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Wednesday 28 October 2009

Mercredi 28 octobre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 28 October 2009

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 28 octobre 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO LABOUR
MOBILITY ACT, 2009
LOI ONTARIENNE DE 2009
SUR LA MOBILITÉ
DE LA MAIN-D'ŒUVRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 16, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario and other Canadian provinces and territories / Projet de loi 175, Loi visant à accroître la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre entre l'Ontario et les autres provinces et les territoires du Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Where are the Tories? I don't get it. Oh, there's one. It is really hard to do a lead at 9 o'clock in the morning—it really is. I do welcome the citizens of Ontario to this parliamentary channel. It's Wednesday morning, and it's bright and early, 9 o'clock. It's really hard. I have to tell you I used to sing when I was a young man, and it's really hard to sing in the morning—it really is—because you need time to wake up, to open up the lungs, to talk to a lot of Liberals—to loosen up, right?—talk to Tories and just loosen up until you're able to have the lungs ready to debate and to feel comfortable and eloquent. So it's really hard. That's why I was hoping some bright, young Tory person would stand up and do 20 minutes and give me time to just reflect a little bit.

I've got a problem with this bill, I have to tell you—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Oh, no.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do. The member from Oakville and I had such a tight relationship when we were dealing with Bill 183, which is the college of trades. It seems to me that what we tried to do in that bill is almost undermined by this bill that we are about to be engaged in—the present bill that I'm talking about is Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario

and other Canadian provinces and territories. I want to try to explain why they seem to be in contradiction with each other, and I'll of course be happy to listen to a number of Liberals after I speak, to see what they have to say by way of their two minutes or 20 minutes or whatever time they commit to it.

The college of trades was intended to do many good things; that is, take what the government has been doing badly around apprenticeships and move it to a college of trades that we hope is going to do a better job of it. As I said yesterday in one of the debates, the Liberals have done a poor job of apprenticeship training. We finally have a college of trades that we hope will not only speak well of the trades and promote them, but also create a “scope of practice for trades” and good regulation for the practice of trades, “develop, establish and maintain qualifications for membership in the college ... issue certificates of qualification and statements of membership to members of the college, and amend, suspend, cancel, revoke or reinstate those certificates ... promote the practice of trades”—as I said—“establish apprenticeship programs and other training programs for trades, including training standards, curriculum standards and examinations ... determine appropriate journeyman to apprenticeship ratios for trades,” which is an important debate that I know Conservatives are very keen on, and I'm eager to see what developments can come out of it. I'm a big supporter of having good ratios of journeymen to apprentices. It's about health and safety of workers and about the health and safety of the work that is done, which protects consumers. So I'm looking forward to that particular piece of work.

They will “address compliance issues in respect of matters within the jurisdiction of the college” and “work with other governments in Canada and the minister with respect to the interprovincial standards program for apprenticeship and with respect to qualifications required for trades.” This is of particular interest to me, because this links to Bill 175, which is before us. I'll repeat that. It says: “To work with other governments in Canada and the minister with respect to the interprovincial standards program for apprenticeship and with respect to qualifications required for trades.”

I'll get back to that in a few moments, but I want to say that what we're doing with this college is establishing rules for the trades, establishing what constitutes a qualification or a certificate in a particular trade. What it usually means is that you've got to go through a rigorous program to be able to be an apprentice in a particular trade, and it usually means you've got to be in that pro-

gram for two, three or four years—in some cases, even five. And what it assures is quality of work at the end of it. Surely this is what all Canadians and all citizens of Ontario want.

I wasn't happy with the former Conservative government in terms of the way they broke up the original act into two parts. They created the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act and created as well the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, two separate acts. The reason they did that—good old Mike Harris. I just read an article by Mike Harris on colleges and universities, and I thought, "Of all people to talk about colleges and universities." He ruined the university system, and he's talking about doing more with less and how great it was that he cut \$400 million because it forced the universities to do a better job of it with less money. I thought, "Gee, the Toronto Star gave him a whole big article." I admit, he's a former Premier and so you've got to give him some space—I understand that—but I couldn't help thinking of good old Mike in the context of these trades and what he tried to do.

0910

Mr. Mike Colle: Re-educate people. Re-education.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Re-education. His own re-education. I guess nobody else talks well of Mike, so presumably he's got to write his own articles. That's okay; I understand that. But he created the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, and what does that mean? It means that you break down the authentic trades that require two, three, four years of apprenticing, break them down into the various skill sets, so that if you have a whole trade that takes two, three or four years and then you create an act, the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, that says anybody can be called a tradesperson even though they only have one component of what a trade is all about—we call them tradespeople. John, you know what I mean because you've been following this. We call them tradespeople. Pretty soon everybody's going to be a tradesman or a tradeswoman in a particular field, even though they only have some qualification in a particular trade. So what the Conservatives have done through my good friend Mike Harris—continued by my good buddies the Liberals, because they kept this act, now folded into Bill 183—what it does is to diminish what a trade is. It worries me. But I have been persuaded into believing that Bill 183, the college of trades, may indeed solve that little problemo I have. I can only be hopeful, member from Oakville, because you're a tradesperson. I can only be hopeful. What can I say? You have to be.

Bill 183 is about creating standards for the trades. I give this little background as a way of stating my concern about Bill 175—and I'll tell you why. I want to say, before getting into the telling you why, that I'm not quite sure why we have Bill 175 before us. I really am not quite sure, because even though this bill represents the first instance of Ontario taking the step of giving statutory expression to an Agreement on Internal Trade—and it seems as if it's a reasonable thing to do—the question I've been asking myself in the last couple of days reading

this act is, why do we need this bill? We know that an agreement on internal trade—

Mr. Mike Colle: I'll be back.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll see you soon, Mike—had been begun in 1994 by the then Liberal government, federally. It has continued to the present under the Conservative government. We know that Monsieur Harper has different kinds of interest in this whole matter, and I'm trying to find his quote because he speaks about why it is that we need to do this. As soon as I find it, I will read it into the record, and if I can't find it, we'll move on. I can't find it, but I will.

Interjection: Try to get organized, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a tough job; being a critic of many things is a tough job. I'll find it.

Oh, here he is. You see? It's a question of seconds. With the Speaker's indulgence, I'm able to find it on time. Here's what Monsieur Harper said. The labour mobility provisions of the AIT which Bill 175 seeks to implement reflect a certain ideological Conservative commitment, if not framework, by the Harper government, in our view, to reduce the role of government in regulating the economy. And in its throne speech on November 19, the federal government committed to working with the provinces "to remove barriers to internal trade, investment and labour mobility by 2010." It all sounds reasonable because if there are barriers, you say to yourself, we should be removing them, shouldn't we? It makes sense. The Conservative election platform went further by stating that a Harper government "will work to eliminate barriers that restrict or impair trade, investment or labour mobility between provinces and territories by 2010.... We hope to see further progress, but are prepared to intervene by exercising federal authority if barriers to trade, investment and mobility remain by 2010."

Again, to the general public and to most people, it seems like a reasonable thing to do. He is prepared to intervene; he is prepared to exercise his constitutional authority, should barriers exist between provinces, to remove them. The fact of the matter is, he does have the constitutional authority to do this. So if there are barriers, we think he should remove them.

The fact of the matter is, there are no tariffs between provinces. As far as I know, there are no taxes that are levied on one province by another. So I say to myself, what problems have we had that we need to deal with? We know that only 20% of Canadian workers are employed in a regulated occupation or trade; for example, professional skilled technicians or people who work in the compulsory trades. We're talking about 20% of the people. We know there should be standards in these fields. We don't want somebody who operates heavy equipment to be able to do something in another province if they're not adequately trained. We don't want paramedics to be running around helping people who are seriously ill if they're not adequately trained. We don't want accountants if they're not adequately trained; we don't want doctors or plumbers or electricians if they're not adequately trained. We just don't want that. We're

talking about 20% of the professional and other trade occupations. It's not like it's 80% or 90%, we've got serious trade barriers; we're talking about a small amount of trades and professions that we're dealing with. Where there have been concerns interprovincially, by and large, as far as I have been able to gather, we've been able to solve them.

We know there is a forum of labour market ministers that has been established since 1983 to talk about the various issues that might pop up from time to time from province to province. We know that there is a labour mobility coordinating group that reports on the progress of the implementation of the Agreement on Internal Trade. So where there have been issues, they have been dealt with. The way they have been dealt with, at least in terms of mobility of trades, is with a program called the red seal program, which allows qualified tradespersons to practise their trades in any province or territory without having to write additional examinations. The red seal program is an example of how workers, or at least provinces, across Canada—with the exception of British Columbia, which has not bought in—that the red seal program applies to all trades across Canada.

They did this co-operatively, so they have found a solution from one province to another in dealing with the trades, in a way that every province has satisfactory qualifications to be able to get a job, no matter where you go, because the standards are the same. We know that there have been 26 complaints since 1996 around potential problems of barriers that might exist in one occupation from one province to another, but of the 26, 23 have been withdrawn, two complaints have been upheld and one is ongoing.

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The point of the matter is that the majority of complaints around issues of occupational standards barriers—presumed barriers that might exist—have been dealt with across Canada, co-operatively, each working with the other. If the government has a problem, it can deal with it on a national level, but standards around occupations are a provincial responsibility and we have a constitutional right to be able to deal with those standards.

That's where the problem lies. The problem is that different provinces have different standards relating to the different occupations, trades and professions. Some standards may be high in one province and low in another. Some provinces love deregulation—i.e. Alberta, God bless them, and British Columbia, God bless them too—and other provinces have stricter kinds of regulations because we believe we should regulate for the protection of the consumer.

Where the problem lies, in my view, is in the federal government's commitment to international trade obligations. We believe those commitments connect, at least as it relates to these Harper Conservatives—and the previous Liberal government, to be sure—to the policies of deregulation and privatization that those agreements seem to entrench.

The real agenda, for me, in terms of what the federal government is doing by way of changes they are making

to the Agreement on Internal Trade, is to make sure, when they go to whatever international conferences there are with other governments, that they are able to say to them that the free trade rules apply to Canada and by extension they apply to the provinces. In my view, it's a slow erosion of our provincial powers to be able to regulate.

This bill allows any person who is outside of the province of Ontario and governed by whatever regulatory or non-regulatory body, private or otherwise, to come into Ontario and practise their trade. That's what this bill does. And it puts the responsibility on the Ontario government to show and to prove—if that person does not get the job, the onus is on the provincial government to show that it's a problem for this province. It puts an incredible responsibility on every ministry of this government to do the research in other provinces and determine what their standards are. It puts responsibilities on municipal governments to understand what the standards are in other provinces and to do research to see whether or not their standards are so inadequate that they have to make a case to say, "No, they don't qualify." It puts the responsibility on non-governmental bodies, meaning the different professions that exist—child care, social work, the Ontario Medical Association and all the other professions—it puts them in the position of having to do the research and assess the qualifications of those individuals and what standards those folks have gone through in the provinces.

Understand: We do not have a repository of information somewhere that says, "Here are the standards across Canada," and you can just flip a finger and say, "Oh, I see. In Nova Scotia, these are the standards around these trades and the medical profession; and in Alberta, these are the standards they have to deal with; and here are the private sector folks managing these trades or some profession, and this is the public sector that's managing it, and here is where they might have had some historical problems connected with it." There is no national repository. The weight and responsibility for assessing the qualifications of an individual and assessing the various regulatory bodies that govern those individuals is not available to us. So you are on your own, as a provincial government—if a ministry is affected—or a non-governmental body or a municipal government, in terms of doing that work. How could they do that? The money and the time aren't there.

This bill imposes \$5-million penalties if, for whatever reason, someone applies and you do not engage them or you do not comply. It imposes a tremendous penalty—five million bucks—on a non-governmental agency, or indeed a government. I have never seen something like it anywhere, and the Liberal government is quite happy to be able to help out with that. So understand: The onus is on the Ontario government to prove and show that the problem doesn't lie with another province whose standards are bad; it is left to you, the Ontario government, to prove that their standards are inadequate and that they shouldn't be hiring somebody. It's just the wrong way of doing things.

I'm quite frankly puzzled as to why the provincial government is doing this. I understand that, from a Canadian perspective, the whole notion of being able to say, "A Canadian is a Canadian, and a Canadian should be able to work wherever they want." I understand how facile that argument is and how easy it is to sell. The problem is that there are different standards, and standards are regulated by provinces. What we're doing is literally giving up on standards no matter where they are. What it means is that we are going to have to downgrade our standards. It's about going to a lower common denominator in terms of standards.

Is this the intent of the Liberal government? I don't know. My suspicion is the following: They're quite happy to comply with the federal government's rules around this issue; they don't see any difficulty. The majority of MPPs have not read this bill; the majority of them have not reflected on the possible consequences of this bill; and the majority of MPPs to my left and in front of me simply enjoy and assume that whatever they're doing is good for Canadians no matter where they are, and that's okay by them. The fact is, when you read this bill, you realize that there are problems. You realize that there are problems.

Section 9 obliges regulatory authorities to recognize and give effect to authorizing certificates issued in any other Canadian jurisdiction. This is the most important part of this bill, and it says:

"When applicant is certified by out-of-province regulatory authority

"9.(1) This section applies if an individual applying to an Ontario regulatory authority for certification in a regulated occupation is already certified in the same occupation by an out-of-province regulatory authority.

"Material additional training"

Additional training does not have to be required. It's not required. Additional training is not required:

"(2) The Ontario regulatory authority shall not require, as a condition of certifying the individual in the regulated occupation, that the individual have, undertake, obtain or undergo any material additional training, experience, examinations or assessments."

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There are some exceptions. They must respect the validity of the authorizations accorded by the regulatory officials in any other jurisdiction even when the occupational standards they apply are lower than those in Ontario.

"(12) Every Ontario regulatory authority shall, to the extent possible and where practical,...

"(b) take steps to reconcile differences between the occupational standards it has established for an occupation and occupational standards in effect with respect to the same occupation in the other provinces and territories of Canada that are parties to the Agreement on Internal Trade."

The question I put to my friend from Oakville: If we are about to create strong standards in the college of trades, and then we say, when someone comes from an-

other province and has been trained in another province, that they can come here and get a job without having to go through additional training, and we in Ontario must take steps to reconcile differences—meaning make it so, make it happen; if there are differences in standards, it doesn't matter, you are forced to reconcile those differences, simply make it happen—you as a government will make it happen. We just passed the college of trades that will have strong standards in Ontario as it relates to all of the trades that anybody can think of. But this bill says, "Not a problemo. If you come from another province and the standards are lower, it's okay; you've got to reconcile those differences." That is the obligation that this bill puts on this government, on municipal authorities and on non-governmental bodies. I've never seen anything like it; I have to tell you that. So even though there are various exceptions and even though a tribunal of sorts will be set up to deal with some of these differences, we believe, based on past practices, that this bill, in the form in which it is written, will take precedence, will succeed in doing what the intent of this bill is all about. This bill overrides any other bill that we have before this place, or any bill that has been passed by this government now or in the past. This bill will override anything else.

Pat Dillon, business manager for the Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, has raised concerns that the new labour mobility regimes may undermine the red seal program which is working to facilitate labour mobility. In part, the problem arises from the fact, as I mentioned earlier, that British Columbia doesn't buy into the red seal program. According to Mr. Dillon, "There is no doubt in my mind that with what they have put in place, it allows for the lowering of standards, no matter how it is cut." That's Pat Dillon, who has supported this government over the many years and has concerns about the bill that you have put before us.

Indeed, the Ontario Federation of Labour has serious concerns about what you are doing with this bill. I think they will all stand shoulder to shoulder in opposing it, as I am expressing.

I know that the Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada has concerns about this. They argue there will be little incentive for physicians to begin practising in areas of need because they will be able to move upon registration in any jurisdiction they want. So they are concerned about standards.

I believe in standards. The idea of standards is not to turn people away. The idea of standards is to make sure that those who have substandard levels acquire the knowledge and the experience they need to be able to do it well. I'm not talking about having to take years, necessarily, to come up to par; I'm talking about doing the adequate training, whatever it might take. The idea is not to shut people out; the idea is to provide the adequate training that is required to be able to achieve the standard that we believe in, that gives us the security and the protection that we, as consumers, need. I think that is what this is about.

This bill is going to put in place monitors. Imagine that. They're going to hire monitors—I believe loads of

them—to make sure that the rules of this bill, the rules of the game, are complied with. Imagine: We're putting into place rules that we believe are going to erode standards in Ontario, and we're going to be hiring monitors whose role it is to make sure that provincial ministries, non-governmental bodies and municipal governments comply with the bill. How wonderful of this government to facilitate that particular role.

We don't know why you're doing this, we really don't. We don't believe that there is a problem here that needs to be fixed. We believe that you're looking for a solution that is already there. We believe that you are working very closely with the federal government in bringing down standards—which you will say is about bringing down barriers, but as far as I can tell, there are very few barriers that we have not solved. Based on what I've told you, of the 26 cases that have been in dispute, 23 have been withdrawn.

We are looking forward to debate, we are looking forward to hearings—I know you want them too—because we will be able to have details of this bill under scrutiny by those who come to speak about it. We will have more time to be able to see what this bill is all about—and what it's about, in my view, is deregulation and privatization of various programs that we provide in Ontario. We believe this is bad overall for Canadians and this is bad for Ontarians, and we look forward to that debate.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning on the labour mobility code. All members here will know that if this bill is passed, the provisions in any other act, any other regulation, any other bylaw that's in existence and that are in conflict with the labour code, as it becomes proposed law, the act is going to override those provisions.

The act is going to apply to applications for certification made on or after the day the act comes into force or to any other application where a final decision has not been made yet. To ensure transparency in this case, the act is going to require that regulators publish on their websites all certification requirements that workers, already certified anywhere else in Canada, must meet in order to work right here in our province.

I think people understand the need for this now, in this day and age. People are moving around the country. They want the right to move around the country. Sometimes the work moves around the country; sometimes the people just choose to move themselves. To have an old-fashioned system where people must recertify themselves every time they cross a provincial boundary I don't think is anything we want to see in place anymore.

Mr. Marchese, the member for Trinity–Spadina, has pointed out some concerns he has with the bill. That's the object of the hearing process, to hear those concerns, to hear from the stakeholders, to have a fulsome discussion as to what changes should be made during that period when the bill is open to the public.

Since last summer, we've been working with provincial regulators and with industry stakeholders to discuss

the changes that are proposed under the amended AIT, and we're going to try to help everybody to meet their new obligations. But I think in today's economy, the average Ontarian understands that this is a necessary move. It's a progressive move. If the member from Trinity–Spadina has suggestions as to how this could be made better, we're open to that.

0940

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for Trinity–Spadina always gets very enthusiastic and, to some extent, entertaining, and I understand his perspective of protectionism in some areas. I think what we need are the highest possible standards in the world. It's not wrong to presume that one province that's doing something in less time or even more efficiently—as long as it meets the highest safety and quality standards possible, then I suspect we should move forward and not assume the Luddite position.

However, I want to put on the record something very important to an industry that's somewhat related to this idea of labour mobility. It's the AIT, the Agreement on Internal Trade provincially. I have a letter here that was written to the Premier, and this letter is signed by the Egg Farmers of Ontario, the Turkey Producers' Marketing Board, the Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission, the chair of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the chair of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario. This was sent as well to the Minister of Agriculture, and it's on agriculture.

It says, "The five supply-managed commodities in Ontario have been a port in the storm during the economic turmoil that has crippled many industries in Ontario, including other agriculture commodities." We know how difficult agriculture is today. "Chicken, eggs, turkey and dairy are renewable resources, producing 'local' food that provides Ontario consumers with the highest-quality and safest food, period."

This is another case where trade itself—not just the idea that Mr. Marchese is pointing out; standards—is in some jeopardy. This is why they've pointed this out: "Premier, the five supply-managed boards in Ontario have greatly appreciated your ... support," and they want you to continue that support. Don't sign on to this agreement.

It's much like this decision between Quebec and Ontario. For years, labour mobility was only one way. This bill I don't think is going to solve the problems, and you may question its ability—

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I think the member from Trinity–Spadina raised a number of controversial and informative aspects of this bill.

I just want to mention one thing that drives a lot of ordinary Ontarians crazy. Take a doctor, for instance: If a doctor is practising in Alberta, and that doctor wants to come to Ontario to practise, in many cases that doctor

would be required to go back to school in order to practise in Ontario. This is not a doctor from Bangladesh or a doctor from Zimbabwe; this is a doctor from Newfoundland or Prince Edward Island who has been practising for five, 10, 20, 30 or 40 years. Because of all the empires that each province has built up, it's impossible for not only doctors but a lot of highly skilled professionals to ply their trade in different provinces.

Do you know what that does? Many doctors who might want to come to Ontario or want to go to another province will go to the United States. It's easier for them to practise in the States; they get certified immediately if they go to the States.

There are bigger barriers. It's like our trade barriers between provinces. You try to get a bottle of beer from another province; you can't do it. Wine from other provinces, never mind people—there are so many archaic, nonsensical barriers between provincial governments that in essence treat Canadians like foreign citizens within their own country. This is a small attempt to try and remove some of these archaic barriers to mobility.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member from Trinity–Spadina, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I appreciate the fact that we're going to have hearings. I appreciate the fact that the member from Oakville said that they would consult the stakeholders. I don't know who they are, but they consulted someone. In the hearings, we hope to be able to deal with some oversights, as we did with the college of trades, where we had a French representative from Collège Boréal who talked about making sure that we include the interests of our French-speaking community in Ontario. That's an oversight that I hope we can correct as we move on with bills. We should have reflected that in the bill. I just wanted to mention that as we go on with these things, we have to remember we have a strong French-speaking community in this province and their needs need to be reflected in law.

I know that the members from Oakville, Eglinton–Lawrence and Durham talked about the idea of being old-fashioned and archaic and that we need to modernize. It's presented in nice language that makes me, as a critic, look as if I am, as the member from Durham said—what did he say?

