm going to wait to see if the government members actually stand on Bill 110 and address the seven-section, 36-page red tape bill.

1630

The member from York-Simcoe, with her experience here, made a couple of very valid points, but more importantly, the overall general theme of what she said was that they're actually making government organizations and self-regulating functions less transparent. They're downloading this stuff to—general public servants can make decisions on licensing and various decisions. I think the member from York-Simcoe had it right.

I've heard other people say that they're suspicious of why they're trying to rush this through; I've heard that word used a few times. We know that if we can trust something that's being said, you have confidence in that they will actually do it. But the experience here is quite

the opposite, whether it's the eco tax—they announce it and then they withdraw it; or the smart meters—they announce it and then they start tinkering with it.

It's amazing to me that their record over the last two to three weeks has really been one of backtracking, of backing up and starting. There's no consistency or continuity. So I remain concerned and worried as to why this so-called red tape—what are they doing here? When you download responsibilities that used to be order-in-council appointments of people who had the authority to make certain decisions or interventions to people who are just members of the public sector workforce, anybody can do these things. That's simply trying to find the person who actually made the decision.

I can't support what I'm hearing. I want to hear some of the government members speak to this, but the member from York–Simcoe had it right, I believe.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm happy to respond to the member from York–Simcoe. The Good Government Act is made up of approximately 70 items from seven different ministries. Most of the provisions would make technical changes to existing acts, but are necessary because they would improve clarity and keep the language of the laws current. Additionally, this bill would ensure that our legislation is up to date.

This bill is an essential housekeeping measure, but is no less important. This bill would build upon your government's Open for Business initiative. Since the McGuinty government came into office in 2003, we have demonstrated our commitment to working with business communities to address barriers to investment and growth. This bill, if passed, would further the Open for Business goals of decreased regulatory burden and better responsiveness to businesses, and, if passed, would improve the services provided to business and the public. That's an important issue.

This bill, if passed, would amend redundant or outdated provisions of the eight statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. In addition, if passed, the bill would provide additional clarity and update terminology in those statutes. No compromise in patient or public safety is anticipated. This is good government.

If passed, the proposed amendments and repeals would provide clarity to Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care legislation, contribute to a more streamlined regulatory framework for the health care sector, and contribute to the government's commitment to reduce regulatory burden. That's good government.

I have a bit of time left, but there are several issues just for one ministry that are going to be clarified by this. I do not understand why anyone would object to clarifying the laws, to make the changes that will make it easier for businesses and everyone to use the system.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you to the member from Kenora–Rainy River, the Minister of Research and Innovation, and the members for Durham and Ottawa–Orléans.

I have to give the same comment as the member from Kenora–Rainy River, that we won't always agree, but I certainly liked his definition of this bill as an attempt to paper over the jobs crisis.

It's interesting that the member from Ottawa–Orléans referred to this as part of the Open for Business process that the government has suddenly gone—it's like getting religion. They had to identify the last few pieces of legislation as Open for Business and this one as good government. It's taken them nearly eight years to figure out that that's why they're here.

The other issue that I think is most important is that when the members of the government talk about how much this does to streamline and so forth, I have to come back to those people that I know who are saying, "We were not consulted. This is going to make our job more difficult." It's no good if you haven't done your homework, and you have left people out in the cold, where they simply get the bill.

I can tell you that we have other members of the broader community who are coming to us to tell us about the lack of consultation and the lack of consideration they have experienced. The travel agents are simply one group of people who have been able to articulate particularly the effects that this will have.

I want to just remind members that this bill—people talk about how many schedules there are. Well, yes, it is a complicated bill. It just lacks substance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There having been six and one half hours of debate on this bill, the debate will be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader indicates otherwise.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: We would like the debate to continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Yes, I'm glad you acknowledge that I'm the Speaker. Thank you very much, member for Durham.

The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on this bill, but I have to say, in the context in which it occurs today, it is difficult to bite one's tongue. The government calls this bill the good government bill, and what we saw today from the auditor in the auditor's report is anything but good government. Millions of dollars of taxpayers' money that was supposed to go for front-line health care has been wasted on well-connected consultants and lobbyists who are oh, so cozy with the Liberal Party. By definition, that is not good government. Any government should be embarrassed by that. They should be ashamed of it, because it is not good government; it is the antithesis of good

government. So I find it interesting that I have an opportunity to speak on this bill today.

Now, the government says that this bill is going to create jobs and restore employment in Ontario. That's what the accompanying press releases say, that's what the government has said over and over again and I just heard a few government members say this once again here in the House. So I approach it from the perspective of people who live in my part of Ontario; I approach it from the perspective of people who live west of Sault Ste. Marie. As I read the bill, I tried to figure out, tried to see how this would do something to restore employment.

Again, let me set the context for you. When the McGuinty Liberals became the government of Ontario seven years ago, we had, in Sault Ste. Marie and west, 21 operating paper machines. We had three operating paper machines in Kenora eight years ago. We had two in Dryden, three in Fort Frances, eight in Thunder Bay, two in Red Rock and three in Sault Ste. Marie. After seven years of the McGuinty Liberals in government, we've gone from 21 operating paper machines in northwestern Ontario to three: two in my home town of Fort Frances and one in Thunder Bay. Eighteen have disappeared. Eighteen are gone, and with them thousands and thousands of good jobs for instrument mechanics, machinists, welders, millwrights, pipefitters, computer technicians; good skilled jobs that offered good pay and good benefits that a family could survive on; thousands of jobs gone.

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I look at this legislation and I say to myself, "Is there anything in this legislation that's going to do anything to remedy that, to restore some of those jobs?" I have to say that, sadly, there is nothing.

But what really rubs salt in the wounds of people who live in Sault Ste. Marie, Marathon, Red Rock, Nipigon, Thunder Bay, Dryden, Kenora or Fort Frances is that if they look to the east, to Quebec, there are more than 25 operating paper machines in that province. Yes, Quebec has lost some jobs, but an industry that has been almost totally destroyed in northwestern Ontario under this government continues to provide thousands of good jobs in the province of Quebec.

What rubs salt in people's wounds even more is this: If I look immediately to the south, if I go across the border to International Falls, Minnesota, the two paper machines are still operating, providing 500 good jobs for people. If I go down to Grand Rapids, Minnesota, only an hour and a half south, the two paper machines are still operating, providing over 500 good jobs for people. If I go to Duluth, Minnesota, the paper machines are still operating, providing hundreds of good jobs for people.