Mr. John O'Toole: A Luddite.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A Luddite, yes. Both parties have talked about that.

The member from Durham said two contradictory things. He said the New Democrats are being protectionist, and at the same time he said he wants high standards. Sorry, they don't go together. This bill is not about the highest standard; it's about the lowest standard. That's what this bill is about: It's about standards. If you are saying to me that across Canada we have the same standards, either I am wrong or you are all wrong. What we do need are standards we can all agree on, and this bill does not give us the kinds of standards, the high standards, we're looking for.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up in my place and enter the debate on a very important issue, the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009. I listened to the parliamentary assistant speak a couple of days ago. I also listened to the member from the third party speak to this issue.

I think it's a very important issue, especially because in Ontario we are prospering in terms of building our infrastructure and our economy. We want more skilled workers to come and enter the professions.

As you know, in this province we try as much as possible to eliminate the barriers facing many different people who want to come to and live and work in this province. As you know, over the years every province has built some kind of criteria and jurisdictions. That's what prohibits many people from coming to this province and entering the workforce. I think it creates obstacles for many who want to come and work here, especially if they have certain qualifications.

Now qualifications have become very similar, and many people are going through the same kinds of colleges and facilities and getting the same education. Why don't we eliminate those barriers and allow them to come and help us build this beautiful province?

This act, if passed, will support full labour mobility and allow more professionals and skilled workers from across Canada to come and work in Ontario.

We're talking about the Asian societies, Asian communities. Many different jurisdictions in Ontario are facing challenges in terms of demographic establishment, demographic capacity, with people moving out or getting older, and people not able to work anymore. In our capacity in this province, we allow people to come and enjoy our privileges in this province. We learn from their skills, capacities and intellectual abilities.

I think it's important to create one nation. As you know, many different jurisdictions around the globe are trying to break the barriers between nations. Look at what happened with the European Union: They tried to work together, from nation to nation. Even though they have different cultural structures, languages, beliefs, philosophies, ideologies and political systems, they created the union to allow the people who live in that jurisdiction, that part of the globe, to work together, move smoothly from nation to nation and work in every country without any problem. They unified the structure, criteria and labour mobility between their countries because they think it's important for them.

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In order to have a prosperous future and be able to tackle high-tech and technology and build their nations, they have to work together. They have to be specialized; they have to be specific in different jobs and different work. That is why they created the union: to break the barriers and allow people to cross from nation to nation and work without any problems, without any certification, without any issues. That's why people are talking

about NAFTA, free trade and many different issues around the globe. Many different jurisdictions and areas around the globe are trying to work together in order to remove the obstacles facing people travelling from one jurisdiction to another. That's why here in Canada, and especially in Ontario, we want to try to eliminate those barriers facing many different people, who are graduates from Saskatchewan or British Columbia or Quebec, to come work in Ontario.

I want to tell you something very important: We have sometimes faced in this province a lot of difficulties to recruit doctors, because if you are a doctor who graduated from Quebec, for a certain time, because of certain difficulties, you cannot practise in Ontario; you have to be qualified according to the system we have in Ontario in order to be able to practise here. Or if you're an electrician from a different province, you cannot use your certificate in Ontario.

It creates difficulty for some people who want to come to Ontario, and they are not able to use their talents and skills. I know we are moving forward on this front, especially in the Ministry of Health. Not a long time ago, my colleague, now the Minister of Children and Youth Services, led a bill and worked on a big, important issue—the doctor issue—which would create in this place, in this government, in Ontario some kind of accessibility for people who are graduates from jurisdictions similar to our system in Ontario, places like England or the United States, where they have the same qualifications and same educational standards, to be able to come and practice in the province of Ontario.

So this step should be taken and it should be addressed because so many people have the ability and the skills, and have been educated very well. They can come and help us to maintain our prosperity in this province of Ontario, especially people who live in other provinces, who have the same or similar cultural understanding and language, and many of the same criteria. Why don't we eliminate those barriers? Why wouldn't we allow people to come and work and share their experience?

If this bill passes, it means every person who is certified in a different jurisdiction can come to this province of Ontario and work. I think it's the right thing to do to go forward toward a brighter future. If we don't eliminate those barriers between the provinces and Ontario, how can we eliminate the differences between us and neighbouring countries? I think it's a very important step to create flexibility and some kind of mobility between the people who live in this province. I know some people don't agree with that; they like to surround Ontario with some kind of fence and not allow people to come, and create difficult barriers to protect, according to them, the workforce in this province of Ontario. It's not about protection, it's about enhancing our ability and how we can mix people together and how we can create some kind of system able to absorb all the skills and abilities that already exist in this nation.

I know we are all of us subject to the same immigration system and, as you know, many people from

different parts of the globe want to immigrate to Canada. Most of the time, they come with a lot of skills, education and abilities, and they want to come and work in the province of Ontario. They sometimes come to Ontario and cannot utilize their potential, so they move to different jurisdictions. We found that in those different jurisdictions they give them more access to the professions and trades than this province has in the past. That's why we came as a government and established a professionals and trade secretariat. We have a commissioner right now, Dr. Jean Augustine, to oversee the conduct of those trades and professionals who exist in the province of Ontario.

This bill, if passed, will give all the people who want to live in Ontario, who want to come from different provinces, an equal chance to apply for jobs. Especially in this province, we like to be united on many different fronts. We have the same policies, we have the same ability and the same future. If this bill passes, it will allow people from many different jurisdictions to come and be able to work in the province. For businesses, it will help to address the critical skills shortage and improve their competitiveness by allowing employers to recruit from larger talent pools.

I know some members of this House don't like the idea. They think it will infringe and break the monopoly of certain groups who like to be in control, who like to be the only people that exist in the province of Ontario. I think that's not good for the unity of the nation, it's not good for the future of this province. I think it's important to create some kind of greater pool so that the people of the province can draw from the talent and skill that already exists in this nation.

I think we are moving in the right direction, we're taking the right steps, and I want to congratulate the minister for coming up with this initiative, because I believe it's a great initiative to allow people to come into Ontario.

Many different times, especially in the jurisdictions close to Ontario, like Quebec—we had, in the past, so many different issues with people from Quebec who wanted to come to Ontario or Ontarians going to work in Quebec. Different jurisdictions wouldn't allow or recognize their certifications, and that's why we opened the door wide for the underground economy. If this bill passes, I guess we'll eliminate those issues, and everyone with certification will be able to open a business and work openly in the province of Ontario without forcing those people to work underground or work illegally.

We've tackled many different issues in the past in this province. As you know, many people, when they came and they had a certificate from a difference province, were being blocked from using that certificate, so we forced those people to work under the table or go into the underground economy. So this will give the ability to people to work openly and utilize their certificate. I think it's a very important step toward opening up the province of Ontario for many different talented people who want to come to this beautiful province. Also, Ontario will benefit from opening up a large talent pool for many dif-

ferent companies that want to prosper, that want to expand their operations in this province.

I think it's an important step toward a brighter future, toward eliminating those barriers not just in the province of Ontario and within different cities and different jurisdictions, but also between many different provinces that want to work toward a brighter nation and a better future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to stand up and speak on this important issue. Hopefully many members of this House will stand up in their places and support this bill, because these are the things—I think it's the right way, the right bill, and is an important step toward breaking the barriers that we face in the future, in which all of us are looking forward to maintaining our ability to attract more skilled people to come work with us in the province and also to deal with the challenges we are facing not to depend totally on people who come from outside the nation, but to utilize the capacity and the potential and the skills which already exist in this nation.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for making his remarks. In fact, his riding is where my husband and I first lived when we were married 43 years ago, so I know the area very well.

I guess we are the first province to jump into this pool. We have introduced this legislation which essentially opens our borders to workers from other provinces to come into Ontario before all of the other provinces have opened their borders in order to allow Ontarians to work in other parts of Canada. I guess being first sometimes wins the race, and sometimes it's good to be second, third or fourth to understand where the wrinkles are and be able to modify whatever is happening so that we do the best we can for Ontarians.

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I know that this doesn't affect the province of Quebec because negotiations are still underway with that province in order for this kind of legislation to take effect there. However, the main concern that is being raised by stakeholders is about the level of qualification, the standards that are being applied across the country. What an out-of-province applicant may have in the way of qualifications may not measure up to what Ontarians have and what we require here.

The College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists has already expressed a concern. Their concern is that without examining the academic qualifications or being able to ask for any retesting, they can't measure whether or not the standards meet those standards here in Ontario.

I think we need to look at that in committee and listen to our stakeholders when they come before us.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I do have a small amount of knowledge on this, considering I was in the trades for over 30 years. I fail to see the relationship that the member from London–Fanshawe says between immigration and trades

and crafts. What it is about is quality workmanship and craftsmanship. It's about safety standards. It's about uniformity. If this country wants to attract tradespeople from other countries, then they should make uniform standards throughout the country. In other words, are there some trades that are red-flagged? In my trade, ironworking and welding, you have to have qualifications throughout the country. Certain standards have to be met. If you want to have everybody on the same page, then you're going to have all the trades qualified throughout the country. It doesn't matter if you're a drywaller—all these people are involved in construction. They're involved in things that people have to walk under and walk on, and also, they have to last. What you need is uniform quality tradespeople throughout the country, a standard for the whole country, not a different one in Saskatchewan, not a different one in British Columbia.

Yes, you're going to have problems if people come from other provinces if they're not qualified. I, for one, wouldn't want to walk on a bridge in Ontario if I knew some guys from BC had about half their tickets, who welded it up. I personally would not want to drive over that bridge. I'd want to know that these guys can go anywhere in the world and work—internationally—and that's the way it should be.

What they aren't talking about are the problems that will be created by people coming in who are not qualified. They're going to be arguing with the people who are qualified in the local unions and locals of that city. They haven't even discussed the problems that are going to be there.

They've got a long way to go on this bill, and it certainly doesn't cut it.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Eglinton–Lawrence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Oakville stood at the same time. The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm sure we'll both end up speaking.

I do want to correct the member from Burlington. We're actually the third jurisdiction that is entering this process. The province of Manitoba has already passed legislation that would allow this to happen, and the province of British Columbia is in the process of doing that.

In my remarks, based on the comments of the member from London–Fanshawe, I did want to talk about the importance of the red seal program. Make no mistake about it: This government supports the red seal program. We think it's a model for labour mobility and it's a model for those common interprovincial standards that we all want to see in the trades throughout the country, especially in the skilled trades and professions. This commitment to the red seal program is explicit in the proposed bill before you. We've gone out of our way to make sure that the red seal program is elevated to the level that it should be because we think that endorsement provides tradespersons a competitive hiring advantage,

it's respected by industry and it's also respected by employers and by the employees themselves. We want the red seal program that's in existence today to remain strong—it's a vehicle for labour mobility—but we also want it to remain as the Canadian standard of excellence for training and certification in the skilled trades.

Why we're doing this is because we want to strengthen the economy during a challenging time by removing the barriers that don't currently allow for the free passage of people who want to work anywhere in this country. At the same time, we're implementing the highest standards possible to ensure that if somebody is certified in another province and that certification is going to be accepted within our province, we're assured that that standard is of the highest quality it possibly can be.

So if it's passed, we're going to support full labour mobility. We're simply going to make it easier for Canadians to work to the highest standards anywhere in this country.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for London–Fanshawe makes a very good point. I suspect even the parliamentary assistant, who just spoke—I would probably agree with what they're saying.

Just a specific case: I have an optician in my riding who has been with the college. He's very highly regarded in the profession. I believe his name is Ali Khan. He was saying that in some jurisdictions in Canada they have a very shortened program for opticians, whereas in Ontario it is a much longer program. The suggestion here is, for the economic value of this, that they could hire someone in Ontario who has maybe trained for four months in BC to work for less money at Costco or LensCrafters or some other larger type of business that's interested in the payroll issues. What is really important here is both the economics and the standards. What fundamentally is the most important is the safety and the standards for the people of Ontario.

I want to objectively say that often, because you have gone to school for a long time for a specific thing, it does not mean you're better trained than someone coming from another jurisdiction in Canada. I think the passing of qualifying tests or some kind of standards might be more the issue, and I think the safety of the consumer is critical here, especially in medical issues, but more importantly in any issue that could affect our common safety.

At the same time, we must be flexible, but the standards can't be lowered. Some people may want to take a degree in four years, and some may want to do it on a fast track—two years—but take the same number of lecture hours. So let's make sure we don't lower the standards in the interest of having the best possible economic value of the skilled trades or professions in Ontario. We need to be competitive in a global economy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from London–Fanshawe has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member from Burlington, the member from Oakville and the member from Durham for speaking and commenting on my speech.

As I mentioned at the beginning, we are asking people to come to Canada from different parts of the globe. We accept engineers, professors, doctors and nurses and we invite them to come and help us build this province, and at the same time we create barriers between Ontario and Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba and Newfoundland. So I think we are looking for skilled people to come with certain standards, and I know we in this province respect the criteria, the standards. We want all the people who have high skills to come and work with us in Ontario.

With respect to the standards and safety that every member spoke about, I think safety and standards are important to us. I think when the bill goes to committee they're going to create some kind of criteria to make sure that all the people from different jurisdictions have the same standards we have in Ontario.

When we talk about different jurisdictions, the member from Oakville, the PA for the minister, mentioned that we in Ontario are the third jurisdiction to do this. I think it's important for all of us in this province to recognize other qualifications from different provinces, as we live in the same nation, and that we've started to create barriers among us. I mentioned how Europe tried to eliminate the barriers between nations, despite cultures, languages, religions, ideologies and philosophies. We're trying in North America to create NAFTA, or some kind of agreement between us, the United States and Mexico, and also eliminate all these barriers. In the meantime, we have barriers within the nation that I think are difficult, and that's a shame.

So I thank and applaud the minister for coming up with a proposal to eliminate those barriers within our nation and allow people with high skills to come and enjoy our prosperity and help us build this beautiful province. Again, I'm looking forward to everyone in the House supporting this bill, because it's good for the future of this province.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): This House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1009 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to introduce some guests in the gallery today on behalf of myself and my colleague from Beaches–East York, Michael Prue.

Today on the front lawn of Parliament, there will be a rally against the HST. The rally coordinator and host, Jim Garchinski, is here today and in the audience. He is accompanied by Terry Sullivan, Paul Bailey, Bill Harford, Richard Metcalfe and Don MacLeod. Today they will be joined on the front lawn of the Legislature by Kevin Gaudet, Pauline Auger, Peter Coleman, Linda Piniz-

zotto, Bill McLean, Russ Rak, John Campbell and Vic Dybenko, as well as the leader of the official opposition, Tim Hudak, who just walked in, and the leader of the third party, Andrea Horwath. We're looking forward to seeing all Ontarians on the front lawn of the Legislature today.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce some guests from the town of Ponoka, Alberta: Robyn McKelvie, Nicole Hoffman and Nathan Hoffman, in the public gallery.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I would like to introduce a couple of guests and friends from Collingwood who are seated in the members' east gallery: Bev and Peter Baxter from Collingwood.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: We will shortly be joined by the principal and students from As-Sadiq Islamic School in York region. It is the Toronto area's largest Islamic school.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today the family of page Emma Johnson. We have Angela, William and Andrew Johnson from the great riding of Kitchener Centre with us here today.

Mr. Bob Delaney: In the members' east gallery, I'd like to introduce a personal friend and a very talented web developer, Paul McKenzie.

Mr. Mario Sergio: In the House, I'm proud to have page Rushabh Shah, and I hope that he will enjoy his time here at Queen's Park and that the time will serve him well. I'd like to welcome him here as he serves all the members of the House.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would like to welcome William Birch, from the riding of Scarborough—Guildwood, to the House today.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have the pleasure to introduce to the members a seven-person delegation from the People's Republic of China. They're here from the Ministry of Labour and the delegation is being led by Mr. Bing Han, who is the deputy minister. Let's welcome them warmly.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I would like to introduce a group of students from Queen's University who will be in the gallery shortly. Annually, Christina Blizzard, one of our esteemed columnists who cover us here at Queen's Park, arranges for students to be here for a day so that they can see the democratic process in action. I'd like to welcome them.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm delighted today to welcome members from the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, who are here. They will be meeting with members of the Legislative Assembly. They are also very generously hosting a reception later on today, and all members of the assembly are welcome. We're delighted that they're here.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd just like to welcome all of the other people who are here today, because it took a little bit of time to get our leader in his seat. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Richmond Hill—Richmond Hill—and page Shaan Ali Jessa—

Interjections: Withdraw! Withdraw!

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker withdraws his unparliamentary comment.

On behalf of the member from Richmond Hill and page Shaan Ali Jessa, we would like to welcome Fatima Jessa, Dilshad Jessa and Hussein Jessa to the members' west gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery, from my riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London, I would like to welcome Ray Galloway, Jeannie Sisco and Glenna Gerry. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday, in response to my questions, the Premier indicated that the McKinsey report is online and can be found online. All the Googling in the world will not find you the McKinsey report online, so I'm wondering whether the Premier is prepared to correct the record or withdraw that comment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not a point of order, but I trust the Premier will address your issue.

STANDING ORDERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: On the point of order raised yesterday, for the clarification of the Speaker and the table: My point of order related to a significant public funding announcement made by the government yesterday outside of this chamber, which has become a rather frequent practice of this government. I cited a number of standing orders, and, at the very least, I believe the continued practice by this government violates the spirit, if nothing less, of those standing orders.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yesterday we had an evacuation drill here at the assembly. Drills such as these are intended to test the processes in place to evacuate the building in case of fire or other emergency. They give us an opportunity to evaluate the processes and at the same time allow for the occupants of the building to understand the proper procedures for exiting the building.

I am pleased to report that yesterday's drill was successful and that the building was evacuated in under 12 minutes. To those members who co-operated, I thank you. To those who did not, I know that we will be able to count on your co-operation the next time we engage in this important exercise.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Premier: Yesterday, the Premier still refused to say when he would bring forward a plan to deal with his massive record-busting deficit that is going to break the backs of Ontario taxpayers. Every day the Premier retreats into his thinking

place, Ontario families are on the hook for an additional \$2.8 million each and every hour of the day in increased debt.

So let me ask the Premier a different way: Will the Premier table a plan before he takes off on his Christmas vacation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're always, of course—

Interjection: Where are you going for Christmas?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm just staying home.

I'm always open to suggestions from the honourable member as to any specific approach that he might bring. What I am aware of is that the member would eliminate the Ontario health premium. That would add another \$3 billion to the deficit. I don't think that would be a prudent approach.

We are going to take a little bit of time. Notwithstanding the member's haste and imprudence, we're going to take a bit of time. We're going to work both internally inside of government and externally and engage Ontarians. We have made it clear that we have three priorities: health care, education and strengthening our economy. If my honourable colleague has any specific suggestions, we would welcome those.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yesterday, when pressed by the media for a plan, the Premier said, "The other shoe will drop, I guess, eventually." While he stands around staring at his loafers, Ontario families are on the hook for an additional \$13,500 in Dalton McGuinty debt.

I sense that we know what Premier McGuinty's real plan is. Pensioners at Queen's Park today know it too. They know that your greedy sales tax grab is going to be used to fuel more runaway spending and sweetheart deals for Liberal friends.

When will the Premier table a plan to end his sweetheart deals and give Ontario families a tax break, not another tax hike?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We know that my colleague's approach is to cut more taxes. How he's going to pay for that, I'm not sure, but at least that is clear. We put in place a plan that is clear—and I think there's a broad level of support for it—of the things that we need to do at this point in time. We continue to invest in infrastructure; that creates jobs in the short term, and it enhances our economic productivity in the long term.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He's against that, too.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague is against that. We provided significant support to the auto sector to put it on a sound footing. We think that's the appropriate thing to do; my honourable colleague is against that. We're investing heavily in retraining opportunities for families that have been, through no fault of their own, dislocated because of the economic recession. We're helping them; my colleague is against that. That is part of our plan. We continue to pursue that part of our plan and, in due course, we'll also be talking about the best ways to address our deficit.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, retired police officers, retired firefighters, municipal workers and others are gathering on the lawn at Queen's Park today to protest your greedy Dalton sales tax grab. On CFRB this morning, Sandy from Mississauga said she can't afford her car payments as it is. She knows things will get worse when your massive sales tax hits home. It'll cost her more to put gas in her car. It'll cost her more for heat for her home. Even her Tim Hortons double-double in the morning is going to get whacked by Dalton McGuinty. We always suspected this was a \$3-billion greedy tax grab. Now we know for sure.

I ask the Premier: Why does your deficit plan include only more taxes on the backs of retirees and Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am appreciative of the opportunity so I can clear a few things up. Number one, my colleague knows that, in fact, the harmonized sales tax will cost the Ontario treasury dollars. He knows that. Secondly, he also knows, but he's not prepared to acknowledge this, that accompanying the harmonized sales tax is a reduction in personal income tax.

One of the things that I have learned through my opportunities to chat with retirees and grandparents is that together they are asking a very important question of all of us: What do we need to do to ensure that we can strengthen this economy so that it generates more jobs not just for ourselves and our children but for our grandchildren? I know the harmonized sales tax is not an easy thing to do. It is not designed to enhance our popularity and have people acclaim us province-wide. It's designed to do what we need to do, which is to strengthen this—

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

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, have you called in the police to investigate the bid-rigging and price-fixing that took place in your billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've had a number of opportunities to speak to this together, on this particular issue, and my honourable colleague continues to expand, enhance, enlarge and exaggerate. Fortunately, we have the voice—the calm voice—of an independent officer of the Legislature, the Provincial Auditor, who looked at these very specific issues. He made some very specific findings. I would encourage my friend to accept those findings and understand that the matter has been thoroughly reviewed. I accept that, and I would urge him to do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess I will take that as a no, that this Premier has no intention of calling in the police or getting to the bottom of his billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle. But we saw a different Premier a few years ago. On November 3, 2005, when talking about Paul Martin

calling in the RCMP to investigate Justice Gomery's findings in the sponsorship scandal, the Premier said, "Prime Minister Martin has moved very quickly and very aggressively on it." Yet in his own scandal, involving 10 times the money and Liberal-friendly health IT consultants getting rich, we see a very different Premier entirely.