People in my part of the province look at it and say, "How can this be?" This industry is still operating immediately to the south in Minnesota, still providing good jobs. It's sustaining over 25 paper machines in Quebec, sustaining thousands of good jobs. Yet 18 paper machines have disappeared from northwestern Ontario and thousands of good jobs have been destroyed.

All people need do to check this out is go to the websites. Go to the website of Abitibi, and you'll see that

they have six operating paper mills in Quebec, for a total of almost 12 paper machines. Or go to the website of Domtar or the website of Tembec or the website of Kruger, and it's all there: how many machines are operating, how many workers are being employed. Will this legislation do anything about that? Nothing.

It goes beyond that, because the reality of that industry is that when you lose paper machines and you lose pulp mills, it also creates great economic difficulty for sawmills. For sawmills to operate, they have to be able to do two things: They have to be able to sell their lumber, and that wood fibre which cannot be turned into lumber, they have to be able to sell the chips to paper mills and to pulp mills so that it be made into paper and pulp. But if you lose 18 paper machines, suddenly there's nowhere to sell the chips. So literally dozens of sawmills have had to shut down too. The sawmill in Kenora is gone; the sawmill at Ear Falls is gone; Sioux Lookout, Dryden, Atikokan; three in Thunder Bay: Northern Hardwood, Great West Timber and Northern Wood; White River, Dubreuilville and Hornepayne—again, thousands of good jobs.

Is there anything in this legislation that is going to help restore some of those jobs? People who have worked for 25 or 30 years, people who have paid their taxes, people who have contributed to the community, people who have been responsible citizens, who have been, in many cases, the foundation of the community: Is there anything in this bill that is going to do anything for them? Nothing; nada; zero.

It goes beyond that, because not only do you have the jobs of the people working in the mills—the paper mill, the sawmill—but you have the hundreds of jobs—indeed, if you look across northwestern Ontario, the thousands of jobs—of people who would work in the forest, of people who would work in transportation, and of people who would work in mechanical services, keeping all of the equipment operating and maintained. Is there anything in this legislation that will do anything to restore those jobs? Nothing; not one wisp.

So I come back to what I said a bit earlier: There is a huge jobs crisis out there, an incredible jobs crisis. People who have worked all their lives, people who are worthy of respect from all of us, have been put out of work, are now struggling on what little employment insurance they may have left, are using up their life savings, have been forced to resort to Ontario Works, and this legislation is not going to do anything for those people.

What is this bill? What is it, really? Well, it is an attempt by this government to pretend that it's doing something about the jobs crisis. It's an attempt by this government to pretend to people that it cares about all those thousands of people who have been put out of work, an attempt by this government to paper over what is a serious crisis—and I would argue it is becoming more serious. Twenty-seven thousand more people lost their jobs in Ontario last month. The job losses that happened last month continue in the resource sector, the

manufacturing sector, areas of the economy which have continued to pay good wages, family-supporting wages, community-supporting wages. Again, this bill isn't going to do anything about that.

What should be in this bill? What should be here if this government were really serious about sustaining jobs, putting people back to work instead of pretending? Well, one thing which would go a long way would be a bill which requires that those municipalities across Ontario that need and should be investing in public transit—that that public transit, whether it be buses, whether it be streetcars, whether it be subway cars, must be sourced in Ontario. If we're going to spend the public's money, the taxpayers' money, then the people who pay the taxes, the workers of Ontario, should get some benefit from that. They should at least have a chance at a job from that. Is there anything in this legislation that will do that? No. Not one parcel, not one word, not one bit. There is nothing in this legislation that will do anything like that.

In my part of Ontario, if you talk to those people who used to work in paper mills, they will tell you that what put their paper mill out of work, what put their paper machine out of work, were skyrocketing industrial hydro rates; hydro rates which are now more than double what they are in Manitoba and Quebec for industrial operations. When did that explosion of hydro rates happen? Immediately following this government's passage and implementation of Bill 100, the Electricity Restructuring Act, 2004.

What did people like Abitibi, Domtar, Xstrata AND Falconbridge say to this government in the Bill 100 hearings in 2004? They said, "If you implement this legislation, if you put this legislation in place, it will cause industrial hydro rates to skyrocket and you will destroy thousands and thousands of manufacturing and resource jobs." Does this legislation do anything to fix that problem which the McGuinty government created in 2004 with Bill 100? Does it do anything at all about it? No, it doesn't do anything to address that issue, to address that problem.

1650

Let me tell you what the net result has been for most of northwestern Ontario and indeed, I would also argue, for northern Ontario. What is now happening is this: We still harvest the wood fibre in the forests. We harvest it. Increasingly, we run it through about four or five pulp mills and semi-process it into pulp, then we ship the pulp to the United States where the pulp is then mixed with rather inferior wood fibre there to manufacture paper in the United States. What we've effectively done under the McGuinty government is literally export thousands of good, skilled jobs to paper mills and paper machines in the United States.

But it's not just in the forest sector that that's happening. We've witnessed, over the last few years, first of all, Vale Inco, now called Vale, close the copper refinery in Sudbury, and they were very clear when they closed it. They said, "We're closing the copper refinery because we cannot afford to operate this refinery with the escalat-

ing industrial hydro rates in Ontario." So Vale Inco closed the copper refinery in Sudbury. They still mine the copper in Sudbury—they mine it there—but they now ship the copper to Quebec to have it refined and processed there. Some 250 good jobs disappeared out of Sudbury. The resource is still taken out of the ground in Ontario, but it's shipped somewhere else to be refined.

The same episode has been repeated just this past year in Timmins. I remember when Falconbridge, now called Xstrata, came to the Bill 100 hearings and said, "Our metal refinery in Timmins is the largest single purchaser of industrial electricity in Ontario." And they said to this government, "If you implement this bill and drive industrial hydro rates through the roof, we will not be able to continue to operate our metal refinery in Timmins." Well, what happened last year? Xstrata announced that they're closing the metal refinery in Timmins. When you take the jobs inside the plant and the contracting jobs and the support jobs, it's 2,500 good jobs gone out the window. Xstrata is still going to mine the ore in Timmins—they're still going to take the ore out of the ground—but they're going to ship the ore to Quebec. It's going to be refined and processed there—another 2,500 jobs gone.

This government, in its press releases, likes to talk about progress, but what we've seen in northern Ontario is actually regress. Fewer and fewer of the resources that come out of the forest or out of the ground are actually being processed, refined and turned into anything valuable in Ontario. We're still taking the wood fibre; we're still taking the valuable ore out of the ground. But increasingly, under this government, what's happening in northern Ontario is that we're regressing. We're simply becoming hewers of wood and drawers of water. The resource is being shipped to other jurisdictions, and the good jobs are being shipped other jurisdictions.

I say again: Is there anything—anything—in this bill that is going to address that? I can tell you that I searched through the legislation, I searched through the schedules and I looked at proposed regulations. There's nothing. There is absolutely nothing in this bill that is going to address the jobs crisis this government has created in northern Ontario—absolutely nothing. Tens of thousands of good jobs have been destroyed; the economic foundation of whole communities, in some cases, has been destroyed, and there is absolutely nothing in this bill that is going to address that.

I think the public is catching on to this government. I think the public is catching on to a government that churns out press release after press release, photo op after photo op, but in fact hardly anything happens.

Just to go back to context: When this government was hauled over the coals by the auditor a year ago over the eHealth scandal, when the auditor said that this government had blown \$1 billion on eHealth, much of it going to well-connected consultants and lobbyists but virtually nothing of value was produced, the government was very quick to produce a press release saying that it was going to address the problem.

But now we have another auditor's report that says that not only was this government blowing \$1 billion out the door on the eHealth scandal, but it's been blowing millions of dollars of health care money out the door again, going to well-connected lobbyists and consultants who are ever-so-cozy with the Liberal Party of Ontario.

I look at this legislation, which does nothing to address the jobs crisis, and I'm embarrassed that this government can stand here and try to talk about good government.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Perhaps people are watching this at home while they're preparing dinner, or maybe they're watching a rebroadcast of the legislative proceedings late at night, so I guess I'm going to say: Don't change the channel. In less than two minutes, I'm going to explain to you what we're talking about, and I'm going to tell you why.

Once or twice a year, governments of all stripes, at all levels, have a cleanup bill that modernizes existing laws and makes technical fixes to legislation from different ministries. It does other of these housekeeping tasks, very much like the spring or autumn cleaning that you do at home. What that means is that members can talk about nearly anything they want, hence the previous member's stemwinder on issues in his own region.

What's good for the opposition is also good for the government, so let's talk a little bit about openness and transparency, which has been one of our province's objectives since the election of our government.

In terms of our commitment to openness and transparency, let's just talk about some of the agencies and boards that were brought under what's called freedom of information and privacy, where you can now access the information that's stored about you:

—Cancer Care Ontario, in 2010;

—publicly funded universities, in 2006;

—Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation, brought back under freedom of information in 2005, where the Conservatives had previously exempted them; and

—local public utilities, brought back in 2004.

The Audit Statute Law Amendment Act of 2004 broadened the powers of the Auditor General to review public sector organizations.

Our government implemented the Personal Health Information Protection Act in 2004, which establishes privacy protection for people's personal health information and allows Ontarians to access their personal health information.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am pleased to comment on the address by my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River.

But I first must comment on the response, or the comment, from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, who, in typical Liberal fashion, promised to explain to the viewers out there in two minutes what this bill was all about and again failed to deliver.

However, back to my friend from Kenora–Rainy River: What my colleague talked about through much of his address—he spoke about the concern he feels for people throughout northern Ontario, many of them in his riding of Kenora–Rainy River. Essentially, the way I see it, he's asking this government—you feel that the priority of this Legislature is to bring in a bill called good government, which of course you self-titled, which is somewhat of a joke in itself, while there are people across this province struggling. In fact, they are just barely keeping their heads above water.

1700

Is the priority of this government to see if they can keep some of those mills that my colleague talked about open? Is the priority to see if they can open up some of those lumber markets so that some of these paper machines can start working? Is the priority of this government to have an energy policy that addresses the economics of energy? No. It seems to be, "Let's bring in a bill that we're going to call a bill about good government and hope that people think, 'Oh, this is wonderful. They're going to bring in a bill for good government.'" The only way we're going to get good government in Ontario is if there's a new party running it after the October election of 2011.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Kenora–Rainy River speaking for almost 20 minutes about many different things, except the essence of the bill. The bill talks about amendments to seven ministries to modernize so many different elements, to update them to fit and be able to be accessible and used by the people of Ontario.

I know the member spoke about many different elements which concern the people of Ontario: health, education and hydro.

I want to remind the member: Since we got elected in 2003 we've created more than 8,000 megawatts—we can say that proudly—and the majority of those megawatts come from renewable and green energy. When he was part of a government, he cancelled the contract with Manitoba. Otherwise, we wouldn't have had to invest a lot of money in many different elements—

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've got it right here: 1,000 megawatts.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, 1,000 megawatts from Manitoba at a good price, cancelled. Why? I don't know. He knows the answer.

We continue to invest in education. We announced not a long time ago the biggest program ever in the history of the province of Ontario: kindergarten for 55,000 students across the province of Ontario, to allow them to have the best start ever, because we believe strongly that the only way we can progress in the future is by educating our people.

Investment in health care: Use the hospital system. The member from Beaches–East York mentioned it yesterday when he was speaking on how important our

health care in the province of Ontario is, how much health care we have. He talked about the doctors, talked about the nurses; he talked about the efficiency in our health care. That's why today, the Minister of Health introduced a very important element to protect the health care dollars from being wasted on lobbyists.

We address all those issues when we face them, when we see them—

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the opportunity—because the member wandered a bit during his speech—to be able to deal with some of his wanderings.

I have a document here that says: “Ontario Hydro has been involved in negotiations with Manitoba Hydro on a proposal which would secure 1,000 megawatts of power for Ontario beginning “in the year” 2000, for 23 years.

“The proposal would entail Manitoba Hydro constructing a 1,300-megawatt generating station in Conawapa and then selling 1,000 megawatts of that ... to Ontario.

“Manitoba has indicated that Ontario Hydro's purchase of power is a critical factor in determining whether or not to proceed with the project.”

Of course, what we found out was that the NDP government, of which my good friend from Kenora–Rainy River was involved deeply—a chief spokesperson—cancelled that contract. I think it was about 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour for that. I'll tell you, that would have certainly helped northern Ontario now.

He talks about a lower industrial rate, and I'm wondering who, then, would pay more. If one segment of a society is paying less, that means somebody else is going to pay more for their power.