I ask the Premier again: Why hasn't he called in the police to investigate this scandal where we saw Liberal-friendly consultants get fat and rich and Ontario families get nothing in return?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure there was any basis in fact to be found in the assertions which form part of my honourable colleague's question. He is nothing if not fanciful, and I congratulate him in that particular respect.

I want to remind all of us of what the auditor said. He made a few findings. One of those was, he said, "We saw no evidence of fraud or criminal activity here." My friend constantly refers to insiders somehow gaining advantage here. The auditor also said, "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts ... but we saw no evidence of this during our work."

I would strongly encourage my friend to review the auditor's report once again and to accept wholeheartedly and without—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back then, the Premier said Paul Martin acted very quickly. I guess in comparison, even Mr. Dithers looks decisive next to Dalton McGuinty.

Two years deep in second-term rot, the Premier still refuses to call a public inquiry. This afternoon, this House will debate an Ontario PC motion to call a full public inquiry. Ontario families want to know who tried to block the Auditor General from his investigation, Ontario families want to know who benefited from the price-rigging and the bid-fixing, and Ontario families want to know why you're going to hit them with a massive new sales tax hike instead of trying to get some of their money back from the Liberal-friendly consultants.

Premier, will you finally do the right thing, stand in your place and support a full public inquiry?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the responsibilities that we all have in this House is to interpret and give expression to the public interest. I think what the public interest demands here is that we accept the auditor's report in full. I think it demands that we work together to move forward and continue to make more progress when it comes to putting in place an electronic health record that will benefit all Ontarians.

The fact of the matter is—again, my colleague is not prepared to acknowledge this—we have built a strong foundation. We have in place an important part of the foundation on which to build this electronic health record: 80,000 Ontarians are now in a pilot project for ePrescribing and four million Ontarians have electronic medical records. All Ontario hospitals have gone filmless; they're now using digital diagnostic scans.

These are the kinds of things that we have established as a success. There's more to be done, and I think that's what Ontarians want us to do.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier told Ontario families they "can't have everything" and that he wants a discussion on fiscal restraint. Does he believe Ontario can afford to move ahead with massive corporate tax giveaways, or is that not up for discussion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we had the opportunity to speak about this here just yesterday; my answer is the same.

What my colleague is talking about is the budget. In that budget, we did a number of things. In addition to ensuring that our corporations were competitive in a globalized economy, we moved to reduce personal income taxes. We also accelerated the Ontario child benefit to help needy families meet expenses for their children. We also invested significantly in new retraining opportunities for people who have lost their jobs because of the global recession.

By the way, it's a budget that has been endorsed by poverty groups and food banks in Ontario in addition to business groups. We think it has struck the right balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families are waiting for the other shoe to drop, and they see it's going to come crashing down on them. The Premier brags about his tax reform, that it's going to cost the treasury billions of dollars. It will also cost Ontario consumers billions of dollars in higher taxes on gasoline, on hydro and on home heating.

If the Premier is sincere, when will he put his unfair tax scheme up for discussion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's up for discussion every day in this House, in businesses and at the breakfast tables of families. I think it's a very important discussion for us to have. To come back to something I said earlier, I think the single most important question that we are charged with answering together is, what do we need to do in order to strengthen our economy? It's different from the question of what we want to do. What do we need to do to build a stronger economy not just for ourselves but for our children and grandchildren? What do we need to do to ensure that we've got the continuing capacity to support our colleges, our universities, our schools, our hospitals, our doctors, our nurses, our police and our firefighters? The foundation for all of that is a strong economy. We're absolutely convinced we've got to move forward with the HST to maintain that fiscal capacity, that economic capacity to enjoy our quality of life and good-quality public services.

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is claiming that he's asking Ontarians for advice, but we all know his

mind is already made up. We're already seeing it. Local hospitals are closing, waits for long-term care are growing, people are being told they have to pay more, but corporate taxes and consulting contracts are not up for discussion. That shoe is not going to drop in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

How can this Premier call this a discussion when everyone knows his mind is already made up?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that we can get a little carried away in here sometimes—it's human nature—but there are no hospitals being closed and I would ask my colleague to acknowledge that. We continue to invest more and more, year over year, in health care. In fact, we're building hospitals and expanding existing hospitals.

But there is an important issue to be made here over and over again. I would ask my colleagues on all sides of the House to accept that we have to make some difficult decisions. We find ourselves at a point in time in our history when we're running a significant deficit, for all the right reasons. We're investing heavily in infrastructure, we're investing heavily in retraining programs, and we're helping people who are on social assistance and needy families through the Ontario child benefit. We're doing those things for the right reasons. But we are going to have to, together, now make some difficult decisions about those things where we may not be able to invest as quickly as we had originally anticipated and those things we may have to stop doing in order to put in place a plan to eliminate our deficit.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again to the Premier, and it's a very simple and straightforward question: Exactly how many jobs will this harmonized sales tax create?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't say exactly how many it is going to create, but what I can say is that there is a very strong consensus that has been there for a long, long time. It's there in the IMF; it's in the OECD. For example, if you want to become a member state of the European Union, you cannot do so unless you first have in place a harmonized sales tax or a value-added tax. There are 130 countries that are already there. We need to give our businesses, and especially—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I have obviously distracted them, Speaker. I apologize for that.

It's the single most important thing for us to do, and that's why we're going to move ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm surprised the Premier didn't just tell me it was on a website and I could look it up online, like he did yesterday with the phantom McKinsey report. But I'm not surprised that the Premier doesn't have a number, because none exists. The consensus of the experts is that the HST is actually a job killer. A report by the C.D. Howe Institute says the HST will drive up the unemployment rate in this province.

Can the Premier cite a single study that shows the HST will increase employment levels in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that with respect to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, my friend has been gently chided and corrected when it comes to her misinterpretation of the report that they put out, and I think the C.D. Howe may be interested in doing the same kind of thing.

The reason that 130 other countries and four other provinces have moved ahead with a harmonized sales tax, the reason that no subsequent government has ever undone the introduction of the HST, is because it works. It does give an added benefit to our businesses, but especially our manufacturers, who had been up against it even long before this recession had its impact here in Ontario.

This is all about ensuring that our businesses can compete in a globalized economy. It's about ensuring that our products can be introduced into the global economy at a competitive price level. When we're more competitive here, then we can expand our businesses, we can retain existing employees and we can hire still more Ontarians. Fundamentally, that's what this is all about: ensuring we have a strong economy that can continue to hire more and more Ontarians.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, in fact, reiterated my comments that this is a tax that's not going to create jobs, that it's going to reduce the rate of job creation in this province.

Ontario has already lost 200,000 jobs this year, and people are struggling right now in this economy. What Ontarians are trying to figure out is why, in the middle of a devastating recession, the Premier signed a secret deal with Stephen Harper that makes life less affordable for people and that experts say will kill up to 40,000 jobs a year? Can he tell them that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's no doubt that we could not have done this without the support and co-operation of the federal government. I think there's no doubt as well that if this were an easy thing to do, other provincial governments would have done it.

We have come to a point in our history, I would argue, where we cannot escape this reality. My friends argue for maintenance of the status quo. They don't believe the world has changed; we do believe it has changed. I think Ontarians understand that and I think they know that we need to do certain things that are different. Some of those things may not be easy, but they want to know what we need to do to make our economy stronger so that it can sustain good jobs and good public services.

We are absolutely convinced, on the basis of all the information that's there for everybody to see, that we've got to move forward with the harmonized sales tax as the foundation for a stronger economy, good jobs and good public services.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Until media scrums yesterday, Minister Dun-

can didn't have much to say about the Casino Niagara deal or Bob Lopinski's success fee. Minister Duncan said that timelines gave him no option but to defy the Premier's ban on untendered contracts for this Casino Niagara lease. But if the only option was to proceed with another untendered contract, why did the landlord hire the same lobbyist who did the Maid of the Mist deal? In fact, if it was the only option, why hire a Liberal lobbyist at all?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can't comment on why that individual or organization would hire anybody, for that matter, but I can tell you that Charles Harnick and Don Cousens, two former Tory members, are part of that firm. I would remind my colleague opposite that, in fact, the government that he was part of renegotiated precisely the same—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind my colleague opposite that the government he was part of renegotiated the same lease. Those negotiations are under way right now.

What I'm particularly proud of is that the member for Niagara Falls and the Premier of Ontario committed to keeping two casinos open in Niagara Falls. I'm also proud that we're investing in a convention centre for Niagara Falls, because that will help that economy get through.

I'd remind my colleague opposite that your colleague in the back row suggested that maybe we should close casinos, which I don't think is the appropriate response at this time. I'm sure my friend the Leader of the Opposition would want to stand up for Niagara Falls—

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

Mr. Norm Miller: This has nothing to do with closing casinos; it's about them changing their rules. Apparently, someone thought this lease needed to be tendered. The Toronto Sun reports that there is "a 53-page draft RFP for the lease, on OLG stationery." But the McGuinty Liberals chose to do a rich, sole-source contract with a client of the Premier's former political adviser.

This is another untendered deal, after you promised they'd stop. It was the Premier who set the bar. His former staffer is the registered lobbyist.

Was it Minister Duncan or Minister Smitherman who blocked the tendering process so a Liberal-friendly lobbyist could collect his success fee?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I apologize, but what my colleague opposite neglected to tell the House and the people of Ontario is that in the contract they signed, they put a renewal clause in the contract. You put that in there, and I think your government did it because they understood that you simply cannot up and move a casino outside of—and that, by the way, is a normal process. So in fact, the renewal clause was put into the agreement by the previous government. That lease is under negotiation now, as I understand it, between the owner of the facility and the OLG.

We did follow the rule that you put into the contract to allow us to renew the lease if that were deemed by the OLG to be the appropriate decision.

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TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Today, a broad coalition of Ontarians who know that the HST will hurt seniors and retirees very hard are here at Queen's Park. These folks are not from chambers of commerce; they are hard-working, taxpaying people who are fed up. They know the HST will raise their cost of living, from condo fees to utilities to coffee at Tim's, sports and recreation fees and even their investment portfolios. Municipal retirees, police pensioners, retired firefighters and the Police Retirees of Ontario aren't fooled by this government's one-time bribe of \$300. They know they will end up paying more for less. When will this government do something right for Ontario and end this egregious and unfair tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: When I heard the member ask the question, there was one salient fact that he missed: We are permanently cutting income taxes on January 1 for 93% of Ontarians, and there is no group of Ontarians who will receive more benefits than our seniors. It is the way that we can honour the contributions that our seniors have made. So we've ensured that these permanent income tax cuts are being applied on January 1. I didn't hear that in your question.

We know that in the first year it will be a year of transition, and that's why we have secured a historic agreement with the federal government to ensure that there is sufficient support for our consumers, particularly our seniors, in that first year.

We've embarked on this tax reform—something we haven't done in this province in over 40 years—because we recognize that the world has changed. It is important for us to understand that change and figure out how we can have an even—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I don't think any of the people here today are going to accept that answer. I certainly don't.

It's not just the groups that I referred to in the first part of the question who are angered by this tax grab; it's also our Ontario realtors and potential homebuyers. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to meet with the chair of government relations for the Ontario Real Estate Association, Barb Sukkau. She reminded me that the real estate market plummeted for two years as a result of the GST. Now this government wants to increase taxes on homebuyers by adding on 8% to real estate fees. OREA predicts that this tax grab will have a devastating effect on what is presently a solid real estate market.

My question: Why is this government hell-bent on putting the brakes on a thriving real estate market and

putting the livelihoods of many real estate professionals at risk?

Hon. John Wilkinson: A precondition for a thriving real estate market is people working. What we have to do is work hard to get people back to work by understanding that reality.

I say, as someone who has been in business for over 20 years before I came to this place, it is important that we are permanently reducing the costs for businesses in the province of Ontario. When we look at the report from TD Economics, a third party, a distinguished economist says that some 80% of those savings will be passed through to consumers in the first year. So we are permanently reducing the cost of business in the province.

We know that it'll be very important for us to support the consumer in the first year, but we also know that those permanent tax cuts, not only for people but also for business, are what we need in this economy so that we can go back to generating high-quality jobs in the 21st century. Again, what we need is a vibrant economy, one that is adding wealth, and we are taking the necessary steps to—

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

PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

Mr. Mike Colle: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: Minister, a lot of hard-working constituents in my riding have been complaining about these private career colleges, the ones that pretend to give a degree or certificate in some area of expertise, but when they get this certificate or degree, they find out it's worthless. They charge them exorbitant fees. They're basically con artists.

What are you doing as minister to shut down these fraudulent, rip-off private career colleges which are abusing the good name of the good colleges? What are you doing, Mr. Minister? Let me know.

Hon. John Milloy: At the outset, I want to recognize the fact that the vast majority of private career colleges in the province of Ontario provide a valuable service in terms of education and training. But, as the honourable member points out, there are bad actors, and I'm very pleased to announce to the Legislature that, beginning November 1, 2009, Ontario will levy fines on private career colleges that offer unapproved programs and fail to comply with the Private Career Colleges Act. Penalties will range from \$250 to \$1,000 for a first offence and can escalate, with repeat offences, to a maximum of \$250,000. Fines can be levied for a range of offences, including misleading advertising, operating an unregistered private career college and offering a program that has—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: Fines are one way that we can encourage owners of private colleges to comply with the law, but that's only one piece of the puzzle. Dishonest owners of these colleges have targeted certain particular

groups—in particular, new Canadians and international students. I've heard that much of the information on these private colleges is often confusing and difficult to navigate. It's especially a problem with students whose first language is not English. Some prospective colleges are offering courses and commitments that just don't make any sense and don't exist in reality.

Minister, what are we doing to help those students, especially those students whose first language is not English and who are perhaps from foreign countries?

Hon. John Milloy: The key is really making sure that prospective students are armed with the information they need about the private career college that they're interested in pursuing, and I'm pleased to announce that we'll be launching a student-awareness campaign that will give students better information before choosing a private career college. We're working with many of our education partners, including high schools, settlement offices and our Employment Ontario network, in an effort to reach out to students to help them understand what a private career college is and what they should be looking for before enrolling.

In addition, we are appointing new provincial offences officers in the private career colleges enforcement and compliance unit. This will lessen the time it takes to pursue legal action against an illegal PCC.

We take the protection of our students very seriously, and through the measures that we've outlined today, we're going to make sure that they're receiving the education that they're paying for and that we can eradicate some of the bad actors that unfortunately exist out there.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Since the summer of scandal began, the McGuinty Liberals have been distracted by a billion-dollar eHealth scandal, an expense scandal at OLG, the WSIB and a brewing scandal over off-the-book construction of an energy centre in your riding. At the time the OLG and eHealth scandals came to light, you and the Premier hastily assembled press conferences to announce legislation to fix the culture of entitlement in the McGuinty government.

Is it true that, four weeks ago, on your watch, at the same time Bill 201 was being debated, OLG sole-sourced an untendered deal to H.H. Angus for the management of the Windsor Energy Centre?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the energy centre, as the member correctly noted, was constructed at Casino Windsor. It is now the subject of civil action. As the member knows, there was an injunction—

Interjections.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: They don't want to hear it.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They just don't want to hear the answer.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I can't hear him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Well, I can't hear him either.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's not saying anything.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: An injunction was sought. OLG took possession of the energy centre itself. They had, in fact, engaged the services of the company noted to go in and continue to run the energy centre in order to keep the facility supplied with power, as I understand it.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'll take that as a yes.

The energy centre is linked to expansion of the Windsor casino and convention centre, which is playing host to the Ontario Liberal convention this weekend. Perhaps among his Liberal friends, Minister Duncan won't have to answer questions about his complete defiance of the Premier's edict against sole-source contracts, but he should be ready to answer them in this place. The sole-source deal to operate the energy centre pays H.H. Angus \$15,000 per day. That's \$6 million per year. Minister, do you consider the practice of handing a sole-source untendered contract to Angus to be fair play, hypocritical, or just business as usual for the McGuinty Liberals?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will ask the honourable member to withdraw an unparliamentary—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A temporary arrangement was entered into in order to facilitate keeping the lights on.

With respect to the significance of building a convention centre and hotel facility in order to allow that casino to compete against large casinos across the river that have had enormous investments, absolutely we're doing that, sir. Are we supporting the tourism industry in Ontario? Absolutely, we're supporting the tourism industry in Ontario. When one looks at the revenue that that facility has produced over the last 15 years for Ontario, it becomes clear that it was a wise decision taken by the government of the day to construct it, the NDP government. It was a wise decision of the government of the day to expand the facility and make sure that it operated. And we took the proper decisions—

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

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, in early 2008, the Toronto Star exposed the complete—complete—disconnect between the WSIB experience rating program and health and safety. The WSIB was awarding large rebates to employers who had been prosecuted or convicted for occupational fatalities. The Star series made it clear that the experience rating program actually rewards companies for under-reporting workplace injuries.

The McGuinty government has the authority to put a stop to this program immediately. Why won't this government put an end to the seriously flawed experience rating program immediately?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for the question. The member is well aware that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board did place a moratorium on any employer that has had a workplace fatality; those employers do not qualify today for a rebate. The member is also aware that the WSIB has retained a third party to review the program and to offer suggested revisions. The report was released publicly. It's assisting the chair with his discussions, conversations with stakeholders.

The member opposite, I believe, would approve of initiatives that help reduce workplace injuries and death in the workplace. That is what the experience rating program does. The WSIB is working hard to ensure that we give incentives to employers to keep their workplaces safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: That is not what the experience rating program does, and you know it. For years, the NDP, injured workers and the labour movement have called for an end to the perverse incentives that employers receive under the WSIB experience rating program. In 2008, the WSIB hired the firm of Morneau Sobeco to review the experience rating program, which confirmed that employers not reporting workplace injuries is common in order to get a WSIB experience rating rebate. In fact, from 1998 to 2007, refunds to employers exceeded surcharges by \$800 million.

It's time to put an end to this disgraceful program. Will this government finally do the right thing and kill the WSIB experience rating program immediately?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It is very unfortunate that this member dismisses the fact that workplace safety incentive programs result in lower workplace injuries and death. The McGuinty government from day one has been committed to making our workplaces safer in Ontario. Since 2004, we have lowered the rate of lost-time injury by over 25% across Ontario. That's been done through enforcement personnel, targeted blitzes and safety incentives. Working with employers, employees and labour, we have made great progress—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would remind the honourable member from Hamilton East that he just asked a question and I would encourage him to listen to the answer.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member opposite, if the member opposite has some helpful suggestions, I would encourage the member to contact the chair of the WSIB. I spoke with the chair yesterday. He'd be more than open to discuss these very important matters.

TAXATION

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Minister, seniors are concerned about how the HST will affect them. We are hearing this concern from the seniors gathered here at Queen's Park today.

Minister, my riding of York West has perhaps one of the largest seniors' populations in Ontario, with the majority

of them living at the threshold of minimum wage. A few may be above that, but many others are making barely over \$20,000 a year.

They have been hearing much about the HST. Some people are trying to misrepresent the facts, saying seniors are getting one-time cheques but paying a permanent increase in tax rates. That is the last thing seniors want to hear.

Through you to the minister, Speaker, I would like to ask, for the benefit of all Ontario seniors, can you shed some light on what the HST will mean for them, especially as we are getting closer to the date of implementation?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question and reiterate the fact that we are permanently cutting income taxes for some 93% of Ontarians. As a matter of fact, some 90,000 Ontarians will no longer pay provincial income tax to the province of Ontario.

I want to say particularly to seniors who are challenged with low income that we are going to be there for them. Many seniors today receive the GST rebate from the federal government. That's some \$240. If a senior is receiving that, I can assure them that that will be increased by an additional \$260 a year and that that increase is permanent. That is the thing that people need to remember.

Beyond that, we're also increasing the property and sales tax credits some \$420 million for seniors. We're more than doubling the senior property tax credit from \$250 to \$500. That provides some \$1 billion worth of tax relief for seniors over the next few years. All of those measures are permanent—

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: It sounds very encouraging for seniors, as they would welcome any additional help. Many seniors rely on Canada Pension and old age security as their only source of income.

Minister, we should support seniors who want the dignity of living in their own homes. On top of the day-to-day expenses of maintaining their homes, seniors living on a fixed income are concerned that the prices of the things they need are going to increase. For example, food under \$4 is now going to be subject to an 8% increase. Therefore, it would help to know what seniors are required to do in order to receive their income tax cuts and rebates.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would say to seniors that it's very important for them to file their 2009 tax return. Because of that 2009 tax return, we're going to be able, starting next year, to provide transitional cheques. We know that many seniors don't file their income tax until the end of the year and we know that these permanent tax cuts may take some time to work their way through the economy. That's why we've reached a historic agreement with the federal government to provide in that first year, in the year of transition, tax-free cheques. It requires a person to file their income tax return, because for a single, including a senior, who makes less than \$80,000 a

year—and that's the vast majority of seniors—they will receive some \$300 tax-free by way of three cheques.

For a senior couple, if their income combined is less than \$160,000—and that is the vast majority of senior couples—they will receive some \$1,000 tax-free by way of cheques in that first year. Then, of course, they'll be able to file their income tax returns and qualify for exactly the tax—

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

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WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Toby Barrett: A question to the Minister of the Environment: Minister, last week, under cover of the \$24.7-billion deficit, you announced that the cost of business will be getting even more expensive: You're demanding that business and industry pay 100% of blue box fees. You refuse to be a 100% payer of programs run by municipalities; how can you justify imposing 100% of costs on business? They can't even access the recycled aluminum or steel.