The last thing I want to mention, because he touched on this particular issue—I'm wondering if the lobbyists to which he made reference are going to be stopped at the door at the Palais Royale, where the NDP is having its fundraiser on November 27. I think it's a little over \$9,000 for a full table. There are lots of special deals you can get if you have lots of money to shell out. I'm asking the member if he will stop those lobbyists from attending that particular event.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kenora–Rainy River has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to be able to respond, and I want to thank my colleagues on all sides of the House for their comments.

I would simply like to remind the minister of—I guess we'd call him community security and corrections—that it was the McGuinty government that promised, and in fact made a public announcement, that it was going to restore the Conawapa contract, and now, seven years later, has failed to do that. I can't understand how you want to hold me accountable for your own failure to fulfill your own promise.

Second, if the minister knew anything about electricity in Ontario, he would know that northern Ontario actually

has a surplus of electricity. Indeed, the northwestern part of the province has a very large surplus of electricity that cannot be transmitted to the rest of Ontario. In northern Ontario today, you literally have hydro dams where they've opened the chutes and the water is running down the river because no one can afford to use that electricity at the price this government wants to charge; hydro dams where the electricity costs less than 2 cents a kilowatt hour to produce, but paper mills are being told by this government they have to spend 12 cents and 13 cents a kilowatt hour for the electricity.

That is the problem with the McGuinty Liberals' electricity policy. That is a policy which is killing resource and manufacturing jobs across this province.

Hon. James J. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to request the unanimous consent of the House to allow the member to go on further to explain whether lobbyists are allowed to go to the fundraiser of the NDP.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: After what we've heard in the debate, I think it would be a good time to get—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Let's just quiet down a bit so we can hear the member for Ottawa–Orléans, please.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Just to redefine what this bill is, it's An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. We haven't been near that topic for a while in this Legislature, and I think it's important to get back there.

This act keeps our government up to date. Legislation must keep up with the times and remain current. The content of this act would ensure that existing legislation remains up to date. This is an important function of government. If passed, this act would improve clarity and modernize a number of our provincial laws, regulations and systems.

The bill includes approximately seven amendments to legislation from seven different ministries, but I just want to get to the point of what it involves with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Most of the provisions are technical changes to existing acts but are necessary because they would improve clarity and keep the laws' language current. This bill is an essential housekeeping measure.

The act furthers our Open for Business initiative. This bill builds upon our government's Open for Business initiative. Since the McGuinty government came into office in 2003, we have demonstrated our commitment to working with the business community to address barriers to investment and growth. The legislation will further the Open for Business goals of decreased regulatory burden and better responsiveness to business. If passed, this act would improve services provided to business and the public. If passed, it would help to ensure the necessary structures are in place to streamline services for business and the public.

As many of you know, our government is committed to a health care system that is patient-focused and strives towards value and quality improvement. This involves this bill—I would just like you to be patient, Mr. Speaker. Since 2003, we have made significant investments and improvements that have had and continue to have positive impacts on the health of Ontarians.

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I'd like to spend a moment to highlight some of our accomplishments so far. We've increased access to doctors and reduced wait times. We've implemented a public wait times monitoring website that did not exist prior to 2003. We have made significant investments that have resulted in over 900,000 Ontarians, who didn't have a doctor in 2003, successfully attached to one today. There are 2,300 more doctors in Ontario today than in 2003.

Recently, we introduced the Excellent Care for All Act. This is new legislation to help refocus our efforts on patient care. This landmark legislation will lay the groundwork for a significant culture shift in the province's health care system. It's a cultural shift that must occur if this system is to be there in the future. The Excellent Care for All Act will ensure that we tie increases in spending to improvements in quality. Health care is too important for us to allow inefficiency and a lack of transparency.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, our government is taking a leadership role in finding more efficient ways of improving our health care system. Part of rebuilding Ontario's health involves ensuring that our legislation is current, and Bill 110, the Good Government Act, if passed, provides an opportunity to do so.

Now I'll give you an overview of the proposed repeals and amendments as it impacts the health care act. The first set of amendments involves the Community Care Access Corporations Act. Amendments to this act would streamline and clarify the current regulatory environment by removing duplicate provisions and adding a new one to align the fiscal year of the community care access centre to the government's fiscal year. This is just good government. It is important to do these things.

We are proposing to repeal sections of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act to remove references to osteopaths from the list of persons deemed qualified to operate an X-ray machine, prescribe an X-ray and serve as a radiation protection officer. At this time, osteopaths are no longer a regulated health profession in Ontario. We have to make this amendment.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is also proposing to change sections of the Health Protection and Promotion Act. The act includes references to facilities under the Nursing Homes Act, the Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act, and the Charitable Institutions Act. These acts were repealed when the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, was proclaimed in that year. A technical amendment is required to remove the outdated references and include a reference to long-term-care homes under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007. It is

good government to make sure that these amendments are made.

The proposed amendments to the Home Care and Community Services Act would remove all references to multi-service agencies and boards of health. These models are outdated and have never been implemented. This proposal would update the current legislation to provide community services. Again, this is good government.

The proposed amendments also help to clarify the Independent Health Facilities Act, relating to requirements for licensees of independent health facilities. The proposed changes remove provisions that are outdated and ones that are not required to ensure public accountability and patient health and safety. This again is good government.

The proposal includes amendments and repeals of certain sections of the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act. Among them is an amendment that will help to streamline the regulatory framework, ensuring greater compliance for laboratories. Again, this is a good thing to do.

The proposed amendments would also remove references to the Minister of Finance related to the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion Act. Currently, there is a reference to the Minister of Finance in the sections involving immunity provisions. This is simply a housekeeping amendment as the Minister of Finance does not actually have any powers or duties under this act. Again, it is good government to clean that up.

We also are proposing changes to the Physician Services Delivery Management Act. This act designates the rights and obligations that limit the crown's liability regarding the funding and provision of insured services between the Ontario Medical Association and the provinces. The agreements listed in this act have expired and are no longer in effect, or have been replaced with new agreements. If you listen to the opposition, you would think that you would keep these obsolete provisions around forever. It is good government that we are making these changes.

Let me conclude. The proposed amendments would provide clarity to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care legislation. It would also help to make the regulatory framework more streamlined and contribute to the government's commitment to reduce regulatory burden. In all of this, Ontario patients are our number one priority and focus, so I encourage all members to support this bill.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'll have an opportunity to speak a little bit longer in a few moments, but I do appreciate my colleague's speaking to the bill.