So, Minister, in the midst of a recession, when your government has overseen the loss of 330,000 manufacturing jobs, why would you add yet another tax on business in Ontario?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, the member is totally mischaracterizing what we're actually doing. We are moving to extended producer responsibility with respect to the disposal of waste. We're doing that with respect to the blue box program. And I must say that municipalities are totally supportive of this. We simply believe that the producers have to take responsibility for the waste they generate, particularly at the end of the life cycle of any products that are out there. That same principle is being adopted with respect to municipal hazardous waste, tire recycling and the electronic waste that is produced in the province of Ontario.

I can tell you, from meeting with many business groups, they are onside; they believe that we're heading the right way. It's not only a good environmental policy, it's also a good economic policy for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it's a policy that's going to kill jobs, I can tell you that. When economic conditions deteriorate, truly it's the optimism and resilience of small business that get us through the tough times. Small businesses create jobs, and the saving grace for many of these small businesses is the threshold that exempts those with under \$2 million in sales from paying blue box fees.

This is my question: Are you now planning to tax them into closing up shop for good?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, we're not increasing anybody's taxes. All of these funds are going to the appropriate stewardship council funds. And he couldn't be more wrong: There are great businesses being started in Ontario that are taking advantage of the economic opportunities that this—we're talking about GEEP, which

does great electronic recycling in the Barrie area. Sims in the Mississauga area is doing exactly the same thing. We're talking about tire recycling that is being done by organizations like Perth Recycling in the Stratford area. There are companies that are being set up all across this province that are taking advantage of the great economic opportunities that these environmental policies that we're implementing lend to them. They are employing the people of Ontario. It's not only a good economic instrument but it's a great environmental initiative as well.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Nortel is restructuring under the creditors' act. Its \$3-billion pension shortfall will mean a cut of 30% or more to the benefits of its 20,000 employees.

Earlier this week, Quebec announced that it would safeguard the pensions of Nortel employees in that province by taking over the remaining pension assets. The Quebec and US governments have responded to the Nortel pension crisis and have extended a helping hand to Nortel employees living within their jurisdictions. My question is, why isn't this government doing the same thing for those workers?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite mischaracterizes what Quebec did. They are not topping up the pension. What the government of Quebec is doing is exactly what we would do in the same circumstances: They're agreeing to manage whatever funds would be left in that pension, should it be wound up. It would not be appropriate to characterize it as doing anything different than Ontario is doing.

I should also remind the member that the United States' equivalent of the pension benefits guarantee fund is under water, and there's a view that it cannot sustain the pressures that it is faced with.

This is an enormous challenge, and we are committed to continuing to work to bring about reform, not only to pensions but to the entire post-retirement income system. I think the member ought to be careful how she characterizes what Quebec is doing because Ontario already does that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister needs to be careful how he characterizes the question that is asked to him. It has been almost a year since the Arthurs report was delivered to this minister. It recommended an increase to the monthly benefit that the pension benefits guarantee fund provides, to the tune of about \$2,500 monthly. That \$2,500 monthly guarantee would go a long way towards safeguarding the pensions not just of Nortel workers but of thousands of other Ontario workers whose pensions currently are hanging in the balance.

Why is this government leaving Nortel employees out in the cold by refusing to table legislation to increase the monthly benefit guaranteed by the pension benefits guar-

antee fund to \$2,500, as was very clearly recommended in the Arthurs report?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I take it, then, that the member is endorsing all the Arthurs recommendations and would call on a massive increase in what employees have to contribute in order to fund the PBGF. I'd urge her great caution and to read all the recommendations in the context of the other ones.

I'd also recommend that she recognize that we are in fact doing what Professor Arthurs has recommended. We have engaged an actuarial study to see what it would take to make the pension benefits guarantee fund solvent. Government after government of all political stripes in this province over the last 20 years has refused to deal with that fundamental challenge. In fact, one government specifically exempted certain big companies as being too big to fail.

I think it's disingenuous to take one recommendation out of Arthurs and not look at all of them, and I think it's also disingenuous to suggest that Quebec is doing anything differently than Ontario is already. We will continue to work with those pensioners and those communities facing this—

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

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, yesterday, as part of the good government bill, changes to the Municipal Elections Act were announced. I believe many of these changes are certainly overdue and will provide for a more fair and transparent process during our municipal elections.

During the debate, the member for Beaches–East York stated that the change in date for municipal elections will mean that, every seven elections, the election day will fall on Halloween. Turnout during elections is slow as it is. To have an election fall on such an important date for families with young children will make it even harder. Why did you make this change and is there anything that can be done to bring about a change?

Hon. Jim Watson: I heard the assertion made by the honourable member, and I asked our ministry staff to look into it. I'd encourage the member from the NDP to go to a bank and get one of those free calendars, because it is mathematically impossible for October 31 to fall on the fourth Monday in October. So that clarifies that point.

We're making this change to increase turnout and to make it safer for those campaigning because daylight savings time will take place after the fourth Monday in October. It's also very beneficial for our senior citizens, some of whom go to warmer climates in November and December. We want to make sure that our seniors have an ample opportunity to vote in municipal elections. It's also safer. We heard from a number of groups, including some women candidates, who wanted to campaign in better climates, more daylight. The change is a good

thing to increase voter turnout and we encourage all members of the House to vote for this piece of legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Minister. That is good news. I'm also pleased that young families won't be negatively impacted by this change, as Halloween is coming up this week and it is important to the kids.

There have been numerous stories and reports on changes that are needed to make our municipal elections more transparent and more fair. Many complain that incumbents have an unfair advantage over potential opponents and there are ever-present concerns about the influence that financial contributions can have. I was also struck to learn that proper identification was not required and of numerous problems with the compiling of the voters lists.

Minister, what other changes are being made to the Municipal Elections Act?

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Hon. Jim Watson: The practice at the ministry is that after every municipal election our staff conduct a review in consultation with AMO, the association of clerks and treasurers, Elections Ontario and MPAC.

The proposed changes will, among other things, bring in strict new caps, similar to provincial laws, that would limit the amount of money a company or individual can donate in a municipality. Candidates, on a go-forward basis, will not be able to keep surpluses and carry them over to the next election, thus levelling the playing field. We are requiring voter identification requirements that are in line with provincial elections. We are making changes that will allow for greater accuracy when it comes to the voters list. We're promoting greater accessibility for candidates and voters with disabilities, including, for the first time, ensuring that all polling stations are accessible to those individuals with disabilities in the province of Ontario. Regrettably, that was never the case before.

These changes will make for a more transparent, efficient and effective process, and we look forward to all members supporting this legislation in this House.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Transportation: My question is in follow-up to a question I put on Monday regarding the DriveTest strike that's now in its 10th week. Jobs are being lost; lives are being disrupted.

I have an e-mail, which is one of many, from a DriveTest employee. They want to get back to work as well, and I want to read from that e-mail: "We have an offer that our union refuses to let us vote on until Serco deems it to be a 'final offer.' The Ministry of Labour mediator has issued his second 'cooling-off period' (the first one lasted a month and a half) which is also frustrating."

I asked the minister on Monday why he will not ask his colleague the Minister of Labour to direct that offer to

be put to the employees so that this strike can be dealt with.

Hon. James J. Bradley: In fact, I'll allow him to ask the Minister of Labour himself.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question, and I thank the Minister of Transportation and the Ministry of Labour officials as we continue to work with the parties and urge them to come to the table to resolve their differences. We highly respect the collective bargaining agreement process. The member is quite right when he speaks about our mediators; we have some of the best mediators in the world. And we have one of the best labour relations records in the world; 97% of all collective agreements are done without work stoppage. There are some agreements that are challenging, there are bumps in the road, and I ask the parties to come to the table, roll up their sleeves, work together and—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: The sleeves are rolled up and we're seeing no results. What I'm saying is that the Minister of Transportation has a responsibility to ensure that these services are delivered to Ontarians. Serco has a responsibility contractually to deliver them. For the last 10 weeks, that hasn't been happening. The Minister of Labour has the ability under legislation, under section 41—just so that he can check it out himself—of the Labour Relations Act, to force a vote; that is his responsibility. His mediator is not successful. Employees at Serco want to have the vote. They want to get back to work, and people across this province want and need those services. Why will the minister not assume his responsibility and ensure that that vote takes place?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: As I said, there are at times disputes that may be difficult. That is why the Ministry of Labour has conciliators and mediators to be there to assist those parties to resolve those differences. I understand, as the Minister of Transportation and many in our communities understand, the difficulties that this imposes on those who want to get a driver's licence and those who need to renew their driver's licence. So we continue to work with the parties, to encourage them to come to the table to resolve those differences.

As I have said, we have a tremendous record in labour relations in this province. I want to commend those who are at the table, who are working hard, who are making concessions and finding that common ground to get a collective agreement done.

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, you'll know that the Ontario municipal partnership fund is a very important component of the funding that the province provides the municipalities. And you'll also know—and if you don't know, I'm telling you now—that there are a whole bunch of municipalities that are being told that the one-time funding that

they've been getting for the last four or five years is going to be cut in this budget year.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no—one-time funding that has been funded for the last five years, and if members paid attention to municipal funding, they would know that.

My question to you is: Will you continue the one-time funding, as we have for the last four years?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member for the question. He's absolutely right about the amount of money this government has transferred to municipalities since taking office. I'd like to review some of them. Under the provincial-municipal review, by 2018, we will have increased operating support to municipalities by \$2.7 billion or 250%. We are uploading Ontario Works benefits, saving municipalities \$425 million by 2018. In addition, we're uploading court costs, saving municipalities \$125 million. I should add that this is in addition to the increased operating supports that we've provided municipalities, up \$1.1 billion between taking office and today.

This government has, I think, the best track record in dealing with our municipal partners. We—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We'll soon find out later on this year. The fact that you don't want to answer the question, "Will you, yes or no, renew the funding?," and instead talk about everything else tells me and tells municipalities that you're contemplating it. For many municipalities across Ontario, and in my riding in particular, if one-time funding is taken away, they're going to have to put the padlock on the municipal offices because they will not be able to afford to pay for such services as police, social services and others because it's a huge part of their budgets.

I ask you once again: Yes or no; will the government continue one-time funding in the next fiscal year?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that Timmins, which I know is very familiar to him, will receive \$14 million in OMPF funding for 2009.

I'd really like to know why the member and his NDP friends voted against the Investing in Ontario Act—\$1 billion in transfers to municipalities. Maybe we'd like to know why the NDP voted against uploading public health. They voted against gas tax funding for transit. They voted against increased funding for the arts through municipalities. They voted against our infrastructure for roads and bridges funding. That party is a sorry excuse for a party when it comes to municipal support.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have a point of order which I've expressed in this House in the past. This House has a long tradition, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, when you reviewed my point of order in the past, you concurred with my findings.

Earlier in the House today the member from Eglinton—Lawrence asked the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities a question whereby his first response appeared to give an announcement, with a new date starting on the first of the coming month, of a new program that would take place. I would suggest that announcements of this nature, if it was an announcement, would be far more properly found in ministerial statements. I would ask for your review and reporting back to the House on the point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is a point of order, and I thank the honourable member for the point of order. It's actually one of the reasons why it is helpful that the tone be kept down in the chamber because there are times when the Speaker himself finds it's difficult to hear questions or answers. I will commit to reviewing the Hansard and will report back to the House.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 71(b), the House leader of the official opposition has filed notice of his intention to file a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts. The bill may therefore not be called during orders of the day today.

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

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: It is my pleasure to welcome some of the members of the executive of the Greek Community of Toronto, who will be celebrating their 100th anniversary. They're just coming in right now. It's Mr. Costas Menegakis, Gail Menegakis, Crist Geronikolos, Eleni Tsikritis, Yannis Kakagiannis, Vlasis Economou and Bessie Anagnostopoulos. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome in the Speaker's gallery a good friend of mine, Mr. Vane Chute. Vane is here representing the Tillsonburg real estate board. He's also a former reeve of Bayham township and a former warden of the county of Elgin. Welcome to Queen's Park, Vane.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHICKEN FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, who are here today at Queen's Park. I want to thank them for coming to share their concerns and let us know the state of their industry. I'm pleased to hear that they are doing very well.

Ontario chicken farmers make a huge contribution to the province. They employ 5,000 people directly and thousands more indirectly through transportation and foodservices.

Ontario families depend on our chicken farmers to produce high-quality, safe and healthy chicken—and they deliver. The nearly 1,100 chicken farmers in Ontario produce 330 million kilograms of chickens annually. I want to particularly recognize the 87 chicken farmers who are located in the great riding of Oxford who produce 35 million kilos of chicken.

We recognize the importance of the orderly marketing system known as supply management to ensure continued success for the chicken industry. On behalf of the PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, I want to assure the Chicken Farmers of Ontario that they have our continued support for protecting supply management.

Later today, the chicken farmers will be meeting with our leader, Tim Hudak, and I to update us on the results of their strategic planning process and the exciting new initiative they are launching here at Queen's Park today. I'm looking forward to that meeting and I encourage all members, if they haven't already done so, to take some time today to meet with the chicken farmers or to attend their reception this evening down in the legislative dining room to hear the great things they are doing to help build their industry.

ELECTRIC TRAINS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to invite anyone who is listening to come to a meeting. It's going to be held tomorrow night, October 29, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Arraymusic Studio, 60 Atlantic Avenue, suite 218. It's about clean electric trains.

We have two guest speakers who are going to talk about why electric over diesel. They are Mike Sullivan, who is the chair of the Weston Community Coalition and a member of the Clean Train Coalition; we also have Dr. Regenstreif, a resident of Trinity-Spadina, who is a retired architect, urbanist and consultant in energy management. He has written extensively on railway electrification in Canada and Europe.

The purpose of the meeting is to try to persuade the government, more than anyone else—because I suspect the people who are going to come tomorrow night want clean electric trains. This government has a love affair with diesel; we don't understand why. But it's a love affair, an obsession with dirty diesel that nobody really wants. What many of the people want is a commitment from this government to do it right from the beginning. Don't spend on tier 4 diesel trains that are not going to be available for five years and are going to be very expensive. Spend on the right clean train electricity today and do it right.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: Yesterday, I had an opportunity to be in Thunder Bay for a fantastic announcement. I was

there with Michael Power, the CEO of the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute; Keith Jobbitt, the chair; Cameron Piron, the president and CEO of Sentinelle imaging; Steve Demmings from the CEDC in Thunder Bay; and Mayor Peterson to announce a fantastic partnership between the parent company, Sentinelle, and Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute in Thunder Bay.

Sentinelle will be spinning off a company to be called Tornado Medical Systems. They're a medical imaging company. This particular company, it's anticipated, is going to provide, according to Cameron Piron, the president and CEO, 50 jobs in this particular field by April 2010. Mr. Piron went on to say to the group in attendance that it's his full anticipation that by 2012 he expects there to be 300 jobs associated with this particular company.

I link this back to something that we did three or four years ago, when the Premier took what was then the Ontario Innovation Trust and spun it into the Ministry of Research and Innovation, creating for the first time in the province of Ontario a ministry dedicated to research and innovation, seeing the importance of it, and appointing himself the minister of this particular ministry. Through that ministry, three or four years ago, we were able to secure investment of about \$15 million in what was then called the Molecular Medicine Research Centre, which has now become Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute. It is through that investment, along with investment that came later from the federal government and an investment from the city of Thunder Bay, that MMRC was established. Three or four years later we continue to see the benefit of that investment, justifying a decision we made three or four years ago.

It's a great example of where good public policy can be good for the economy. I think of our environmental policy not too long ago, which has led to major investments by our government in mass transit and has created hundreds of good-paying jobs at Bombardier in Thunder Bay. Similarly, the announcement of this \$15 million three or four years ago has led to a diversification of Thunder Bay's economy and more job creation as well.

TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I raise an issue that has great consequences for every person in Ontario, especially outside of Toronto. Local television and local TV news are in trouble. Stations are being closed in communities across Ontario and Canada. Other stations in Ontario are being given away for next to nothing. Consider that CHCH-TV in Hamilton was recently sold for \$12 cash. One of the cable companies agreed to purchase another Ontario station for \$1, but that deal fell through. Compare this with the recent sale of Mountain View Cable, a cable system serving only part of the city of Hamilton, for a quarter-billion dollars—that's "billion." Guess who bought it? One of our profit-rich cable companies that hate competition.

The business model that over-the-air television has operated under is broken. An imbalance exists between

the stations and the distribution companies, and if it isn't fixed, communities like mine will lose their local stations and their local news.

Local television stations must be compensated for their signal by the distribution companies, and there is no reason for the public to pay more to the cable companies. I urge all members of this House and concerned citizens of Ontario to complain to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission at their website, crtc.gc.ca, and encourage them to fix this problem before it is too late.

INTERNATIONAL CREDIT UNION DAY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: On October 15, I had the pleasure of visiting Central 1, a company in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. The purpose of my visit was to join in their celebration of International Credit Union Day.

International Credit Union Day has been celebrated by the World Council of Credit Unions on the third Thursday of October every year since 1948. The day is set aside to reflect upon the history of the credit union movement and to promote the achievements of credit unions. Every year, International Credit Union Day raises awareness about the great work that credit unions are doing for their members.

It gives me great pride to see companies in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South providing great services to the community. I would like to congratulate the staff at Central 1 for the work they do for their members to reach their financial goals. Central 1 is helping credit unions build a greater economy.

I look forward to visiting Central 1 to celebrate International Credit Union Day next year.

1510

CANADIAN CLUB MOVEMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise in this House to pay tribute to the Bowmanville Men's Canadian Club on its 100th anniversary, which will be celebrated on November 18.

Robert McCullough, a founder of the Canadian Club movement in Canada, was born in Bowmanville. He moved to Hamilton in 1888, where he and four friends would launch an organization dedicated to the study of Canada's history, literature, resources and talents. In 1909, a central Canadian Club association was formed. It had branches throughout the Dominion of Canada.

It is a fitting tribute to the vision of Robert McCullough that the Bowmanville Men's Canadian Club still meets in Mr. McCullough's hometown. On November 18, club president Harold Yellowlees and members of the Bowmanville Men's Canadian Club will be celebrating the 100th anniversary celebration.

I am pleased to pay tribute to the proud Canadians who belong to this organization and, more specifically, those in my riding of Durham. I wish all members and all people who are in support of the vision of the Canadian

Club movement to celebrate this event with pride in a country which celebrates multiculturalism as well as leadership, in a country that is very tolerant and forthcoming for all Canadians.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased today to share with members in the House the remarkable progress my riding has made thanks to our government's effective renewable energy strategy. As a result, Sault Ste. Marie is on its way to becoming a North American leader in green energy initiatives. We recognize that promoting a dynamic, innovative and growing green economy will foster job growth in our community.

Just this week, Elementa Group signed a deal to construct a full-scale waste-to-energy conversion plant, after our government provided \$50,000 and technical expertise for a pilot project. The project will provide the technology for Sault Ste. Marie to become Canada's first jurisdiction to have all curbside waste diverted from its municipal landfill site in the form of a green energy project.

This initiative is part of our government's strategy to help support green energy products and projects in Ontario. Power-purchase agreements through our renewable energy programs have facilitated many projects in my community: a \$400-million investment by Brookfield Renewable Power to build the largest wind farm in the province of Ontario; a \$360-million investment by Pod solar to create a 60-megawatt solar project; and a \$135-million investment by Essar Steel to build a 70-megawatt cogen plant, eliminating 400 tonnes of nitrous oxide from the atmosphere. We're also investing in a tire recycling project that is currently under construction and a methane collection system at the local landfill to reduce greenhouse gases.

These projects have helped to diversify my community of Sault Ste. Marie, helped our community become a leader in the new green economy, and perhaps most importantly, created exciting new technology jobs that will allow Sault Ste. Marie to attract and retain talented young workers. We're watching too many of our youth over the last number of years leave the north for other opportunities.

GREEK COMMUNITY

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On October 30, the Greek Community of Toronto will be celebrating their 100th anniversary. Since 1909, they have provided a supportive network for Greek culture to flourish in Toronto. From helping Greek newcomers to settle in the city, to preserving Greek language and traditions in their new home, the Greek Community of Toronto has been and it continues to be critically important for those of Hellenic descent in the greater Toronto area.

I would also like to recognize a very important day for Greeks all around the world. Today is Oxi Day. Sixty-

nine years ago, the Greeks said “Oxi,” or “No,” to a demand to submit to foreign occupation. Instead, guided by courage and optimism, the Greeks chose the path of resistance. Four years later, they regained control of their country.

Oxi Day and the centennial of the Greek Community of Toronto is a time to reflect on the values of the Greek people: the importance of community, the importance of sacrifice and the importance of justice. Celebrating Oxi Day is an example of how our traditions and cultures have been preserved by organizations like the Greek Community of Toronto.

I would like to thank Mr. Costas Menegakis, the president, and the rest of the Greek Community of Toronto’s executives for being here today. I look forward to another century of success from this wonderful organization.

Lastly, I would like to say: Zito H Ellas, Zito O Kanadas.

CHICKEN FARMERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to welcome the Chicken Farmers of Ontario as they once again bring us their popular wings-and-beer reception in the legislative dining room. Others will have already told you about the contribution of broiler chicken producers to the economy of Ontario. But my involvement with the industry is of a more personal nature. As you well know, the feather industry has been very good to my family over the years.

This summer, Rene and I entered our 40th year as farmers—18 of them as part of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, and we are proud to be counted among their numbers. Like all farming, this sector requires hard work, taking risks, making large investments of time and money, and, yes, off-farm jobs as needed. But as a supply-managed commodity, chicken production is predictable—for the producer in terms of expectations and incomes, and for the consumer in terms of quality, price and supply.

Rene and I are proof that you can start a business from scratch and build something that your son, his wife, and their young family will want to take over. And that’s what’s happening this fall, actually in a matter of weeks. Rene and I are moving into a new home so that we can step aside for the next generation as they come on to our farm.