Let's be very clear: There might be 70 items in this piece of legislation, but it is hardly a piece of legislation that is of substance. I think back to the comments of my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke or my

colleague from Kenora–Rainy River, and what this House is looking for is a jobs plan, an action plan that is going to help Ontarians who have felt the brunt of the recession. That, I think, would classify as good government.

This bill, on the other hand, is essentially a bureaucratic bill that deals with very few real details on how to make life here in Ontario better for our constituents. In fact, one of the amendments is to a bill they put forward last year, in 2009, called the Good Government Act. I think that that, in and of itself, speaks volumes for what the desire is from this government. They weren't able to achieve good government last year. What makes them think they're going to achieve it with this piece of legislation? After all, they were named by the National Post as—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Canada's worst government.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —Canada's worst government, and that's very sad.

Mr. Peter Kormos: They hold the record.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They hold the record. So, it's a bit of an oxymoron for the Liberal Party of Ontario to put forward a piece of legislation that says "good government" when everyone knows they are the worst government in the country at this juncture.

I hear a lot of excitement on the government side. I think it's the first time in months that we've heard from them in an excitable fashion. It's good to see most of them coming back to work because, again, part of good government is actually showing up as government to work and not having 30-odd members missing each and every day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague the member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Un gouvernement doit toujours s'assurer d'une saine gestion publique. La raison d'être de ce projet de loi est bel et bien ça.

It is very important that this is exactly what the McGuinty government wants to assure Ontarians. A good government should always have a vision for the future, and again, this is exactly what we've been doing ever since we got elected in 2004.

Again, when I looked at the discussion we had, especially yesterday, I don't think the opposition should criticize this bill at all. They should look at themselves, because when I look at what happened during the previous government, especially at electricity when, way back in 2002, they decided to freeze electricity at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, I don't know if you would call that good government, because at the time we had to purchase electricity at \$1.33 a kilowatt hour and sell it at 4.3 cents.

As my colleague the minister said a little while ago, the NDP cancelled a contract with Manitoba for 1,000 megawatts. The previous government, the Tories, really cancelled another contract with the province of Quebec for 1,250 megawatts. At that time, they tried to get

investors to invest in Ontario so that they could upgrade our electricity generation. They couldn't find anyone—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'll tell you, I couldn't really hear much of the member for Ottawa–Orléans. I was trying to catch a bit of a nap here; it was rather boring. But I can tell that the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is in quite a lather. You see, these folks had their little convention—their mini-convention—last weekend, and this is what their game plan is now. They don't want to talk about their record. They want to talk about some things that happened in the past or maybe didn't happen in the past. I can tell you about the previous government. You see, the previous government, in its eight-year term, created 1,088,000 new, private sector, sustainable jobs in this province. What have we seen in seven years under the McGuinty government? Loss after loss after loss: 300,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario gone.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: You see, they had their little convention, and the Premier got up there. You know, they're just like little Pinocchios on the string, and he's telling them, "Folks, if we just don't talk about our record—we're going to make them all think of something else; we're going to get them to go back into history. But don't talk about our record. We've got to get them off our record. We don't want them to really take a close look at how we have failed, and failed so miserably in office in this province."

But let me assure you folks that the people in Ontario—Premier McGuinty can fool his 70 Liberal caucus members, but he cannot and he will not fool 13 million Ontarians. Not next time, folks, not next time.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Certainly, the member opposite didn't enjoy my colleague's speech. It was an excellent speech, because he spoke to the topic, he spoke about the importance of this bill and why we have to pass it. Rather, they like to speak about many different elements, which we're all concerned about, like jobs, like health care, like education, which we are dealing with in a professional manner.

I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Ottawa–Orléans for his speech, where he outlined how important this bill would be for the people of Ontario who access the government and the regulations and laws of the government of Ontario.

This bill, as he mentioned, will effect almost 70 amendments and also affect seven ministries. The aim and the most important thing that this bill will do is modernize our system and make it accessible, because it's important, if you want to be a good government, to be accessible. You have to make the rules and regulations

accessible to the people so that people are able to use them and read them. That's what we're trying to do.

I know the member opposite likes to speak about many different elements. They had a chance to govern. What did we have? We had a disaster in the province of Ontario. We had chaos with electricity, health care, education and loss of jobs. That's why I'm standing up and supporting my colleague, the member from Ottawa–Orléans, for his speech, because he outlined the right things. I congratulate him and wish him luck and success. He's a great member who represents his constituents very well on a regular basis.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to thank the member from Nepean–Carleton—she still does not understand the bill.

Merci à mon ami, le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Il a bien parlé sur l'électricité.

I'd also like to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—King Coal, as he's known in this House. He'd like to go back to cheap, dirty energy like a lot of countries in this world that want to stay on dirty coal. They don't have any concerns for the health of their people or the health of the planet.

I'd like to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for his good support and his understanding that we're dealing with a bill that is necessary. It's not the most dynamic bill that's ever been made, but a bill that is extremely important for good government. And if you had looked at it that way without going into all the areas where you wanted to get off topic, you would have known that this act keeps our government up to date, and that's important. The legislation must be kept up to date.

If passed, this act would improve clarity and modernize a number of our provincial laws, regulations and systems—I have to repeat this part, because you seem to have missed it. The bill includes approximately 70 amendments to legislation from seven different ministries. You just heard the ones from health care today, and they're important ones for health care. They're important ones for the people of Ottawa–Orléans, I'm sure, and of the overall province.

If you had looked at this and read the bill and understood that this is a necessary thing—it's not the most exciting bill that will ever come your way, but it's important and it has to be done. It helps our businesses work with government.

The act furthers our Open for Business initiative. This bill builds upon our government's Open for Business initiative. Since the McGuinty government came to office, we have demonstrated our commitment to working with the business—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to enter the debate today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and PC leader Tim Hudak.

Furthermore, I would like to congratulate our critic, Ted Chudleigh, as well as our other critics Christine Elliott and John O'Toole. I apologize too; I should have referred to them by their ridings: Halton, Whitby–Oshawa, and Durham. They've put a lot of effort into this because this bill does deal with 70 different pieces of legislation.

Just to name a few, just to say how significant this bill could have been, had they really done a thorough review: the alcohol and gaming regulation, the Evidence Act, the Gaming Control Act, the Liquor Licence Act, the Provincial Offences Act—the Justices of the Peace Act—what I find personally amusing in this piece of legislation is that they're already amending the so-called Good Government Act, 2009—the vintners quality act and others.

In particular, when I look at some of the health acts that are going to be amended, we're looking at the Community Care Access Corporations Act, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Home Care and Community Services Act and the Ontario Mental Health Foundation Act.

I think, when you look at some of the health care acts that are being amended, we can be doing a better job in Ontario on health care and we should have taken this into consideration, particularly in light of today's Auditor General's report, where we see that hospitals have had to resort to paying lobbyists with taxpayer dollars intended for front-line care to lobby the Minister of Health or provincial bureaucrats or political staff under Mr. McGuinty's regime.

The reality that we have here is that good governance hasn't taken place. So to name this act a good government act is a bit of a misnomer. In fact, I would argue that it's actually an oxymoron when you consider that it has been widely regarded across Ontario that this is Canada's worst government. In fact, it was published in the National Post.

I've spoken to a number of my constituents, as many of us have over the summer and during the break week. You hear concerns from folks, whether it's on high hydro rates or the HST. When we had the eco taxes and that \$85 million—which, by the way, hasn't been paid back to people, even though the minister has backtracked—when you're looking at the pocketbook issues of Ontarians, good governance to them is actually respecting their tax dollars and ensuring that they get value for their tax dollar. That does not appear to happen, as we know from today's Auditor General's report.

But even more, we notice that small businesses are having a rough time making ends meet. I've heard just horrible stories from small businesses in my riding. In particular, I must say that I and my colleagues from York–Simcoe and Halton met with some restaurateurs who were telling us that this government is hurting their bottom line.

The reality is, until some of those fundamental changes happen—my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River discussed the pulp and paper industry, and I'm

talking about restaurateurs from different places; for example, London and Ottawa. The reality is that these people are having a really difficult time, and this government doesn't seem to be listening to them.

I have a great little coffee shop in my riding called the Two Monkeys café. I've been told that they had to let go a staff member based on the high hydro rates that they have. They're not able to keep up their competitive advantage. That's sad, and I'll tell you why, about this particular coffee shop.

As you know, I'm one of the few members—there are a few of us here—who have small children. Two Monkeys café is named aptly for two monkeys: two children. The front is a regular coffee shop, for coffee lovers who want to go in there and maybe take their laptop to use the Wi-Fi. In the back, which is almost separated, is an inside playground for children so that moms and dads, like me and my husband, can go and have our coffee.

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The reality is, this government, this Liberal government, is not looking after the competitive advantage that my constituents need to run a successful small business. In fact, if you want to talk about good government, you would give them the tools so that they can succeed on their own. But that's not happening here because of the high energy prices. The high cost of doing business in Ontario is making it more difficult for my friends at Two Monkeys or any other restaurant or hospitality service or hotel in this province to succeed. We heard again from my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River, who talked about this government's catastrophic policies in his constituency.

I think, too, of the people who volunteer their time and their efforts only to find out that this government is telling them, for example, that they shouldn't be spending Saturday at the Metcalfe Fair or doing anything political or community-oriented because Mr. McGuinty thinks that they ought to be at home doing their laundry. That's not good governance; that's overbearing. The reality is, these folks who want to contribute to their communities are being told, "No, no, no. It's Saturday. Do your laundry."

The list continually goes on when we see examples of bad government, things like sex education for six-year-olds—that was in today's Toronto Sun—when we're talking about some of the other issues. Today my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and my other colleague from Leeds–Grenville ate a Double Down out in the front because Mr. McGuinty and his cabinet were considering banning them. They were considering banning chocolate milk in schools.

This is a government that is so out of touch. "Good government" doesn't need to be the name of a bill; it just needs to happen. But they've forgotten about it. They've been so out of touch for so long now, and out of gas, that what has really occurred is that there isn't good governance happening right now. One of my colleagues from the Liberal Party said, "Well, what's good for the

government is good for the opposition," and that couldn't be further from the truth. He's just saying this because he wants us to support a piece of legislation that, quite frankly, doesn't really mean anything.

I go back to the reality, as my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke spoke about, when the previous government created a situation in Ontario where one million new jobs were created because of the economic environment. If you think back, we have lost hundreds of thousands of jobs: full-time jobs, well-paying jobs, manufacturing jobs, forestry sector jobs. I just mentioned we have lost some in the hospitality industry. We've lost them under their watch, but they're so upset at their record that they get so venomous when they want to attack back and protect their own record. The record speaks for itself; the numbers speak for themselves.

This was a province that was the economic powerhouse of Confederation at one point in time. It was where every Canadian would see their home. They wanted to grow a family. They came to Ontario. They came from around the world because they believed in prosperity and the ability to harness that, to create a better life for your family. Instead, what has happened under this sort of nanny state—"Dalton McGuinty knows best"—is that we have seen an erosion of that personal freedom. And it's not like people want it to go overboard, but what they want is to have an ability to live their lives. They want to know that on Saturday, if they would like to go to the Metcalfe Fair or the Richmond Fair or if they would like to go to Lansdowne Park, they can do that. But this government here, instead, turns to every family that I represent and says, "Hey, you shouldn't be doing that; you should be doing laundry. So go on downstairs to the laundry room and load up the whites, load up the colours, load up the towels, and then just get it done. And make sure you get the rinse and that whole cycle done and get the spin cycle done and get it all dried up before Saturday night, because you need to be in by a certain time to make sure your kids don't have chocolate milk to watch Hockey Night in Canada."

The reality is, people are fed up. They're just so tired of this government. That's why, of course—I have to say it again—the National Post called this Canada's worst government. The reality is that it speaks for itself. I think of my colleague from Durham who spoke to this bill yesterday. He's one of the many critics on this bill because, as I mentioned, they've decided to open up 70 acts. They've not decided to do that well, mind you, but they've decided to open up 70 acts. He says he's got serious concerns over the way this Liberal government is governing this great province.

And I think, to my colleague from Halton, who—what will happen is, as the Liberals get up to speak, they'll start blaming Mike Harris and they'll start blaming Ernie Eves. They'll blame everybody. He said, "You know, they will actually probably try to blame Sir John A. Macdonald." There was a point last year on these HST cheques that were given to the HST tax collectors.

Remember the \$45,000 severances? Do you know who they blamed on that? John Robarts. I think John Robarts was out of office before I was even born. This is how desperate this Liberal government is.