Rene and I want to say thank you very much to the Chicken Farmers of Ontario for your support and your leadership in the past 18 years, and now for our next generation in the future.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Brad Duguid: It’s kind of hard to follow that, but I’ll do my best. I seek unanimous consent to put

forward a motion without notice regarding private members’ public business.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 45 be waived.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Motions? I will revert to introduction of bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION AMENDMENT ACT (FIRE SPRINKLER RETROFITTING), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L’INCENDIE (INSTALLATION RÉTROACTIVE D’EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES)

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 214, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 with respect to fire sprinkler retrofitting / Projet de loi 214, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l’incendie à l’égard de l’installation rétroactive d’extincteurs automatiques.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: The bill amends the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, to require that specified care occupancies that have been in existence since before March 16, 1998, be equipped with a system of automatic sprinklers.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Brad Duguid: I’m pleased to rise in this House to welcome to Ontario the federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the leaders of the five national aboriginal organizations, and the ministers of aboriginal affairs from each of the provinces and territories. This group includes the Premiers of Nova Scotia and Northwest Territories.

1520

This occasion marks the first time since the Kelowna Accord meeting in 2005 that aboriginal issues will be brought to the table for discussion among national, provincial, territorial and aboriginal leaders. This represents the dramatic shift in leadership on aboriginal issues taking place nationally. The provinces, territories and national aboriginal organizations are now seizing the leadership on this issue.

This summer, Premier Dalton McGuinty, his fellow Premiers, and aboriginal leaders met prior to the Council of the Federation to discuss how to address issues facing aboriginal people in Canada. The Premiers of Canada's 10 provinces and three territories agreed to direct their respective ministers responsible for aboriginal affairs to form a working group. This working group includes the participation and support of the Assembly of First Nations, Métis National Council, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and Native Women's Association of Canada.

Today this working group will determine how the federal government, provinces and territories, and aboriginal organizations can work more effectively to improve outcomes for aboriginal people. A revitalized federal-provincial-territorial and aboriginal, or FPTA, process will help everyone work together to ensure that aboriginal issues maintain a high national profile. The FPTA process will allow us to work collaboratively on mutual goals and will enable the federal government, provinces, territories and aboriginal organizations to complement one another's policies, programs and areas of expertise.

I'm pleased to be able to say that our Premier was one of the first leaders to call for a First Ministers' meeting on aboriginal issues, as have other Premiers across the country.

Other provincial Premiers have also been asserting themselves on aboriginal issues, demonstrating how critical these challenges are. Through this new national process, we intend to follow up on their direction and work toward a future First Ministers' conference.

We will also be addressing two broad quality-of-life priorities during tomorrow's meeting: lifelong learning, specifically education and skills development, and economic development. As a government and as a civil society, we have a moral obligation to address the wrongs of the past and focus on making improvements in the future. We need to continue addressing aboriginal issues because it's the right thing to do.

Given the state of the global economy, addressing such apparent and pressing issues affecting aboriginal people has now become an economic and social imperative. Ontario needs to be at our best if we're going to compete in the global economy. Aboriginal people, particularly aboriginal youth, are the fastest-growing segment of our population. They are our future.

Aboriginal people have demonstrated remarkable resilience, knowledge and expertise throughout the ages. This combination of indigenous knowledge, experience and foresight will continue to bring us valuable ideas,

helping to build our economies throughout Canada now and in the future. Stronger aboriginal communities mean a stronger Ontario and a stronger Canada.

This new aboriginal affairs working group and new FPTA process can be a tangible means of addressing the socio-economic gap, improving social conditions and enabling sustainable economies for aboriginal people in this province.

Again, I welcome my counterparts from the provinces and territories, my federal counterpart and the leaders of the five national aboriginal organizations. I look forward to a productive meeting tomorrow and a first step toward a better future for aboriginal people and all Canadians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and his statement today regarding the upcoming aboriginal affairs ministers' meeting on aboriginal education and economic development, which I understand takes place tomorrow downtown, at the Delta Chelsea Hotel.

At long last, on October 20, I was fortunate to finally have a briefing which I'd requested from the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs some weeks before, and I want to thank the ministry staff for this opportunity. Their presentation was professional and the information that they provided me was detailed and comprehensive, and I want to express my appreciation to the staff at the ministry for the good work that they do.

Basic demographics tell us that education and economic development are both critically important. Ontario is home to more than 242,000 aboriginal Canadians, the largest number in Canada. The aboriginal population is young, with over 26% being 15 years of age or younger.

It's worthwhile to point out that our aboriginal population is growing. Between 2001 and 2006, it has grown at rates ranging from 20% for the First Nation population to 52% for the Metis population, and that's significant. Aboriginal Canadians have so much to contribute to our country, and we need their talents, skill and culture. A young and growing population will require the best possible education and economic development to sustain jobs, which in far too many aboriginal communities remain far too few.

After six years in power, these communities have heard a great many promises from the McGuinty Liberal government. Unfortunately, however, they have seen very little action and very few tangible results to improve their quality of life—which brings us to the purpose of the ministers' meeting.

According to the minister's website, the purpose of the working group is to "examine how to work more effectively with the federal government to improve outcomes for aboriginal people." Of course, we hope that this group succeeds and that meaningful progress is achieved. But in terms of education and economic development—the focus of the ministers' meeting—the McGuinty government has fallen woefully short. Their record of improving outcomes has also come up short. In fact, observers both from within First Nations communities and outside

observers are saying that legislation now coming from this government is likely not to improve outcomes. In fact, it may worsen outcomes.

One example is Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act, which passed third reading last week. Our caucus believes that this bill did not even include defined economic development targets to ensure that our mining industry, which is critical to First Nations communities, continues to thrive. As an aside, we see that bureaucratic red tape is alive and well in the province of Ontario. In fact, I'm told that it takes three years to open a mine in Russia but it takes nearly 12 years to open one in Ontario.

Here's what Terence Corcoran wrote in his widely read column about the McGuinty government, which he dubbed "Canada's worst government": "First is Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act, which among other things is an attempt to bring aboriginal communities into the administration of the province's scatterbrained mining laws. Second is Bill 191, the Far North Act. It also attempts to bring aboriginal participation into decision-making over resource development of Ontario's far north. What these two bills actually do, however, is trample on everybody's property rights, from First Nation rights to the rights of cottage owners caught in the murky legislation that sets out mineral rights across the province."

He goes on to write the following: "Only about 24,000 people live in First Nation communities in Ontario's far north. One of those First Nations, the Nishnawbe Aski, declared its total opposition to Bill 191 after it was introduced last summer. Grand Chief Stan Beardy called for an immediate withdrawal of the bill. He said that the 225,000-square-kilometre conservation area, established without consultation or consent, will prevent his people 'from achieving economic independence by preventing development needed to build our communities and strengthen the Ontario economy.'"

I think it's obvious that the McGuinty government has failed in its duty to consult First Nations and it has failed in its duty to promote the kind of economic growth and development that would yield real benefits to those communities. The government's rhetoric surrounding consultation sounds particularly hollow when it comes to its planned sales tax hike, which, if it comes into effect next year on Canada Day, would increase the cost of living for every Ontario family. Aboriginal families of course would also see their costs going up. Just this week, I received five letters from First Nations communities, all of which voice their strong opposition to this new tax, but they also express opposition to this government's approach, which has failed miserably to consult the people whose lives this new tax would affect.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wonder if this is something that I should be celebrating, first of all, as a member of this assembly and as somebody who represents a great number of First Nations. If I was to read the statement made by the minister, I would be feeling warm and fuzzy inside because it says, "We need to continue addressing

aboriginal issues because it's the right thing to do ... addressing such apparent and pressing issues affecting aboriginal people has now become an economic and social imperative," and it talks about how aboriginal people are our future. Well, you have a funny way of showing it, because as I look in communities in my riding and as I look at communities inside the various ridings of the province of Ontario, I ask myself a very simple question: Are First Nations community residents any better off today than they were six years ago? And the answer is, absolutely not.

Do we still have 20 people living in a house? Yes. Are people in a situation where they can't study when they go to school because there's so much dysfunctionality in a house with 20 people that they're not able to even graduate from grade 6 or grade 7? Do we still have communities that have a lack of policing? Absolutely.

1530

Community after community has come before the minister of corrections and security and has said, "We need you to take a leadership role in this province and to increase the funding to Nishnawbe-Aski policing in order to provide basic policing services inside our communities." If you called NAPS in Attawapiskat or in Peawanuck or in Big Trout Lake, often there is nobody there to respond to the call. Is that because the police don't want to come? Absolutely not. It's because they don't have the resources to do it. Nishnawbe-Aski policing, along with the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, have come before this government—I was at those meetings—and said, "Listen, it's very simple. There is an agreement. It's called the '68 agreement." In the '68 agreement, it says that if the province of Ontario was to increase the funding to a program that it is jointly responsible for the funding of, the federal government has to do the same.

So we went to the provincial government, we went to Minister Bartolucci and said that there is currently a \$20-million underfunding—\$24 million, to be exact—of Nishnawbe-Aski policing in northwestern and northeastern Ontario to be able to provide really basic things, like a vehicle they can drive to a call with, a radio system so they can answer the call, a phone system so they can pick up the phone, police officers so somebody is there to answer the call, just basic things. We're not talking about forensics. We're not talking about highfalutin technology. We're just talking about putting boots on the ground. And what did we get from the minister? Mr. Bartolucci said, "I feel your pain. Oh, my God, I'm with you. We are going to struggle, we're going to fight on behalf of First Nations and we're going to do everything that's necessary to lobby the federal government to increase its share."

Well, where's Ontario? You know, I look at the province of Ontario and I look at the map, and the last time I looked at it, Nishnawbe-Aski territory is in the province of Ontario. People who live in Attawapiskat or Big Trout Lake are residents of the province of Ontario as well, and we have a shared responsibility to provide basic services. Can you imagine in the city of Timmins if residents in

that community couldn't get somebody at the end of the phone when they called 911? Or if the police were asked to be dispatched and they didn't have a car to put the police officer in to go and answer the call? Can you imagine what people in that community would be saying? Can you imagine what we would all be saying? Government members and opposition members, we'd be finding a solution. But because these communities are far away, landlocked, no roads, fly-in communities, we say, "Oh, well, it's a federal responsibility."

Are we any further when it comes to the issue of housing? We had an agreement to build a new community in Kashechewan, and as a result of the games played, mostly by the federal government—I'll give you some credit—and the province's lack of leadership, we're no further ahead today than we were six or seven years ago. We have children who go to school in Attawapiskat in portable classrooms. We don't allow that to happen in any other community in Ontario. But what's worse is, the portable classrooms are contaminated by way of diesel. Does the province say, "Oh, my God, these children are important. They are our future. It is an economic and social imperative"? Absolutely not. They say, "Go talk to the federal government." So the kids of Attawapiskat have been without a school for an entire generation. I fear that at the speed we're going, it will be a second generation before we actually have a solution.

Is it just Attawapiskat? Go a little further north and talk to the kids in Fort Severn. Find out what they're going through in the community of Fort Severn, where their school has been closed because of mould contamination.

So you can use all the words you want, Minister—and I have great respect for you; I don't mean this personally—but I represent the people of Timmins–James Bay, and from the vantage point where I sit, when I see ministers say, "They are our future, our economic and social imperative, and it's the right thing to do," I'm looking for actions, not just words.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is now time for—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I didn't have an opportunity earlier, but I'd like to welcome both Tim Perron and Anne Marie Vaillancourt, realtors from the city of Timmins who are here with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "Whereas the McGuinty government's plan to 'harmonize' the PST and the GST will result in Ontario taxpayers paying 8% more for a multitude of products and services;

"Whereas the 8% tax increase will increase the cost of services such as housing and real estate services, gasoline, hydro bills, home heating fuel, Internet and cable bills, haircuts, gym memberships, legal services, construction and renovation, car repairs, plumbing and electrical services, landscaping services, leisure activities, hotel rooms, veterinary services for the family pet and even funeral services; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers cannot afford this tax grab—particularly in the middle of a recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to abandon the sales tax increase announced in the 2009 budget."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this and give it to page Matthew.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I want to thank one person in particular for having gathered the signatures. Thirty years ago, I won my one and only hockey championship on a team on which a gentleman named Glenn Ursulak played in front of me. He's one of the guys who gathered the signatures and signed this one. Hi, Glenn. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could" better "be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to add my signature in support of those on the petition and to ask page Kira to carry it for me.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

“Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic cultural heritage resources, Ontario’s inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

This petition is signed by a great number of my constituents, primarily from the great town of Tillsonburg. On their behalf, I’m pleased to be able to present this petition to you, Mr. Speaker.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I present a petition that reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Parliament of Ontario to prevent the windup of Nortel pensions under the current regulations administered by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. To be forced into annuities at this time is the worst possible outcome under current market conditions.

“Since Nortel fulfilled its responsibility under the pension benefits guarantee fund, we are asking the province to honour its responsibility and protect Nortel pensions accordingly.

“We need our government fighting on our behalf in the bankruptcy court. We need change in provincial and federal laws which are unfair and outdated. They are in conflict with one another and allow failing companies like Nortel to deny pensions and benefits to pensioners, terminated and long-term disabled employees.

“Our government must convene a national summit on pensions and improve the Canada pension plan benefits and make it mandatory. All provincial governments must take action now.”

I agree with this petition. I sign my name and give it to page Henry for submission.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I’m pleased to stand up and read a petition on behalf of Ontarians from the Barrie region.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

1540

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the re-

location of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition and sign it.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas residents in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke do not want the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it down with page Emma.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I want to say that it was a pleasure to hear the good member from Oxford read a similar petition here this afternoon. I have one that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

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

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition provided to me by W.T. Isaacs of Brantford and Forbes Insurance of Cambridge, which reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario’s history, but he still cuts health care services and nurses; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again on Canada Day 2010 with his new 13% combined GST, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s new 13% combined GST will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas at the pumps; home heating oil and electricity; postage stamps; haircuts; dry cleaning; home renovations; veterinary care; arena ice and soccer field rentals; Internet fees; theatre admissions; funerals; courier fees; fast food sold for under \$4; bus fares; golf green fees; gym fees; snowplowing; bicycles; taxi fares; train fares; domestic air travel; accountant services and real estate commissions;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

As I agree with this petition, I affix my name thereto.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I definitely want to thank Sean Travis of Sir Lou Drive in Brampton, who represents Brampton Caledon Community Living, who delivered me this petition. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the population in Peel has tripled from 400,000 residents to 1.2 million between 1980 to present. Human services funding has not kept pace with that growth. Peel receives only one third the per capita social service funding of other Ontario communities; and

“Whereas residents of Peel cannot obtain social services in a timely fashion. Long waiting lists exist for many Peel region service providers. The child poverty level in Peel has grown from 14% to 20% between 2001 and 2006... ; and

“Whereas Ontario’s Places to Grow legislation predicts substantial future growth, further challenging our already stretched service providers to respond to population growth;

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

“That the province of Ontario allocate social services funding on the basis of population size, population growth, relevant social indicators and special geographic conditions;

“That the province provide adequate growth funding for social services in Peel region; and

“That Ontario develop, in consultation with high-growth stakeholders, a human services strategy for high-

growth regions to complement Ontario’s award-winning Places to Grow strategy.”

I agree with this petition. I am pleased to sign it and to ask page Rebecca to carry it for me.

SALES OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition that was given to me by the Ontario Korean Businessmen’s Association. There are more than 900 signatures on it. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of beer and wine to the LCBO, a few winery retail stores and the Beer Store, and the three large beer companies are owned by multinationals;

“Whereas other provinces (notably Quebec) have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores for many years without any harm to the well-being of the public;

“Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of beer and wine in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society;

“Whereas it is essential to support local convenience stores for the survival of small businesses;

“Whereas it is obvious from the current market trends that the sales of wine and beer in convenience stores is not a question of ‘if’ but ‘when’;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of beer and wine in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province and to do it now.”

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: Before presenting this petition I would like to thank Marjorie Stewart of the Ontario Genealogical Society for her work in getting petitions to me on this subject. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

Again, as I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition from the riding of Durham. It’s more specifically from

Zephyr: Paul Thompson and others from that small community. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

“Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty’s new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements;

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I’m pleased to sign and endorse this and present it to Kira, one of the many pages here.

SALES OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I am reading this petition on behalf of the Ontario Convenience Store Association.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of beer and wine to the LCBO, a few winery retail stores and the Beer Store, and the three large beer companies are owned by multinationals;

“Whereas other provinces ... have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores for many years without any harm to the well-being of the public;

“Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of beer and wine in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society;

“Whereas it is essential to support local convenience stores for the survival of small businesses;

“Whereas it is obvious from the current market trends that the sales of wine and beer in convenience stores is not a question of ‘if’ but ‘when’;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of beer and wine in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province ... now.”

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to take this opportunity to recognize a constituent of mine, my father, who is celebrating his 79th birthday today. I just wanted to recognize that and put it on the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member knows that is not a point of order, but we do wish your father a happy 79th birthday.

1550

OPPOSITION DAY

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call upon the Premier of Ontario to appoint a commission of inquiry with a mandate to identify, examine and report on:

(a) whether there was any deliberate price-fixing and bid-rigging of contracts at eHealth Ontario and the eHealth program at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

(b) untendered contracts awarded by Management Board of Cabinet;

(c) whether ministry officials were ordered to obstruct the Auditor General from accessing offices and records of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; and

(d) whether there were affiliations between the Liberal Party of Ontario and persons involved in the eHealth scandal, including but not limited to former political staff in the offices of Premier McGuinty and Minister Smitherman.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day motion number 2. Debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: We are introducing this motion today because the public still does not have the answers they deserve on the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle.

Now, Dalton McGuinty may be feeling he has moved this off the headlines in the last couple of days. Certainly, following up a billion-dollar scandal with a \$25-billion deficit could accomplish that task. Perhaps this is the kind of damage control we could expect from Canada’s worst government: If you demonstrate enough fiscal incompetence, people will only talk about that and hopefully forget about the growing second-term rot spreading across the McGuinty government.

But we’re not going to let them get away with that, and Ontario families are not going to let Dalton McGuinty get away with that. Ontario families are working harder, they’re paying more in taxes, their hydro fees are going up, their auto insurance rates are going up, their tuition is going up and utility costs are going up: all of this just to stand still, all of this just to tread water. To see a billion dollars of taxpayer revenue get flushed down the drain and Liberal-friendly consultants get fat and rich on untendered contracts rightfully makes Ontario taxpayers outraged, and they want answers today.

While the Auditor General’s work has been helpful in shedding some early light on this appalling waste of taxpayer dollars, the full extent and depth of the rot has yet to be determined. And while one of Dalton McGuinty’s senior ministers finally did the right thing and resigned for his role in this sordid affair, the people behind this scandal have not yet all been held to account—not by a long shot.

An auditor’s report and a token resignation do not close the books on this sorry affair. There are other senior

cabinet ministers implicated in the auditor's report, including the Deputy Premier and former health minister, George Smitherman, who presided over the growing culture of entitlement and spending abuses behind this scandal. If the consequence for a health minister, David Caplan, who wasted \$240 million, was to lose his job, then the former minister, George Smitherman, who wasted \$837 million, should suffer the same fate and should be stepping down immediately.

Sadly, Mr. McCarter lacked the mandate or the resources necessary to answer many of the most important unanswered questions that remain about Dalton McGuinty's eHealth boondoggle. Let me give you some examples. Were activities such as bid-rigging taking place that would warrant a criminal investigation? Who ordered government officials to block the Auditor General from his job in investigating this eHealth mess? What was the full role of the powerful Management Board of Cabinet and, in particular, Deputy Premier George Smitherman, who presided over the growing eHealth debacle for five straight years? And what are the full identities and possible Liberal affiliations of the people who got rich off the misuse of taxpayer dollars?

Ontario families are demanding answers to these questions. They want to know who is going to pay the consequences for those misdeeds, and they darned well want to know if Dalton McGuinty is going to try to get their money back from the consultants who fleeced the taxpayers in this province.

With today's motion, the Ontario PC caucus continues its call for a full public inquiry to get to the bottom of this scandal, to get answers to those questions that remain about the serious and potentially criminal abuses of taxpayer dollars that occurred at eHealth under Dalton McGuinty's watch, under George Smitherman's watch, under David Caplan's watch.

We deserve to know who broke the rules, who got rich and who in the McGuinty government was involved. And the only way the people of Ontario will get those answers they need is a full public inquiry, similar to the Gomery commission, which exposed the worst abuses of the federal Liberal sponsorship scandal to the full light of day.

Let's put this into perspective. A billion dollars went to waste due to the eHealth boondoggle. The entire cost of the sponsorship scandal in Ottawa: \$100 million—money that was earmarked for advertising; the eHealth money earmarked for health care in the province of Ontario—10 times the cost of the Adscam.

Today, hospitals throughout the province are being forced to stretch their health care dollars and debate service cuts or staff reductions. They could have used some of that billion dollars that went to line the pockets of Liberal-friendly consultants, sadly, instead. In my own riding, construction of the new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital has been delayed indefinitely. Other hospitals face similar dilemmas province-wide, such as Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie or Port Colborne General Hospital that have seen their 24-hour ERs shut down and

surgery taken from their hospitals by a Premier who increased taxes he said were for health care and now is closing down services in these very same hospitals.

What are the patients and families who depend on these facilities to think when they see hundreds of millions of dollars blown on Liberal-friendly consultants while pediatric and maternity wards are forced to close? Family health care should not have to take a back seat to Liberal insiders and to sweetheart deals. Sadly, that is exactly the example the Premier is setting as he continues to railroad our call for an impartial, arm's-length and thorough investigation.

Ontario families are already forced to work harder. They work longer hours away from home just to make ends meet. They're forced to pay higher taxes and higher fees, but are seeing little if any benefit in return from this government. They deserve to see value for the dollars that they do pay, and they better get some answers to why this money got flushed down the drain with nothing to show for it for Ontario families.