This shouldn't be called the Good Government Act; it should be called the desperate government act, because this government is nothing short of desperate. When you look at today's issue, at the Auditor General's report and how he's uncovered that they've used public tax dollars at hospitals to lobby the government, and then came out with a bill that's not anywhere near as strong as the bill we put forward in May, you'd be shocked. But do you know what? They've lost touch with everyday Ontarians, and it's time for them to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Nickel Belt.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just before the member for Nickel Belt starts: You've had your time; you've listened; now we're going to listen to the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was most interesting to listen to the member from Nepean–Carleton. She talks about what a good government would look like on the ground in her own riding. She gave us a real-life view of what it means in her riding when good governments are in place. She talked about small businesses that would be allowed to thrive, talked about healthy communities. This is what a good government does. They bring in healthy people, healthy families, healthy businesses and healthy communities so that all of this can thrive. She tried to show, through her experience as an MPP and through the experience of the people whom she shared her life with, that they need a good government in order for them to have a good life, and basically showed that this is not really happening.

When we have comments coming from this government that talk about, "Do your laundry on Saturday," I'm sorry; this is not acceptable. We expect more than this from our government. Never mind being good government; we expect more than this just to be an average government.

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm laughing at some of the comments that are being made.

But really, what she brought forward were real-life examples. This is what people expect from the MPP and this is what she did. She brought us what the situation looks like in her riding, because we do not have a good government right now.

I support what she said, and hopefully others will as well.

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

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to stand and speak about the Good Government Act.

I don't expect the members from that side of the House to vote for the Good Government Act. Do you want to know why? Because they don't want good

government. They don't want healthy communities. They don't want a strong economic package that works for the people of Ontario—they don't want that. That's why they'll vote against this Good Government Act.

When we think about the health care that is available to the people of Ontario, how it has been strengthened, and our education system, and we hear the member from Nepean–Carleton—when they were in government, they lost 26 million school days. So I say to the member from across the way: I don't expect her to support this. Because what does it take to make the people of Ontario strong? It takes a strong health care system, it takes a strong education system and it also takes a strong business environment, where our businesses can prosper. There has been so much work done. This is further emphasized by the Good Government Act.

When I think about the HST, her federal cousins get it. But on that side of the House, they don't get it. They wouldn't even get it if it came up and knocked on the door in Nepean–Carleton. They don't understand what the business community needs.

When I see the member rise in the House and talk about, "Everything should be the way it was," well, it's not going to be. We have to move and change and bring an electricity system forward that will meet our needs going now into the future.

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I wouldn't want to miss the opportunity to say what they did when they were in government and shut down my riding with their energy policy. Let's talk about that.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Boy, we've got the lady from Huron–Bruce all lathered up, too.

The Liberals' convention on the weekend—we've seen the news reports from that and you see that they're going to get down into the gutter and practise the kind of politics that Liberals practise when they're desperate. Do you know who was there? Warren Kinsella. He's quite a piece of work. A couple of years ago, when my colleague from Nepean–Carleton—she's talking about having to do the laundry at night—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She's going to have to bake her cookies at night now, too. That was a big sexist thing that Warren Kinsella had on his blog, that she'd rather be baking cookies. No, she'd rather be here serving her constituents. But, you see, that Kinsella, he's quite a piece of work. There will be a thing on his blog about me tomorrow, you watch, because that's the kind of low-life, gutless political practitioner he is.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think the language is getting just a little stronger than parliamentary language should be. So let's temper our language a bit.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. He is quite a piece of work. There's no depth that is too low for him to sink to when it comes to political action taking

place. You see, that's the kind convention they had on the weekend. It was Warren Kinsella: "Okay, this is how we're going to attack, attack." Gutter politics, and we're going get down into that kind of mode where we reduce the debate to the level of the lowest possible common denominator.

You know what they don't want to talk about? They don't want to talk about their record of the last seven years. But you know what? The people are tired of the Warren Kinsellas of this world. The people are tired of Warren Kinsella. They want a new government. They're going to have that opportunity next year.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll be in Warren's blog tomorrow.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll be in the blog tomorrow—oh, I'm sorry.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: There has to be some note of civility in the discussion here this afternoon, so I would say it's great to see the good spirits here.

The member from Nepean–Carleton obviously touched a nerve, and when the Minister of Agriculture so rudely interrupted her, I was quite surprised at how aggressive the attack was.

In fact, this is about good government by a government that's on retreat. When they have to bring in message managers like Warren Kinsella, it shows that they've run out of messages that actually work. If you look at their energy plan right now as one example, it is a complete sham. George Smitherman set Brad Duguid up like a golf ball on a tee because the smart meters—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Durham knows full well that we don't use names; we use positions.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Energy, with all due respect, has a file that he doesn't have the foggiest idea about. He says that we did nothing. We refurbished the nuclear plants.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He set him up on a tee and drove him into a hazard.

Mr. John O'Toole: Exactly. To me, if he only knew what was being done—the refurbishment of the plants. They still haven't looked at the new-build nuclear in Durham, but they're putting 80-cent wind and solar power on the grid. Clearly, the question periods today and yesterday and all week show that they have a failed policy. That's the issue on the table here.

One more thing they're doing with this particular Bill 110 is, they're really making an obscure motion to outsource almost all the decision-making from the minister or order in council to public servants who aren't accountable to the electorate. I think they're walking—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That was the most entertaining 10 minutes I've had in here in a long time.

I want to say thank you very much to my colleague from Nickel Belt for joining the debate today. I'd also like to thank my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—and if it was not clear, he wants to be in Warren Kinsella's blog tomorrow, so if my colleagues from the Liberal Party can arrange for that, that would be great.

I'd also like to thank my colleague from Durham, who has spoken to this bill many times as one of the critics—because, as we mentioned, it does deal with 70 different pieces of legislation.

In Ontario today—we are loath to say this because it's sometimes overused, but I actually believe it right now—we're at a crossroads. I think it's incumbent upon all members here to remember that we need to get back on the road to economic recovery, and for that we need good governance. This bill is not appropriately named. The reality is, the challenges that we've seen in the last seven and a half years are a result of one government and one government only, and I think it's important that we convey that today.

Just to the point of my colleague from Nickel Belt, talking about community: That's why today I thought it was important to bring forward the concerns I heard from my community. I'm hearing them more frequently, and I'm sure you're hearing them as well, with the high hydro costs, with the high cost of doing business in Ontario. It's pretty tough these days to raise a family in Ontario. It's very expensive. As a chamber, I think we need to very studiously and thoughtfully have that conversation—and it doesn't happen when you wrongly name a bill. You have to put a little bit more energy and effort into being good government than just putting forward an omnibus bill with a title that makes you feel good.