Hard-working Ontario families deserve an answer; they deserve an answer immediately. That's why I respectfully encourage the Liberal MPPs in this House to support the opposition call for a full public inquiry. If nothing else, the full inquiry will remove all doubt about who was involved in the scandal and those who profited from it. And if you believe there's nothing left to hide following the Auditor General's investigation, then we should proceed with the inquiry to help restore Ontario families' faith that tax dollars are being spent carefully and responsibly. I would also call on their constituents to not let them get away with simply following Dalton McGuinty's directions on this one.

These Liberal MPPs were also elected to represent their constituents, not Dalton McGuinty and not George Smitherman. Liberal MPPs can do the right thing today simply by voting in favour of our motion later this afternoon.

I'd say to my colleagues across this House, it's not too late. Let's do the right thing. Let's show some real responsibility for a change. Let's protect the public's right to know and get answers to exactly what happened with this \$1-billion boondoggle and get some of that money back to put into health care today.

1600

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

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to speak to this today. The opposition party is being disingenuous in this request, this motion for a public inquiry. Let's go back to what our very distinguished—

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Can I ask you to rule whether or not the member for Willowdale has used unparliamentary language?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): By not standing or correcting him, I have ruled. The member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. Our very distinguished, capable, competent and ever-vigilant Auditor

General has rendered a great service to this matter of the eHealth records.

The Premier, the minister and our government, when this issue broke, specifically asked the Auditor General to look into the matter of eHealth records.

I can tell you that a number of us in this chamber sit on the public accounts committee. I can tell you, as will, I expect, the Conservative Chair of the public accounts committee, the five Liberal members, the Conservative members and the NDP member—they will all attest to the vigour and the competence of our Auditor General. He went in there at the specific direction of this government to investigate the accounts at eHealth, and after he spent considerable time there, along with his team of very skilled and, in my view, hawk-eyed auditors, this is the conclusion that the Auditor General reached: He said, and this is very, very important, “We were aware”—and by the “we” he means himself and the staff of the Auditor General—“of the allegations that ‘party politics’ may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work.”

This is not just in the auditor’s own work. He uses the expression “our work”; that is, his team of professional auditors who have great experience in reviewing the accounts of the government, as will all members of the public accounts committee and especially the Conservative Chair of the public accounts committee.

So now we have an Auditor General, a professional Auditor General, whose position as Auditor General has been renewed from time to time by this Legislature because this Legislature has great confidence in the Auditor General. The Auditor General went into that exercise with a thought in his mind: He had been made aware of allegations that party politics may have entered into the awarding of contracts. And with that thought planted in his mind, it’s inconceivable that an auditor of that skill, of that competence, of that commitment to the integrity of the position of Auditor General was not ever-vigilant himself, and his team, when they conducted their audit.

Having brought that vigilance to the exercise, having brought that competence to the exercise, having brought that spirit of good government to that exercise, what did the Auditor General find after his team’s audit? What did he find with respect to this allegation of party politics that he had been made aware of? Again, in closing, I repeat the Auditor General’s report at page 11. It’s interesting that that quote appears at page 11, right at the start of the auditor’s report. It’s not some passing comment that he made in the depths of page 300 of the report. It’s an issue that he faced right up front at page 11. It’s an issue that was in his mind. His conclusion, and I repeat: “We were aware of the allegations that ‘party politics’ may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work.”

It begs the question: What is the intention of this opposition motion? The intention of the opposition motion is merely to play politics with an issue that we ought not to be playing politics with. Let’s move ahead on the eHealth file.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The opposition has moved a very broad resolution today addressing the eHealth situation, and I want to take a few minutes just to talk about the sorts of things that the public has been made aware of in the last while. The problems at eHealth—really, the big numbers caught the public’s attention, but there are small numbers as well that talk to people about the contempt with which the whole process was managed: the expensing of tea at Tim Hortons for \$1.65, referred to previously in this House; \$3.99 for Choco Bites; \$30 for a carwash; child care expenses.

Then we heard about the \$3,000-a-day fees, the speech that cost \$25,000. After that, we heard about the \$317,000 severance package to eHealth’s CEO.

The auditor revealed a lot of troubling details about the issue that’s before us: 300 consultants, outnumbering 30 ministry staff; the number of consultants going from one in 2002-03 to 328 in 2008-09, with a 10,000% increase in the value of consultants’ contracts; consultants on the payroll for six years. Consultants? Temporary staff? Six years? After six months or a year, you start looking at whether or not this is a permanent position—six years at premium pay.

A consultant who awarded consulting contracts worth over \$1.3 million to a company he was associated with; the sole-sourced hiring of a consultant firm to help hire 15 senior management positions; millions of dollars paid in untendered consultant contracts, with little to show for it; a rigged bidding system; favouritism in awarding contracts. In one bid, senior management awarded a bid to a consultant whose bid was five times that of the next competitor and significantly higher than the budget allowed.

A revolving door between work at the ministry and work as a high-priced consultant; a ministry under two ministers who completely failed to oversee eHealth; a board that may have been hesitant to watch over the CEO because she was hand-picked by the Premier; Ontario at the back of the pack when it comes to electronic health records.

As the Auditor General said, “The value of this investment ... has not been realized.” Ontarians expect more from their government and their health care dollars. They want real accountability. What they got was a government more interested in rewarding consultant insiders with lucrative contracts.

1610

The Auditor General has much to do. Last week, the NDP was able to get through the public accounts committee a motion to have the auditor review the use of consultants by the Ministry of Health, the LHINs and hospitals. The Ministry of Health spends \$100 million on

consultants. That excludes spending by LHINs and hospitals. The government spends more than \$1 billion a day on consultants, a figure that excludes transfer payment recipients. The Ministry of Health failed to oversee eHealth's use of consultants. How could Ontarians know that the ministry is doing a better job with consultants than the eHealth board did?

In the last few months, we've heard more troubling details about the use of consultants across the health sector. On the same day that the Auditor General's report was released, an internal government audit of Cancer Care Ontario was released. The audit was requested only after it was revealed that \$75 million had been spent on consultants over a two-year period: \$30 million to three consultancies, \$19 million in untendered contracts with the Courtyard Group and expenses without documentation.

Meanwhile, a scandal is brewing at the London Health Sciences Centre: \$3.3 million in contracts were awarded to the Atwood Group, an IT consultant, without competitive bidding. The owner of the consultancy, Tom Vlastic, charged \$1,350 to \$1,500 per day. Diane Beattie, a vice-president at the hospital, awarded the contract. Ms. Beattie was a long-time colleague of Vlastic. Ms. Beattie resigned in late September. She received a severance package of almost half a million dollars.

Over the summer, very disturbing facts were brought to light by the Chatham media. The Erie St. Clair LHIN was looking to close Wallaceburg's Sydenham hospital; the LHIN has already shut down the hospital's medical-surgical beds. Wallaceburg activists are fighting to save the hospital, and have formed the Save Our Sydenham Committee. In an e-mail discovered by the Chatham-Kent Daily Post, the Chatham-Kent hospital hired Veritas Communications, a consultant, to dig up dirt on the chair of the Save Our Sydenham Committee: our tax dollars at work undermining a citizens' group that was, in fact, trying to protect health care services.

These details speak to the need for the auditor to look at consulting contracts beyond eHealth. We look forward to the auditor's reviews of LHINs, hospitals and the ministry itself.

Ontario's attempt to build an electronic health system has soared in cost to more than \$1 billion, and that's a lot of money. But this is only a small part of an even larger story. It doesn't tell us about the waste that has occurred because of years of stalled work. It doesn't explain the costs, both financial and human, to Ontario's patients of the inefficiencies of our system.

This \$1 billion may have been money well spent if we had a system to show for it, but we don't. If you could walk in to your physician's office and see the record from your recent visit to a walk-in clinic, if your physician could forward your health information to the hospital where your specialist is working, all of that would be very useful. Unfortunately, none of this is possible today, in spite of the \$1-billion investment. Instead, Ontario's patients remain sorely underserved when it comes to electronic health records. Not only do

we have nothing to show for all this money, but we're also pouring good money down the drain as our need for these funds grows.

New Democrats have a lot of ideas about how to spend \$1 billion on actually delivering services. My guess is that people across Ontario could think of good uses for \$1 billion. The sad reality is that our health care system is under increasing strain. Hospitals are facing soaring deficits that have forced them to cut costs even when it is care that suffers. We have witnessed loss of emergency rooms, maternity wards and physiotherapy services. As emergency rooms close in these small communities, like what happened in Fort Erie at the Douglas Memorial Hospital, it's hospitals in the larger centres that are increasingly straining under the weight, hospitals like those in Niagara Falls, which are now serving patients in the communities of Port Colborne and Fort Erie because there are no services for them at home. Since the Port Colborne emergency room closed down, the Welland Hospital has faced a 20% increase in patients. But these aren't the only communities that have been losing services. This is happening across the province.

The Minister of Health may attempt to hide from the realities faced in these communities, but residents know the truth. They're looking at looming cuts. As an example, cuts in the Soo: 125 renal dialysis patients were discharged because of cuts to the dialysis clinic; five surgical beds closed; 12 RN positions to be eliminated by spring 2010 at the Sault Area Hospital. At Burk's Falls, the urgent care centre has been closed. There are another 28 beds across Muskoka, Bracebridge and Huntsville areas on the chopping block. Burk's Falls is planning to close all of their acute-care beds; there are currently seven.

Sudbury: Sudbury Regional Hospital is poised to cut 37 RN positions because of a \$12-million deficit. And I have to say to you, having talked to people in Sudbury, there's already huge pressure on the Sudbury regional health system because of the needs in outlying areas. Further reductions in health care support are not reasonable, not justifiable and not acceptable.

In Windsor's Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital, the neonatal intensive care unit has experienced service reduction. There have been cuts to respiratory therapy. They've cut the pain clinic. Other beds and service cuts have followed. But now at least they have a balanced hospital budget, after removing significant and important services to the public.

Guelph General Hospital closed its pain clinic and cut 30 staff and 16 beds.

In Kitchener, St. Mary's General Hospital closed inpatient rehabilitation beds, and they recently lost their outpatient physiotherapy clinic.

In Kingston: huge hospital deficits—around \$14 million—and the loss of 157 full-time positions. Closure of 20 beds is planned.

One could go on for a very long time. One could go on for the full 40 minutes and then some. But the reality is that even when you go through all those details, all the

details that are publicly available, we know that there's a lot more to find, that the situation we find at the moment is not transparent, and that in fact we need oversight, an assessment of what's being done with our precious health care dollars.

We hope today that there will be a full examination of the eHealth scandal that flows out of today's debate. Ontarians are tired of the games they've been subjected to. They want answers.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Just to let you know, I will not be supporting the need for a public inquiry. This isn't because we don't agree that there have been some serious problems at eHealth and its predecessor agencies. Clearly, their practices around procurement and sole-source consulting were just simply not acceptable. Because they were not acceptable, we have accepted the recommendations from the Auditor General's report. We have changed sole-sourcing requirements, or at least said, "You can't sole-source." We have changed expensing, expense rules and salary disclosure rules.

So, yes, there is a problem. We recognize there has been a problem. We have been dealing with fixing the problem.

However, part of that, getting to the root of it, is asking the Auditor General to do a report. The Auditor General was working with the federal Auditor General to look at the whole area of eHealth records. The Minister of Health at the time asked the Auditor General to look at it, and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts asked the Auditor General to look at it. As a result of that, he did in fact table an extremely thorough report. We have the report and we've been looking at it in public accounts.

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One of the things that I found really interesting was being able to sort out in fact where the money had been spent, because there has been a lot of implication that this \$1 billion was misspent at eHealth Ontario. In fact, what the auditor identifies when he looks at the figures, where that \$1 billion comes from, is an effort that started back in 2002 with something called Smart Systems for Health that was actually set up by the Conservative government of the day, in co-operation with the federal government. I'm not criticizing them for setting this up. Smart Systems for Health actually spent \$817 million of the money in question. The Ministry of Health spent the bulk of the rest of the money working on applications. In fact, at the time the auditor was looking at the up-to-date figures, or at least the figures that he had up to the end of 2008-09, eHealth had only spent \$20 million of that. So there's a total misconception about where the money was spent.

But what's also interesting is whether we got anything for that money, because the headlines have indicated, and certainly the opposition has fed into that, that somehow this whole \$1 billion was wasted and we didn't get anything for it.

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: No, the auditor did not say—

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: No, the auditor did not say that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Oxford.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Let me tell you what the auditor actually said instead of us standing here arguing about it, because I was at his press conference; I've been there at public accounts. So I asked him, "Was there \$1 billion wasted? Because that isn't what I heard you say, Auditor." The auditor went on to say, "Yes. I think what I said was that in our opinion, we didn't get full value for money for the \$1 billion." We all agree on that. "I have seen that headline as well: 'Auditor Says \$1 Billion Was Wasted.' That would be going too far. We basically felt that there is some value that is going to be realized from some of that money, certainly on the infrastructure side"—

Interjections.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: —with the \$800-million eHealth highway, and that the applications were useful.

I want to give you a really quick example of something that worked. In my community, the eHealth highway matters, because for the rural areas there is no high-speed Internet, so getting that electronic highway in place mattered. Once that happened, one of the first applications was the diagnostic imaging application. Up to that time, if you went to a hospital in Wellington county, you might be able to get an X-ray, and a simple fracture could be read by the doc on call, but if you had a more complicated issue, either the X-ray film had to go to Guelph to be read or the patient had to go to Guelph, because there was no capacity. As soon as this system came into place, they started to do the X-rays in the rural hospital, transmit them digitally to Guelph, and have them read in Guelph by the Guelph radiologist.

In fact, in a week or so we're having the opening of a CT scanner in Fergus, and it's because of eHealth. They can do the CT in Fergus and it can be digitally transmitted to the radiologist in Guelph. That's eHealth at work for patients in Ontario.

So what do these folks over here want to know? What they want to know is, was the money wasted? The auditor says we didn't get full value for money, but we did get some good stuff.

Was there party politics? Well, let me tell you what the auditor said about that. He said, "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work." They knew that was the allegation, but "we saw no evidence of this."

Interjection: What's the page number?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Page 11. "Allegations that the agency showed favouritism in awarding some of these contracts are ... true." So he did say there was favour-

itism. “In our opinion, the CEO’s”—and he’s talking about Kramer, the CEO of eHealth—“prior relationships with a number of the firms and individuals were one of the factors in her hiring and procurement decisions, and this does constitute favouritism.”

We know the answer: It wasn’t political; it was personal favouritism.

Well, then the opposition says, “We have to get to the bottom of this. It’s illegal.” The auditor has said quite clearly there is no evidence of anything illegal. “I have no information”—

Interjections.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes, he did. He said that he had seen no evidence that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Guelph, just a moment. Earlier in the debate there was attention paid to those who had the floor. That seems to be waning a bit, and I don’t want to see it get any worse. The member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Just let me wrap up by saying that we have a report. The Leader of the Opposition asked for answers. There are 50 pages of answers in this report. The problem the opposition has is that they don’t like the answers. We don’t need another report; we need to pay attention to the Auditor General.

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

Mr. John Yakubuski: It’s my pleasure to support this motion by our leader, Tim Hudak, in order to bring this government to account.

It’s interesting, in the course of questioning over the last few weeks, it has been clear that Premier McGuinty, when he was in opposition, called for a public inquiry almost daily when he thought there was something the government was not disclosing to the opposition. In fact, our research shows that he asked for it even more often than Mr. Hudak asked in his questions last week. In fact, the story goes that one day, while he was having a snooze in here, somebody bumped into his chair—

Mr. Robert Bailey: You’re kidding.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Yes, and Dalton woke up and said, “I demand a public inquiry.” Those were the first words he uttered as he arose from his slumber because he was so conditioned to demanding a public inquiry on a daily basis in this chamber when he was in opposition. In fact, he also complimented the famous Mr. Dithers, Paul Martin, then Prime Minister of Canada, for calling the Gomery inquiry, and that was about \$100 million, \$150 million; this is \$1 billion. The people of Ontario want to know where their money went. This is not us; this is the people of Ontario, who want to know what happened to the \$1 billion at eHealth.

It is interesting that the member for Guelph wants to get into the words of the Auditor General, but they only want to quote the words that they want. I’ve also seen the transcripts from the hearings with the Auditor General. He goes into the several hundred millions of dollars when he talks about the money that has been misspent at eHealth, but he also talks about the fact that the scope

and ability of his mandate to go beyond the curtain, so to speak, is limited, if it’s there at all. He can only follow the paper that he is given by the government.

When you start to see things coming up every day that show that there was a concerted effort to deny the public the information that they have the right to, then the only way we can get at that truth is through a public inquiry. This government refuses to grant that public inquiry, which goes against everything that they ever said when they were in opposition. There are so many unanswered questions. The Auditor General cannot ask the questions. In spite of what they want to tell you, he can’t ask the questions.

There’s a great deal of difference in the way the federal government operates with regard to committee and the way the province operates. In the committee structure in the federal government, the opposition controls the majority on the committee; in the province, it is dominated by the government. In the federal Parliament, they can call and subpoena witnesses; in our system, we can’t. We asked for that. In a motion today in the public accounts committee, when it was put to the committee to call Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson, two people who used to be a part of this mess and who might be able to shed some light on to it, Ms. Sandals, Mr. Leal, Mr. McNeely, Mr. Ramsay, and Mr. Zimmer, who spoke earlier, all voted against it. They shut down the public’s right to a fair hearing and information from these key people.

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It is interesting that a couple of weeks ago, when we had an opposition day motion to open up the committee, Mr. Zimmer seemed to think that that was exactly what the committee was going to do: “The standing committee already plans to review eHealth when the Auditor General reports. That report is going to be available next week and, as with previous hearings in the past, the committee will hear from witnesses,” only the witnesses that this Liberal government, this Liberal Party and the Liberal Premier, who is hiding, want to hear from. The people whom the people of Ontario want to hear from, who can shed light on this scandal of \$1 billion of their money, are being denied access to that committee. The people of Ontario and those listening have to understand that the only way we can bring people before the committee is to allow the subcommittee on the committee to change the rules by which they bring in witnesses; otherwise, we on the committee are powerless. The opposition does not have enough votes. It’s a skewed system.

It’s totally wrong that this government has the majority on the only committee that can hold their feet to the fire and bring them to public account on this issue, but the opposition is neutered. The members of this government, the trained seals who do whatever the Premier tells them to do, go into those committee meetings and just nod, “Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full; whatever the Premier’s office wants us to do.” You see, there are two kinds of people on the government side. There are those who sit in cabinet and have the fancy limousine and want

to keep it, and there are those who want to be in cabinet and get that fancy limousine, and either one of them is only ever going to achieve that goal if they do whatever Dalton McGuinty tells them to do.

Now, there are a couple of people who are exempt from that. One of them is George Smitherman, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. But you see, he was the Minister of Health when \$837 million of the \$1 billion was spent, and yet he still sits—he's quiet these days, though, have you noticed? I don't think he wants to upset the people in Toronto. He wants to stay kind of under the radar, or maybe like he is in a tunnel to the island airport. No, he'd be against that, like David Miller.

I'm going to pass this on to some of my other colleagues, but this party is incensed that they have taken advantage of every opportunity to block the people's right to the facts and the truth, and put the opposition in a position where we cannot exercise democracy in this House. It's a shame. Something should be changed, and what could start it is that these people could stand up and say, "Do you know what? It's \$1 billion, it's taxpayers' money and we have every responsibility to get to the truth, even if it points some fingers back at our Liberal friends."

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand in my place and speak on the motion on eHealth brought by the opposition leader. I was listening to my friend opposite speak for quite some time. He was talking about eHealth and many different issues. I know this issue is very complex and has been addressed a long time ago, in 2000, when the federal government and all the provinces and territories came together to establish electronic health records to save the health care budget around the nation more than \$6 billion on a yearly basis. Since that time, many different governments came and tried to address this issue.

This issue is very complex. I was reading the report of the Auditor General. I was shocked when I learned how many procedures: 2,000 health care transactions every minute in Canada, 1 billion transactions each year, including 440 million laboratory tests, 382 million drug prescriptions, 332 million visits to physicians, 35 million diagnostic images and 2.58 million in-patient hospitalizations. So this is a very complex issue, and so many people enter this domain. That's why the complexity came, because we need a lot of technology to warehouse and transfer all of this information.

I know that our government committed to this cause, and since we came to office, we've been trying to work hard to establish electronic health records because it's good for the people of Ontario, good for the patients of Ontario, good for the taxpayers.

Then, when the whole issue about eHealth erupted, due to transparency and due to respect for the people of Ontario, our Premier Dalton McGuinty called the Auditor General and asked him to conduct a report about this issue. As a result of that, he came out with his report;

everybody knows about the report that came out not too long ago from the Auditor General.

As a government, we believe strongly in accountability and transparency. We accept all these recommendations and we're trying, as we are in office, to implement them step by step because I think we owe respect to the people of Ontario who gave us the chance and the honour to serve on their behalf, to manage health care, education and many different issues in the province of Ontario.

The honourable members across the way are talking about accountability. If we were running away from accountability, we wouldn't have called the Auditor General to open our books. Our books are open on a regular basis to any audit because we believe the taxpayers have a right to know what's going on in every ministry, in every issue in the province of Ontario.

As you know, when we work in this area, as I mentioned, it's very complex, with many millions of transactions. It's a huge ministry with about 4,000 employees. We serve many, many patients across the province of Ontario, many doctors, many hospitals—this is very complex. That's why—as the Auditor General mentioned many, many times, no money was missing or stolen. The whole issue is oversight by the Minister of Health. That's why the Minister of Health took full responsibility and resigned, because we believe strongly in our responsibility for whatever actions happen under our mandate.

I think there's no need for an inquiry because an inquiry's going to cost a lot of money and take a lot of time, since the Auditor General came with a detailed report outlining every step of the way, since the year 2000 until today, how the money has been spent and how many transactions have been done. That's why we accepted the recommendations, and we promised the people of Ontario, as a government—our Premier, our Minister of Health and all the people who serve in this government—to fully implement all recommendations, because it's in our interest as a government to protect taxpayers' money, to implement every step of the way, and we're trying to utilize every tax dollar we have to serve the people of Ontario.

As you know, we are an aging society and these days many people are getting older. That's why we require a lot of money to support our aging society. Nobody knows what's going to happen with the flu that we're facing in the province of Ontario. I learned that it's going to cost \$650 million. We never budgeted for that. This pandemic and these circumstances we're facing today, we have to be ready for them on a daily basis, to face all the circumstances that might come in the future.

That's why, by implementing the Ontario electronic health record initiative to monitor the health care system across the province of Ontario, we would be able to save lots of money because, as you know—Mr. Speaker, probably you know it. You are not from Toronto. I'm not from Toronto. If we get sick here and go to the hospital, they have to conduct all the health reviews again for us and ask us to do many different tests, which we don't

need because we've already been tested. But if we have electronic health records, the hospital we go to outside our jurisdiction will be able to tell us what's wrong with us or what test we did and what kind of complexity we have.

That's why I think it's important to continue despite all these obstacles, because we're determined as a province, as a government, to continue in that direction because it's a good thing for the people of Ontario and a good thing for the taxpayers. That's why we respect all the people who gave us the chance and the privilege to be here to act on their behalf and protect their interests, whether in health care, education, social infrastructure or social issues, because I think we have the mandate and we're going to do whatever we can to protect that right and also to serve the people of Ontario.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to stand in my place and speak against this motion brought by the opposition, because it does not mean any more—what we did in terms of accountability and transparency.

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

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Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today to speak in support of this motion. I find it more than moderately strange that various Liberal members have gotten to the point where they're waving copies of the Auditor General's report at us and suggesting that that in itself is a fait accompli, that everything is done.

If you, like me and most members of the Legislature this week, paid any attention whatsoever to the political polls that have been published, and there have been a few of them—I ordinarily don't, but there's something I'd like to quote here from the Ipsos Reid poll on the Ontario political scene. The National Post earlier in the week, on Monday, said this: "While the poll found McGuinty has been able to mute the blame for the recent scandals, with only 35% of Ontarians pointing the finger directly at the Premier and his ministers, 58% believe the Liberal government has not done enough to 'deal with the circumstances' of the scandals." So it isn't about whether Mr. Hudak says we need an inquiry and it isn't about whether I say we need an inquiry, it's about the fact that Ontarians believe that we need an inquiry, because they, like us, don't believe that the Auditor General's report is satisfactory. And I don't believe that the Auditor General believes that he has been able to investigate to the extent that he had to.

The way that this government governs is contrary to nature. In nature, when we see something that we think needs correction, we go about the business of correcting it. Their refusal to listen to our demands for a public inquiry into the eHealth scandal is inexplicable. It is unacceptable to me, it is unacceptable to the entire opposition, and again, it is unacceptable to the people of Ontario.

Is the government's refusal to open a full inquiry into the eHealth scandal McGuinty's way of circling the wagons? Is the Premier choosing to protect his own,

rather than do what is right for Ontarians? Those are the two valid questions that this inquiry seeks to answer.

With a billion dollars of taxpayers' money squandered on a web of Liberal friends and insiders, a public inquiry is needed to answer the questions that the Auditor General could not address in the scope of his work.

I'd like to quote from page 7 of the Auditor General's report. He says, "I first wrote to the deputy minister in the late summer of 2008, advising him of this audit. I stated that the EHR was to be the subject of the audit. We had planned on starting fieldwork in the fall. As our planning proceeded, we requested access to the ministry's eHealth program branch office and working accommodations for our field auditors, as is our normal practice. Despite repeated efforts over the course of several months, we were granted neither access nor accommodations until early February 2009"—more than a veiled allusion to the fact that the work was thwarted for as long as it was possible to be thwarted by the people in the ministry who were the subject of investigations.

What was the role of cabinet ministers, including George Smitherman, who oversaw much of the waste and scandal at eHealth and even retained responsibilities for a portion of eHealth after he was shuffled? Minister Smitherman boasted he was the longest-serving health minister in the last quarter-century in the province of Ontario. Meanwhile, you throw David Caplan under the bus for taking 22% of the responsibility. The remainder was on Smitherman's watch, and he sits there and drives it.

It just goes to show you that it's never quantity in years; it's about quality of work, a concept that the Liberal government has difficulty with in other areas of governance as well, whether that's the economy or education or the environment.

"Spend a lot" is not the same as "spend well." So when you wave those copies of the Auditor General's report at us, don't expect us to buy that as the end of this. Don't expect Ontarians to buy it, either.

Inquiring minds want to know: What was the past quarter-century's longest-serving health minister doing in the five years that he spent overseeing eHealth? That's what we want to know. George Smitherman presided over 78% of the spending abuses at eHealth. That's \$837 million of taxpayer money wasted. David Caplan, as I mentioned, was there for 22% of it.

Minister Smitherman is still heading a top-tier Ontario ministry, energy and infrastructure. David Caplan took the fall for his own mistakes and his predecessor's, and he resigned. And then Captain McGuinty rearranged the deck chairs on the Titanic.

Is this the McGuinty standard? Can we expect the same value for our money when it comes to building infrastructure? Will advancement in environmental projects in this province be hampered by the types of abuses that the Auditor General uncovered at eHealth? Time will tell, but Ontario cannot afford to take that chance. That's why we need a full and a proper inquiry. We cannot afford to gamble with Ontario's future.

There's something else that I'd like to deal with before I pass the torch to another one of our speakers, and that is the issue of what happened this morning in public accounts. The member from Willowdale, a neighbouring riding to mine, had been dealing with the issue of whether or not witnesses would be called once there was an Auditor General's report to deal with. I'd like to quote from the Hansard. Prior to the issuance of the report, the member from Willowdale said, "The standing committee already plans to review eHealth when the Auditor General reports. That report is going to be available next week and, as with previous hearings in the past, the committee will hear from witnesses.... The public accounts committee will deal with the Auditor General's report in the course of its mandate. So it raises the question, then, why is the opposition party bringing this motion? What they're asking for is already going to happen."

As we now know, it didn't, because he was one of these infamous five this morning who voted down any option to hear witnesses, which was being called for by both of the opposition parties. I've got to tell you, I happen to know two people named Steve and Jane Kerper who run the Progressive Conservative riding association in Willowdale, a very well-funded, well-organized Progressive Conservative organization. I'd like to tell the member from Willowdale that we'll be watching, because in 2011 there's an election coming, and we'll be very well-organized and very happy to send the member from Willowdale back to the practice of law.

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

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join the debate this afternoon and talk about the opposition day motion. I'm going to do it without any huffing and puffing or finger pointing. I'm going to be very calm, and I'm going to just stay with the facts and what we know.

We know this did not happen overnight. We know that what we must do is learn from the past. We know that Santayana says that if we don't learn from the past, we're condemned to repeat it. Well, I'll tell you something: We are not going to repeat the past that began under another government. This government is addressing the eHealth issue.

As a vice-principal, when students would come into my office and they had experienced trauma or difficulty in their lives, I always said to the students, "Do you know what? It's how you deal with the problem that builds character." Let me tell you something about the character of this McGuinty government. We are dealing with this problem. On October 7, the Auditor General filed a report. Immediately, the McGuinty government reacted to the report, accepted the report in its entirety and committed to implementing all of the auditor's recommendations.

The Auditor General shone a light on some significant issues, and we thank him for that. The lessons we learned through eHealth Ontario and this audit have helped us to improve procurement and expense policies across government. We have an avowed commitment to protect

taxpayers from the misuse and misappropriation of funds. We have established solid new rules and regulations that will ensure proper governance and accountability.

Our investments in electronic health records management are significant but very valuable in how they will greatly improve our health care system. They will ultimately result in better patient care, in more efficient health care services and more efficient health care delivery for all Ontarians. We remain committed to ensuring that the money that we spend on eHealth is devoted to initiatives that will strengthen and modernize the province's health care system.

I wanted to go specifically to the recommendations of the auditor. Recommendation 1 surrounds eHealth Ontario. The recommendation is that they "should develop a comprehensive strategic plan that specifically addresses the electronic health record (EHR) target, takes Ontario beyond 2012, and lays out a path for the implementation of the EHR by 2015." The auditor's recommendation says, "The plan should also address the challenge of ensuring that the disparate EHR applications are appropriately integrated and that suitable privacy controls are built into the development process."

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So what does that mean? Well, let's talk about the government's immediate response. Prior to this, in 2007, the government announced it would develop an electronic health record for all Ontarians by 2015. So that is complete. The 2009 Ontario budget also provided approximately \$2 billion over the next three years to allow the province to move ahead, of course, in a coordinated and a meaningful way.

Ontario's plan towards an electronic health record, or an EHR, has three components, and I just wanted to briefly go over those components. What I'm doing is building towards a local example and a local success story, because at the end of the day, that's what this is about. We've heard all parties say here, "That's what we're here for. We're here to represent our constituents." In my case, it's the constituents of the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. We're here to make sure that we are delivering the best possible services in this province for our constituents—in this case, health care. So I want to highlight that with a local example.

The third part of the first recommendation:

"Ontario has directed its efforts toward all three areas. As have other jurisdictions, Ontario has decided to use a specific clinical priority—diabetes—as a focus point in the creation of an EHR. Achieving EHRs for diabetes patients will provide a foundation for achieving EHRs for patients with other chronic diseases. From there, EHRs can be extended to all Ontarians.

"The ministry recognizes that more work is required to meet the government's commitment to an EHR for all Ontarians by 2015, and will continue to work with eHealth Ontario to meet this commitment."

That said, I wanted to go to an example. Bill Davidson is the executive director of Langs Farm Village Association. Bill Davidson and I had the opportunity to serve

on the community safety and crime prevention council of Waterloo region. The example that I'm giving is exactly supporting not only the Auditor General's recommendation, but the fact that this government, the McGuinty Liberal government, is implementing this already in our communities across Ontario—and I stand here proudly to say that that's happening in my area as well.

Bill Davidson proudly represents, as the executive director, the Langs Farm Village Association, which is an association that's been around for 30 years. It started in 1978. It's serving the community and neighbourhoods, and doing great things. He draws our attention to the Ontario telehomecare phase one program, which is part of the OTN, the Ontario Telemedicine Network. It's funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care eHealth liaison branch, which focuses on congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive lung disease, and has demonstrated the effectiveness of using communication technology to enable health care providers.

What eHealth and this type of communication allows is to provide education and monitoring of clients with chronic conditions. It allows and engages clients to improve their ability to self-manage—to self-manage their condition, and to do it in a way that they are still connected—to decrease the utilization of emergency room visits, and to decrease the utilization of hospital admissions and visits to medical physicians. I really want to stress that in the pilot program that's going on, there was a 72% to 74% reduction in emergency department visits, as reported by the patients themselves in this pilot.

An individual with type 2 diabetes would be given a telehomecare device that links to their phone line to monitor their condition, thereby increasing the ability of the patient to manage their care. Again, all of this is part of exactly recommendation 1 of the auditor's report. A registered nurse would also monitor the results, refer the patient to the family doctor or any other health care provider, as needed.

I want to give you an exact quote from Bill Davidson, the executive director. Bill says:

“Building on the success of the phase one program, the Lang's Farm Community Health Centre, Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre and Woolwich Community Health Centre are hoping to adopt the methodology/model to deliver remote care and monitoring to clients with diabetes.”

I thank Bill for that because what that means for all of us, and especially my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, is that the ability to connect patients through the electronic system, the use of the technology and the ability to teach patients to self-monitor is really moving along the road that we need to continue to move along in order to provide all Ontarians with the support and the health care that they not only need but that they deserve.

Finally, I thought that it would be worth looking at some things that are already happening, some successes that we are already experiencing. More than a million children have electronic health records, and I'm not sure that a lot of people in the province really understand that.

More than a million children already have electronic health records. Since 2005, more than four million Ontarians are already participating in the electronic medical records program, run in partnership between the province and the OMA, the Ontario Medical Association. Since 2008, 80,000 Ontarians are in a pilot project for ePrescribing, which, at the end of the day, is saving lives.

So I think it's important that we stop finger-pointing, that we accept that a lot is being done. The auditor has delivered a top-notch report. We have accepted all aspects of the report and the recommendations. This government has already been moving forward on initiatives that I highlight here, great things happening in the province. Those people who are pointing fingers and huffing and puffing really need to go back and take another look at the great things, these statistics that are happening across the province, the patients' lives that are being saved. Let's never lose sight of that fact. Whether they're in a rural area in Ontario, whether they live in an urban centre, this electronic health record system—it's filmless in hospitals; it needs to be done. We are getting through this, and at the end of the day it's what right for all Ontarians.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to stand on the opposition day motion that our leader, Tim Hudak, moved, trying to bring some accountability to the Auditor General's report but more specifically, the scandalous spending, much of it unaccountable in eHealth, and arguably in other areas as well.

I guess it comes down fundamentally to a matter of trust of a government that seems to be operating from one side of the spectrum to the other, and even to the extent of the scandalous level of spending that's going on not just in the obvious areas where the auditor has most recently said there was \$1 billion spent. I really feel that the important part is to look at what other third parties are saying.

If you look recently at the articles in the Toronto media, starting with one here—it's October 17, and it reads:

“Canada's Worst Government,” and it goes on to state how this government's matter of trust, the Liberal government says—I'm reading here—“The Liberal regime of Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, now slipping into deep deficits that are likely to exceed \$30 billion ... and ... into the future, has hit the tipping point and triggered its candidacy as Canada's worst government.” Quite honestly, when you look through this article, they go on and spell out some of the improper decisions that really augment the strength of that “Canada's worst government” argument.

There is another one on the 27th of October. The article—it's a well-written article—says, “The Ontario government wants to blame record deficits on recession, but their spending is the problem.” The title of this article here is “Dalton McSpenny.” It's quite an interesting article. It goes on to explain—and this is where the

element of trust comes into it. He says that Premier McGuinty last week pegged this province's deficit at \$24.7 billion, with an added deficit of \$21.1 billion and \$19.4 billion forecast for the next two fiscal years.

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This is going to be a continual saga of operating deficits, and there's a lack of a plan to recover from this. Even the addition of the education announcement for early learning announced \$500 million and as much as \$1.5 billion additional spending at a time when they can't afford the services we have now.

But the important part of that is they have no intention of addressing the spending problem they have. In fact, this article goes on and say, "By all accounts, the growth in government spending in Ontario has been startling. During its first term, Premier McGuinty's government ramped up spending from \$73.9 billion in 2003-04 to \$96.5 billion in 2007-08, an increase of more than 30%.

"To finance its four-year spending spree and move from a significant deficit..." all the way through has an indication that they really do have a serious spending problem. They haven't met a promise that they couldn't break, and all of the promises they make include spending more money. That's the problem. If you look at the reality in the economy—not just in eHealth, the wasteful, scandalous spending of \$1 billion that we're calling for a full public inquiry on. We should give free rein to the Auditor General of the province of Ontario to bring into account if this spending is value for money based.

What is the plan here for energy prices going up? Auto insurance premiums are going up. They're cutting transfer payments to municipalities we've learned today. The list goes on of spending more and actually getting less.

We're seeing it in my riding in health care more specifically. They just announced a restructuring in the Lakeridge Corp., a shortfall of some \$13 million. This means nurses being cut. This means procedures being cut.

We've heard about the children's aid society. Every children's aid in the province is short funding. We see all of the core issues being savaged, while at the same time they're announcing more spending in programs that won't happen until 2015-16. There will be two elections before that period.

So it's a matter of trust, as I started saying at the beginning. Can you trust anything they're saying? They're wandering around without a plan. They're on a spending spree by any measure, by any report, and there's another one I want to put on the record, "Deficit-Saddled Ontario Shuns Sweeping Cuts." It says right here they have no plan. That's the Toronto Star. This is a Liberal-friendly document—"has no plan to make any cuts."

All I can say in defence of our call for a public inquiry is that we must call on this Premier over and over again—I call on the people of Ontario to call on the Liberal members who, in the committee, denied a full disclosure in the public accounts committee. Mr. Leal, the member from Peterborough, will be speaking this

afternoon. He knows full well that he was told by Premier McGuinty's office, or the staff itself, to vote down having any more witnesses to bring any more clarity to this issue.

The case has been made. We need a full public hearing and a full public inquiry on this important issue of overspending in eHealth and other areas.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The clock will be stopped for just a moment as I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act / *Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines.*

Bill 183, An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades / *Projet de loi 183, Loi visant à réviser et à moderniser le droit relatif à la formation en apprentissage et aux qualifications professionnelles et à créer l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario.*

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I just want to take a minute or so to engage in debate on this opposition day motion. I've been listening attentively to the opposition about their request today and all the wrongdoings. I just want to say that this is a legacy that we found ourselves with; it wasn't started by this government. Yes, the Auditor General, under our watch—we moved forward. We asked the Auditor General to get to the bottom of it. He made some recommendations. We, as the government, accept our responsibility, as any government should do, not to hide behind those kinds of recommendations. They're implemented.

I will say that we've put some laws in place that go even further than what was there before. Although some regulatory regime was there in the past, this will only strengthen that.

They refer to "the \$1-billion boondoggle." I think experts have come forward—and I'm talking about experts here on the ground. I spoke to my own doctor and to some officials from the health delivery community. They tell us that the majority of the money that was spent was on pieces of the puzzle for eHealth that are going to deliver us the full package down the road.

Yes, there has been some waste, and I think anybody would admit to that. We're getting down to the nitty-

gritty of that. Do we need to spend more time and money? I think we need to move forward.

The purpose of this motion is typical of the opposition—to try to stall things and to make some political hay. The thing we're talking about here is the health and the well-being of Ontarians.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: It is somewhat with sadness that I rise to speak to this opposition day motion. It really shouldn't be needed. However, we all know—everyone in this House knows—that some serious questions remain, questions that call for this government to implement a commission of inquiry. We have a Public Inquiries Act for a reason. We have this legislation. On occasion, there are times in the history of this province when that legislation has to be acted upon.

When you get questions that are floating out there about price-fixing, not only in this House but elsewhere in Ontario and throughout our ridings, questions about bid-rigging of contracts, not only at eHealth but also at the Ministry of Health, that provides reason right there to make use of the Public Inquiries Act.

At the end of the day, Ontario families have had their money blown by a government that seems to spend money first and ask questions later. I think we all realize in this House the value of a public inquiry, and to my view, in many ways it's just that: It's public. It can be a way to find out, in a very public way, with public participation in the process and in the hearings—very simply to not only find out what happened, to look back, but it also gives us an opportunity to look forward and it gives this government—it gives our society, really—an opportunity to deliberate on reform, to ensure that something like this doesn't happen again.

We hear words like “transparency” and “accountability.” That can be achieved definitively through a public inquiry. These are two things that people expect of their government.

Regrettably, the behaviour so far of this government has given people in our province every right to really feel cynical about politicians, and I'm referring to members on all sides of the House because we're all part of this if we continue, on the government side, to see this blocked or if we don't speak up in opposition.

Two scandals involving Liberal friends and insiders, involving billions of taxpayer dollars that were squandered, contribute to the figure we just heard yesterday, the \$24.7-billion deficit.

1710

In my mind, clearly a public inquiry is needed to answer the kinds of questions the Auditor General could not address through his deliberations.

I'll quote Auditor General McCarter: “In our opinion, the allegations that contracts were awarded to certain consultants and vendors without giving other firms the chance to compete for the business are largely true.” These are not my words; these are the words of Auditor General McCarter. “In fact, we estimate,” he goes on to

say, “that two thirds of the value of all eHealth Ontario contracts was sole-sourced. Allegations that the agency showed favouritism in awarding some of these contracts are also true.” Again, not my words; these are direct quotes from Auditor General McCarter.

Sure, the health minister has resigned. He's not the only one, clearly, who has had problems looking after the purse. Quite honestly, on his resignation, I fully expected the former Minister of Health to step down as well, the reason being that many of the biggest abuses of taxpayer money occurred under the eye of Minister Smitherman. As McCarter notes, under both ministers Caplan and Smitherman the eHealth program was rife with problems. Together, they helped create somewhat of a consultant free-for-all, with millions going out the door to pay fees for which virtually no or little accountability was demanded.

I'll quote further: “By 2008, the branch was engaging more than 300 consultants compared to fewer than 30 full-time ministry employees.... Consultants were not only managing other consultants but also at times had the authority to hire more consultants, sometimes from their own firm.”

As well, the former health minister was not alone in approving a massive, \$30-million eHealth Ontario contract to Liberal friends at IBM. Fellow caucus members—Dwight Duncan, Gerry Phillips, Monique Smith, Ted McMeekin and Michael Chan—also sat on that cabinet committee and gave their nod, their wink, with respect to approval.

So what bothers me and what bothers many people I talk to in my riding is the lack of accountability underlying a seeming culture of entitlement and a culture that has allowed \$1 billion in precious health care dollars to be lost forever.

Even the Auditor General's report strongly suggests there may have been deliberate collusion and bid-rigging at eHealth. Clearly the eHealth initiative was designed originally to save us money while creating seamless, speedy access to individual health information. So far, as we know, it has cost us \$1 billion and left us with virtually nothing. This makes gun registration look credible.

I really should remind everyone here—the story gets worse—that the same day the Auditor General's report came out, we got word that the Cancer Care Ontario audit showed that that provincial agency handed out consulting contracts in the same questionable ways as eHealth. It gave a consulting firm \$18.7 million in deals over two years, some in the form of so-called follow-on agreements, a practice that allowed them to be added to the current contract without, again, being open to bid.

The Auditor General's report highlights the role of the powerful Management Board of Cabinet in waiving the rules relating to these untendered contracts in August of 2008. Again, a public inquiry is an opportunity to fully investigate how extensively members of Management Board were involved in the eHealth scandal.