I want to say thank you for your indulgence here today. I appreciate my colleagues and their spirited debate. We're going to have some fun. I'm looking forward to my colleague from Nickel Belt providing her understanding of this bill as well.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to talk about Bill 110, the Good Government Act. It is really hard to be standing here today talking about good government after having read the special report from the Auditor General, Mr. Jim McCarter, which talks about the use of consultants within the broader health care system. Some of what you read in there will truly make you sick. Let me read some of this for the record.

So, we have in—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member from Nickel Belt, don't read too much, and relate it to the bill, please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We are talking about good government. How can we talk about good government when we see consultant contracts for \$398 per hour; when we see the Minister of Health spending \$2.6 million through

the transfer payments agency with no specific project deliverables, no expectations? We see health care consultants charging \$500 a night for a hotel room, then \$700 a night for a hotel room in Singapore. We see \$300 for a dinner in Toronto; \$140 of this is alcohol. We see \$350 for another dinner in Toronto; \$215 of this was alcohol. How can we have this debate about good government when things like this are going on? This is not good government. And then we look at what they put forward as a report to this.

To me this is a five-star alarm, what's going on within our health care system. I expect the government to come out and react the way that everybody else reacts when we see our taxpayers' dollars going out the door like this, and what do they do? They bring in a bill that, even if it's fully implemented exactly the way they have designed it, will not keep hospitals from hiring lobbyists, will not keep hospitals from overpaying consultants for not getting too much value for money, and this is if the bill is fully implemented. This is the way they have designed it. This is not good government.

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Good government would make sure that we regain confidence in our health care system, not put out half-baked measures that don't do what everybody in Ontario wants. Nobody in Ontario wants hospitals to be hiring lobbyists to lobby the government, but yet we won't see this in this bill.

It's hard to digest why this is happening. If we really had a bill that was talking about good government, would we have all those kids on the front lawns of Queen's Park right now? They're all wearing purple. They're wearing purple because so many kids belonging to the LGBTTTQ community have committed suicide. How can it be in a province like Ontario, in 2010, that we have kids who are so desperate that they see the only way out as suicide? Their friends are standing on the front lawn right now trying to bring attention to this awful thing playing out throughout communities in Ontario.

If we had good government we would have been proactive. We would have helped members of the LGBTTTQ community so that their members don't get so desperate that they commit suicide. But none of this is in the good government bill. Those kids will continue to sing songs and hold vigils for the friends that they lost, and we are in here talking about a good government bill that does nothing for them.

Si on avait vraiment un bon gouvernement, on verrait un gouvernement qui respecte ses propres lois. On a une loi en Ontario, la Loi sur les services en français, qui dit que tous les services du gouvernement devraient être disponibles en français et en anglais en même temps. Mais, vous vous souvenez tous, l'automne dernier, on parlait de la grippe H1N1. Le gouvernement a dépensé pour envoyer à chaque foyer de l'Ontario une brochure en anglais seulement. Comment ça se fait qu'on est rendu à 2010, qu'on est supposé avoir un bon gouvernement, qu'on fait même des lois qui s'appellent « bon gouvernement », et on envoie une brochure à la grandeur

de la province en anglais seulement sur un sujet aussi important l'automne dernier, qui était la grippe H1N1?

If we look at—si on regarde les plaques d'immatriculation—je me suis trompée de langue pour une seconde—on voit la même chose. Les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes veulent souvent afficher avec une plaque d'immatriculation personnalisée qui dit « Tant à découvrir ». Mais non; on ne peut pas avoir ça. Il y a 70 différents modèles qui existent, toutes en anglais. On en a une qui existe en français, celle avec notre beau drapeau franco-ontarien; c'est très beau, mais c'est très limité. Pourquoi les anglophones ont le choix de 70 modèles, puis les francophones, on a le choix de un?

L'ironie de tout ça, c'est que si tu prends celle avec le drapeau franco-ontarien, tu peux l'avoir en anglais. C'est un peu bizarre, cette affaire. Mais pour les francophones, ça va de bizarre à insultant vraiment.

If we had good government, we would not let people wait over 618 days before they get into a long-term-care home. That is two long years before you get into a long-term-care home. This is a complete disrespect to those people.

If we had good government, we wouldn't have 20% of the beds in all of the 155 hospitals occupied by alternate level of care patients. Those are people who have supported this province, who have given us the best years of their lives, and in their moments of need we leave them in a hospital bed where they are not receiving the care they need; where they are not being treated with the dignity and the respect they deserve. We leave them there for days, weeks, months and sometimes years at a time, depending on where in Ontario you live. This is not good government. This is not good health care.

If we had good government, we would have interdisciplinary practices throughout Ontario. They keep announcing family health teams. Well, family health teams, so far, haven't moved beyond an alternate payment plan. If you take all of the physicians in family health teams—they range into the thousands—you don't even have that many of all of the other—whether you put nurse practitioners, nurses, nursing assistants, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, podiatrists, social workers—if you put all of them together, they don't even equate to the number of physicians in the family health teams. Those are not teams; they're alternate payment plans, and they're a dyad at the most.

This is not what we need. A good government would make sure that those models are more than just PR and are actually rolled out on the ground as providing good-quality care.

We all know that interdisciplinary care is the way to treat chronic illness, which is what we see the most of. Eighty per cent of a primary care practice will be managing chronic disease.

Do we see good government? Well, we see good PR and we see good announcements, but we don't always see good government in there.

We want, as people have said before, a government that takes responsibility for their actions. After the report

was tabled today, the Ontario Hospital Association was swift and decisive. They came out with a full apology. I can read it. They apologize “without reservation to all Ontarians for failing to meet their expectations with respect to the hiring and management of consultants.” They took responsibility. This is the first step in making things better.

When we asked the Minister of Health to take responsibility, she didn't. She said she was quite willing to apologize, but really it was somebody else's fault: “It has nothing to do with us.” That encourages a culture of self-indulgence with taxpayers' money.

There are many steps that could be taken that would bring us to good government in this province. I don't see any of them in Bill 110. I don't see any of them in the Good Government Act of 2010. I guess we'll have to keep waiting.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): As I have said before, there are a number of timepieces in the Legislature, but I always rely on my little pocket watch.

This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock Thursday morning, October 21.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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