The Auditor General himself reported incidents of overt obstruction of his probe by officials of the

McGuinty government. To me, this represents potentially a massive abuse of power, again, that requires an independent probe. We need to find out what really went on.

The Auditor General's probe lacked the mandate and resources to fully look at Liberal affiliations of the individuals involved or to conclusively determine which individuals made personal financial gains. Again, things like this can come out in a public inquiry.

While he was in opposition, Mr. McGuinty was not shy about pushing for public inquiries. So merely admitting that you've made "some mistakes," when there are billions of dollars that have been wasted, is simply not good enough.

Given the potentially criminal behaviour hinted at in the Auditor General's report, including potential collusion, bid-rigging, as well as instances of overt obstruction of the Auditor General's probe, in my view, in the view of the opposition, only an independent, neutral, objective, impartial public inquiry with a full mandate to subpoena testimony and documents will provide the kinds of answers that people in this great province of Ontario require.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Beaches-East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you. I was looking for my colleague; I didn't see him here.

I have been listening to this debate for most of the afternoon. I did not stand up before because I didn't know exactly how to deal with this. I am in some considerable agreement with what has been put forward in the motion, but I also understand the reluctance of some members of this House to support it.

This motion is calling for a number of things, some of which I support, some of which I do not; some of which I believe, some of which I do not. What I do think is necessary, though, is the fourth part of the motion, whether there were affiliations between the Liberal Party of Ontario and persons involved in the eHealth scandal, including but not limited to former political staff in the offices of Premier McGuinty and Minister Smitherman. I do believe that that needs to be explored, because the auditor was very clear in his report that he did not have a mandate. He did not have a blind eye, but he did not have a mandate to look at that. Mostly what I hear from people, mostly that which is swirling around outside of this Legislature, involves this.

I will categorically state that I believe that the people who work in this Legislature are honourable. I do not believe that any of them have a criminal intent. I do not believe that any of them deliberately tried to price-fix or bid-rig. I do not believe that any of them went forward knowingly and purposely trying to have untendered contracts. And I don't believe that any of them attempted, wilfully, to obstruct the Auditor General.

I do understand why this has been put forward, but I think that in putting forward this kind of argument, it demeans this Legislature. It demeans the men and women who work in this Legislature. It demeans me in opposition, because when I walk out into the streets and go into Beaches-East York or travel around this great province, the feeling about politicians is not the same feeling that people had 10, 20 or 50 years ago. I remember a time—and I'm not that old—when the men and women who came to this Legislature were the absolute epitome of what every community could send. They were the men and women who were the voice of reason. They were the men and women who talked the great issues of the day and helped to make the decisions of people who could not afford the luxury or the time or even some who had the education to understand the complex issues.

I am not going to be supporting this resolution because it says that someone acting in good faith—and I believe they all acted in good faith—did something that was improper. I am only going to support this resolution for the last item, and that is because I think people out there are demanding to know whether there was favouritism in the awarding of contracts. I certainly need to know that, I certainly want to know that, my constituents want to know that, and I am voicing what I hope is a very reasoned opinion: that this is something that the government should embrace, that this is something that the members on the other side should say, with all honesty, "We have nothing to hide. We need to bring this out so that if it happened, it won't happen again. If it didn't happen, we need to clear the air—that we were not responsible and there was no favouritism given to those who once worked for us, to those who had ties with our government or to those who were our friends." For that reason, I'm going to support the motion.

1720

Having said that, I want to be very clear. I want this to be very well-understood: I cast not a single aspersion on the minister who has resigned; on the Deputy Premier, who was there; or on the Premier, whom I consider to be a man of honesty. I don't know how to say it any more than that.

Everyone in this place tries to do the best they can. Sometimes they don't. That is my job in opposition. The people have determined that I am not to be in a government; we only got 10 seats. My job is to stand here each and every day and hold the government to account.

I am going to vote for this motion because that is my job: to hold this government to account, not to make wild and outlandish statements, not to impugn people's motives, but to hold the government to account.

The reason I think I need to hold them to account is because everything that has unfolded—the very first day when this so-called scandal broke in the paper, I remember clearly what broke. What broke was that one of the consultants expensed tea at Tim Hortons for \$1.65. What broke that day was that there was \$3.99 for Choco Bites; somebody spent \$30 for a car wash; and there were child care expenses that weren't really the way they were sup-

posed to be. That was day one. I remember, on that day, wondering what was going on, never imagining how this would unfold.

I want to take a couple of minutes to say how it unfolded and why it continues to cause me, as a member in opposition, and my constituents, who sent me to this august and wonderful place, to question and to be concerned.

Since that day and what was a relatively minor first revelation, we have learned the following: In the days that followed, we heard about \$3,000-a-day fees that were charged by some of the consultants. We heard about a speech that was written by a consultant that cost \$25,000. After that, we learned about a \$317,000 severance package to eHealth's CEO.

The auditor revealed even more troubling things. The auditor revealed that there were 300 consultants and 30 ministry staff working on this file, and that the number of consultants went from one in 2002-03 to 328 in 2008-09, with a 10,000% increase in the value of consultant contracts. I think people want to know why this happened.

I think the auditor did a brilliant job. I think the auditor did everything that an auditor could do, given the limited number of his staff and given the mandate that he had and where he was supposed to look.

He also revealed that consultants had been on the payroll for six years, some of them. When I was a federal civil servant all those many years ago in the immigration department, if somebody was hired as a temporary or casual worker and worked there for more than one year, the government had to determine why that person was not brought on payroll as permanent staff, because it was supposed to be for a temporary purpose. It was supposed to be for some expertise that was not necessary in the long run. After one year, you were to be made permanent.

I don't understand how a consultant, at much higher rates of pay than most of the public employees of this province, was able to stay on the payroll for six years, getting consultant fees. I would like some answers to that.

There were other things revealed: that a consultant awarded consulting contracts worth over \$1.3 million to a company he was associated with, so therefore a consultant hired somebody and had the authority to spend \$1.3 million on someone else who was a consultant with whom he was associated; and that there was the sole-source hiring of a consultant firm to help hire 15 management positions.

The auditor revealed that there were millions of dollars paid to untendered consultant contracts, with little to show for it. The auditor, although he didn't come right out and say it in words that I think are concrete enough for one to hang one's hat on, said that there was some kind of a bidding system that was not exactly copacetic, that there was favouritism in awarding contracts. In one bid, senior management awarded a bid to a consultant whose bid was much, much higher—some say as much as five times higher—than the next competitor, and

significantly higher than the budget allowed. The auditor revealed that there was a revolving door between work at the ministry and work as a high-priced consultant and that ministers had failed to oversee eHealth.

The auditor, in the end, came to a conclusion that Ontario is at the back of the pack of electronic health records, and the Auditor General said, "The value of this investment ... has not been realized."

So what we have here is that a whole range of things have happened that people are demanding answers to. I sit in this place every day and I listen to question period. I listen to very tough questions from the leader of the official opposition and from all the people who are members of the official opposition. I hear equally tough questions asked by my colleagues in the NDP, my leader Andrea Horwath and other members of my caucus, asking equally tough questions. I was taught a long time ago that it's called question period but don't expect questions to be—it's not called "answer period" for a reason, because one cannot expect that answers will actually be forthcoming. I wish that sometimes they were, because had the answers been forthcoming, the people's fears would have been assuaged, people would understand what has happened, would accept that perhaps mistakes were made and would go on to the next facet of our lives.

But in fact, that is not what has happened. The reason I believe that the opposition is standing up and asking for this commission is because those questions have not been answered. That's why I think they need to be.

I commend the auditor. I think the auditor did a very good job. I agree with the government members. The auditor did a very good job. But is there more to be asked? That's the question. Is there more to be asked? I believe there is more to be asked, that there are questions that are not being answered that have been asked. They are pushed aside.

Every day when I stand in this place, every day when I listen in this place, I hear answers that I don't want to hear. I know the members opposite are entitled to say them. They say, "When you were in government things were exactly the same. When you were in government or when something happened in 1975, this is what happened then." I don't think the people of Ontario care what happened in 1975. I don't think, honestly, most of them care what happened to the NDP government of 1990-95 and most of them—or, as we get closer, some of them still care, but I would think the overwhelming majority don't care what happened during the Harris and Eves governments that followed.

What they care about is what the men and women in this chamber are doing: Why are they doing it, is it justifiable, can we hear the facts? I don't want to hear blame. I don't want to go back 20 years. Certainly, I wasn't here. I often hear, and I chuckle when they say "when you were in government." I have never been in government. I don't know. I have never been government in this place. I have been here for more than eight years. I have always been on this side. I wasn't here when the

NDP was in government and I don't know what it was like. I don't really know. I was a simple mayor in a medium-sized or rather larger than medium-sized municipality. So I don't think that's the answer I want to hear and I certainly know it's not the answer that the people of Ontario want to hear.

I'm supporting this for a second reason, and that is because the sad reality is that our health care system is under increasing strain. If you go anywhere in this country and you ask people, "What is the thing that makes you proudest to be a Canadian? What is the thing that makes you proudest to be an Ontarian?" they will almost universally tell you, "It's our health care system." They will almost universally say they don't understand the debate that's going on south of the border; they don't understand why President Obama is having such a difficult time convincing Americans to adopt our system, and they almost universally will tell you that they are proud of our health care system. They know it has difficulties. We know it has difficulties. I know that we can make improvements, and that is our job at legislators: to make sure that those improvements are made.

1730

One of the improvements that needs to be made—surely, clearly—is to have an e-health system. We need to computerize and make that system workable for Ontarians. But at the same time, we have to acknowledge what is happening here because of the downturn in the economy, because I think the government really, given the lack of resources and the declining moneys and the increasing deficit and the problems and the complexity of a society such as our own—after all, some people live in an acephalous society or a near-acephalous society where government is limited. We live in a highly complex world where government is literally everywhere and has a key and important role.

In our society, hospitals are facing soaring deficits that have forced them to cut costs even when it's care that suffers. We have witnessed the loss of emergency rooms, maternity wards and physiotherapy services. As these emergency rooms close in small locations, in Niagara region, in Burk's Falls, in Fort Erie—small communities—it is the hospitals in the larger centres that are increasingly straining under the weight as people have to travel to places like Niagara Falls, which are now serving patients in the communities of Port Colborne and Fort Erie because there are not services for them at home. Since the Port Colborne emergency room closed down, the Welland hospital has faced a 20% increase in patients. But these aren't the only communities that have been losing services. This is happening across the province.

The Minister of Health sometimes, I think, plays on the fact or perhaps doesn't answer the question or says, "When you were in government, these same things happened," and tells the Conservatives that they shut down 28 hospitals. But I don't think that's what the people in Port Colborne or Burk's Falls want to hear. They want to know what's happening to their hospital.

There have been cuts in the Soo: 125 renal dialysis patients were discharged because of cuts to the dialysis clinic, five surgical beds closed, and 12 RN positions are to be eliminated in the spring of 2010 at the Sault Area Hospital. That's what's on the horizon.

In Burk's Falls, the urgent care centre has been closed. There are another 28 beds across the Muskoka, Bracebridge and Huntsville areas on the chopping block. Burk's Falls is planning to close all of their acute care beds. There are currently seven. That may not sound like a lot, but to a community like Burk's Falls, that is the difference perhaps to some of life and death.

In Sudbury, the Sudbury Regional Hospital is poised to cut 37 RN positions because of a \$12-million deficit.

We know that at the same time that these are happening in small and medium-sized communities across Ontario, other things are happening which are disquieting. They are upsetting to ordinary people when they read about them. They don't understand that the jewel that is Canada, the jewel that is Ontario, our health care system, is in such disarray, and they don't understand why they can't have the hospital care that they fervently desire and need when other things are happening.

As an example, in London, Diane Beattie, a vice-president at London Health Sciences Centre, was given a \$451,000 severance package for leaving her job after awarding millions of dollars in electronic health record contracts without seeking competitive bids. People look at their hospital shutting, they see that they don't have the care, they see a nurse being let go, and then they see this. They want this question to be answered—they want me to ask it, they want the Conservatives to ask it, and they want the government perhaps to set up a kind of inquiry that will allow this fact to come out: How can you juxtapose the closing of an emergency facility with somebody getting \$451,000 in severance pay? That's in all the newspapers in the London area, and people are incensed.

Or they look at Windsor, where, at the Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital, the neonatal intensive care unit has experienced service reduction, cuts to respiratory therapy, cuts to pain clinics, and other beds and service cuts in order to balance the hospital budget, which they now have. They wonder why all of that had to happen when there are literally millions and billions of dollars that are questionable.

Or why the Guelph General Hospital closed their pain clinic, cut 30 staff and 16 beds; or why the Kitchener St. Mary's General Hospital closed in-patient rehabilitation beds and recently lost their outpatient physiotherapy clinic; or why in Kingston there are huge hospital deficits of \$14 million, the loss of 157 full-time positions and the closure of 20 beds that are planned in the new year; or in Ottawa, where the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario is poised to close six hospital beds and 13 nursing supervisor positions, along with a handful of paramedic and nursing jobs.

Or Quinte Health, located in Belleville and Picton and Trenton: There are rumours circulating in that community—whether true or not, I don't know—that are

being reported in the press that 69 beds are being cut, 79 staff, including nurses, hospital supervisors, and other appointed people who are to be cut. Or in the Cornwall community, where the hospital has closed critical care units and one of two emergency rooms.

But it is not only the hospitals and the hospital-based services that are being cut. We are seeing it all across the system, including the reduction of nurses.

At the same time, we have the whole question of what is happening around eHealth, and we have the question of what happened at the London Health Sciences Centre and Cancer Care Ontario. We have \$1 million a day being paid on consultants. People want to know and they are literally demanding answers. If they are going to have to suffer the loss of something that they hold so dear, what is it that the government is doing? What has gone wrong? How can it be fixed?

I am not looking here to lay blame; I am looking to see how this government, my government, can fix it, because it is my government too. I look to my government for leadership. I look to see what they are going to do and how they are going to do it and the service that they are going to deliver and the mistakes that they are going to rectify. Whether those mistakes began under a previous government or began anew under theirs matters not to me and matters not to the majority of Ontarians. What matters is that the problem is fixed.

Maybe it is time for this government to seriously consider bringing the development of this system back into the public sector. We must learn the lesson of the need for proper accountability mechanisms and responsible procurement policies. I am a firm believer, an unremitting believer, a true believer that the public service provides excellent work and knowledge for a government. I am a firm believer that public employees can do the job as well as or better than anybody you bring from the outside, including legions, myriad legions of consultants. I do not understand this government's penchant for hiring outside people when we have thousands upon thousands of dedicated people who work for this province and who can provide that kind of information.

I go back to my own experience as a mayor, back to a time when there was a call for privatization, and how people said that the private sector could do better and that outside consultants could do better. I want to tell you, never once in my experience of those years did the outside consultants who came in or the people who were contracted out, and those services that were contracted out, compare to the public employees' dedication to job, dedication to the community, and overall knowledge of what needed to be done. It is time that this government saves money, in my view, by going back to those people who have given a lifetime of dedication and service to our community.

But we must also learn the lesson of the need for proper accountability mechanisms and responsible procurement policies. I think that will happen—I know that will happen—if there is a commission that recommends it.

1740

There is no question that building an electronic health records system will require investment. I am willing to make that investment, provided that in the end I see results from that investment that are commensurate with the amount of money we have spent and what we expect from it. I am not willing to make that investment to see the money frittered away on needless consultants and on \$1.65 cups of tea and Choco Bites.

New Democrats want to see wise investment and investment that is based on the needs of patients and the building of a coordinated, interdisciplinary health care system. We must never forget that what is at stake here is not only a complex IT puzzle but also the provision of world-class care. We have it within our power, surely, to have the best health care system in the world. We once could brag of that, and we can brag of it again.

New Democrats have been extremely concerned that eHealth Ontario, even before this latest disaster, has not been focused on implementing a system that prioritizes coordination over all else. Ontario's public health system has been raising flags about the absence of proper plans to have systems speak to each other. This happens elsewhere. It happens in literally every industry.

I'd like to close with a couple of things and the reason why I hope this government will allow, at least in part, a truncated, limited, small commission to look at whether or not there have been any other abuses of the system—I'm not looking for criminality; if there's criminality, I think the police should be called in—looking at those other things that can be done and must be done right.

Ontarians need and deserve a high-functioning system of electronic health records; that cannot be disputed. But let us not ignore the reality that the electronic health records that function best are those that grow out of a health care system that values interdisciplinary and comprehensive care. That's what we need. That's what we need to engender; that's what we need to produce. We need a system where primary health care providers work together, are able to collaborate, and essentially achieve the second stage of medicare.

If we take a moment to have a reality check, to look back on the failure that has been the Smart Systems for Health and eHealth, because they have both failed the people of Ontario, we see the real tragedy that we have at hand. We have a tragedy of expectations that have not been met. We have a tragedy of ordinary people who look upon this Legislature and see scandal instead of hard-working men and women who are trying to make Ontario a better place. We have a scandal of a system, and we have a system where they see their money being frittered away and wasted and where they see their own particular circumstances, in places like Port Colborne and Burk's Falls, being decimated. This is not the Ontario they want to see. They are calling out to this Legislature, they are calling out to me in opposition, they are calling out to the government to do something. If all we can do is set up a commission to find out how to do it better, then I'm going to vote for it.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on this resolution this afternoon. I had an opportunity to review this resolution this morning, and I immediately went to the library. I got myself a book called *One Dead Indian*.

Interjection.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: This is a book that's called *One Dead Indian*. It was written by Mr. Peter Edwards, who was a columnist with the *Toronto Star*. Mr. Edwards chronicled in this book—it's a good read. I recommend that everybody in this House should take the opportunity to read this book because it talks about the tragic circumstances of the death of Dudley George.

What's interesting is that I hear that the Leader of the Opposition, who put forward this motion, was a senior member of the cabinet for eight years, between 1995 and 2003. When you read this book, every day the very distinguished member from Scarborough–Agincourt asked the government of the day for a public inquiry regarding the circumstances of the tragic death of Dudley George.

I want to take a couple of quotes from this very fine book. In fact, as early as 1999, the Ombudsman, who was consulted on this particular issue, issued a report that suggested there should be a public inquiry into the circumstances around the death of Dudley George. Indeed, the member from Scarborough–Agincourt brought forward a private member's bill to ask that a full public inquiry be held in this particular case. I'm not going to spend the time, but I could identify members opposite who stood up one by one to quash the private member's bill of the honourable member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

If you want to talk about excessive government spending, this book goes on, and I reference page 236, about how taxpayers' money was spent defending the Premier of the day, two Attorneys General who were involved with this, several other cabinet ministers, and the legal bill went ticking, ticking, ticking.

Indeed, it was interesting, when we came to government, that one of the first things we did was to make sure that we held an inquiry into those circumstances. It's also interesting that one of the Attorneys General who came forward in that public inquiry, Charles Harnick, admitted that he misled the Ontario Legislature in response to several questions dealing with this particular matter.

If you go back to 1956, when the British Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, misled the British Parliament with regard to Great Britain's involvement in the Suez crisis, he was forced to resign his job of Prime Minister. So it's really interesting that this resolution lacks all credibility when we have the Leader of the Opposition coming forward, and he rejected, for eight long years, an investigation on a subject that mattered to the people of

Ontario. What kind of dollar value do you put on the death of an individual?

Everybody is talking about articles from papers. I just picked this one up. This was a *Toronto Star*, October 25, 2009, letter to the editor. It says, "Time to End the eHealth Blame Game."

"Since 2007, our hospital has been implementing components of electronic health records throughout our facility. Sadly, the result of the eHealth controversy is that progress is now stalled."

"It's time for all parties to note that the storm is over—the minister is gone, key personnel in the agency have changed and the new board chairwoman, Rita Burak, is moving ahead after offering an apology to the people of Ontario."

"But the opposition parties are still vying for a fight. Tim Hudak's comments in the *Star* are both wrong and harmful. To imply that \$1 billion of taxpayer money 'got flushed down the drain' is ridiculous and misleading. The public needs to know that much has been put in place and that, currently, progress is being stalled because of the controversy. It's time to get on with the job."

"Hudak would serve this province better if he did his research, learned about the many eHealth initiatives currently in place or pending and pressed our new chairwoman to get the job done. The controversy is over: Please let's get on with the job."

Who is the author of this letter to the editor? Let me tell you who it is. I should say that the member from Muskoka–Parry Sound should listen. It's from Ms. Lynne Atkinson, executive director, West Parry Sound Health Centre Foundation—a lady who is non-partisan, who is an expert in the field and is saying exactly what we need: to get on with this.

Let me conclude. My favourite passage in the Bible is John 23: "Let he who has no sin cast the first stone."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted

Bailey, Robert

Barrett, Toby

Dunlop, Garfield

Gélinas, France

Hardeman, Ernie

Hillier, Randy

Hudak, Tim

Martiniuk, Gerry

Miller, Norm

Munro, Julia

O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.

Prue, Michael

Runciman, Robert W.

Savoline, Joyce

Shurman, Peter

Sterling, Norman W.

Witmer, Elizabeth

Yakubski, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Hoskins, Eric	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Johnson, Rick	Ramsay, David
Best, Margaret	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Dickson, Joe	Moridi, Reza	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Naqvi, Yasir	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pendergast, Leeanna	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 20; the nays are 37.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare
the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being
slightly past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until
9 o'clock on Thursday morning, October 29.

The House adjourned at 1802.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O’Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L’hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l’Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L’hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L’hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l’opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L’hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L’hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l’Énergie et de l’Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L’hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L’hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L’hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l’Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L’hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l’Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l’opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Eric Hoskins, Pat Hoy
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziatti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, Reza Moridi
David Oraziatti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Yasir Naqvi, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Arnott
Ted Arnott, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Sophia Aggelonitis, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
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