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**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Thursday 26 November 2009**

**Jeudi 26 novembre 2009**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 November 2009

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 novembre 2009

*The House met at 0900.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

*Prayers.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### CORRECTION OF RECORD

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday in debate I said that the region of Durham would be paying \$7 million. I misspoke. It was \$700,000. I just wanted to correct the record.

#### ONTARIO TAX PLAN FOR MORE JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2009

#### LOI DE 2009 SUR LE PLAN FISCAL DE L'ONTARIO POUR ACCROÎTRE L'EMPLOI ET LA CROISSANCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2009, on the amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 218, An Act to implement 2009 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi 218, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2009 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I usually say it's my pleasure to rise in the Legislature to debate legislation. Unfortunately, it's a displeasurable experience today, because this of course is the last chance for anybody really, and specifically New Democrats in this case, to have something to say on second reading of Bill 218, the bill that ushers in the harmonized sales tax by this Liberal McGuinty government.

I have to say that we have been very vocal in our opposition to this wrong-headed move by the government. I say "wrong-headed" specifically and purposely. Why? Because this government is prepared to basically bring in a piece of legislation that hits families when they're already down; a bill, a tax measure, that makes life a heck of a lot less affordable, at a time when the people of this province are suffering significantly from a protracted recession, from a downturn in the economy.

People are losing their jobs. People are losing their pensions. People are not able to find a job to replace the

one they've lost. They're losing their homes. Their quality of life is being reduced significantly. And that has been happening month after month after month. Over 200,000 jobs have been lost in this year alone. And what does this government do to respond to this crisis in job loss, to this crisis in quality of life that we're facing in this province? They decide to hit people with an 8% tax increase on all kinds of goods and services that they rely on, on a daily basis.

The lack of consideration, the extent to which this government is completely out of touch with the people of this province, whom they are supposed to be governing in the best interests of, is absolutely incredible. The arrogance is unbelievable. This government has decided to close their eyes, to close their ears and to plow ahead with something that is going to hurt people at a time when what they really want is a government that brings solutions to the table that actually help them get back on their feet. This province will go nowhere as long as the people in this province are hurting. I have to tell you: This government might not realize it, but the people are hurting; they're hurting very, very deeply right now.

At a time when this economy is at a stall—and we know what happens when there's an economic stall. People are told by economists and others that the best way to address that stall is to get people spending again; right? Get them spending again. That'll stimulate the economy. And what does this government do at a time when we need people to be spending, we need consumers to start spending money in the economy? They bring in a tax measure that's going to do exactly the opposite of what we need to happen. People are going to spend less with prices that are going up because of the HST. They're not going to be spending more.

So again we have this government that is bringing in a tax policy that is exactly the opposite of what we need right now. And as if that isn't bad enough, as if those two things aren't bad enough, the harmonized sales tax is also a policy that reduces the rate of job growth in the province of Ontario. That's not something I've come up with on my own. That's something that the C.D. Howe Institute—not an organization that I tend to quote often—very clearly, in their studies over the last year or so, indicates: that some 38,000 jobs will not be created as a result of this government's wrong-headed policy on harmonization of taxes.

But they're not the only ones; they are not the only ones. Another organization that I don't tend to quote from very often, but from time to time and in this case specifically: the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. What does the

Ontario Chamber of Commerce say? The Ontario Chamber of Commerce says the exact same thing as the C.D. Howe Institute says: 40,000 fewer jobs are going to be created because of the harmonization of the sales tax.

Now, I've got to say, if I'm not mistaken, that this economy has been shedding jobs by the tens of thousands every single month: As I mentioned in my opening remarks, 200,000 jobs in this year alone, some 350,000 jobs over the last couple of years. These are real people. These aren't just statistics. These are families. These are folks who are now at the end of their unemployment insurance and starting to go and apply for welfare. How do I know that? In my community alone, the welfare rolls have ballooned by almost 3,000 caseloads—and that's my community alone. It's happening across the province; I can tell you that.

So at a time when what we need the most is more jobs, is more opportunity, is hope for people in this economy, what does their government do? Their government brings in a tax measure that reduces opportunity, that slows down the rate of job growth, that tells them, "Too bad, so sad. We know you need a job, but we would rather whack you with an 8% tax increase than give you any opportunity whatsoever, give you any hope for the future."

Shame on this arrogant government. Shame on them for not listening to the people of this province—because that is the other thing: It's not just New Democrats who are extremely critical of this tax. It is people in every walk of life, in every corner of this province who are telling this government, "Stop; don't do this. Don't hurt us while we're already hurting. Do something that gives us hope, that provides us with opportunity"—but they're simply not listening.

I have to say I've had the opportunity to listen myself. I've listened carefully to what the people are saying, and it's interesting that this government, in its response to the criticisms that we've been levelling against the tax, dug up an economist—a neo-conservative, heavy right-wing economist from the University of Alberta. They paid this person to write a report that claims that, in fact, jobs will increase. The government has taken this one person, who has not had any of his report corroborated by any peers; they've taken this person's report that they paid for—of course, the government knows how to pay for consultants and overpriced reports; we've seen that over and over in eHealth and many other situations—and what do they do? They take this isolated report, the opinion of one person that they paid for, and they fly it out there like somehow it's the truth. We all know it's not the truth. We all know that the government bought and paid for that opinion, and now it's shopping it out there like it actually has meaning. Shame on them trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the people of this province. Guess what? The people of this province are simply not buying it.

What are they saying? What do they say when I go to Kitchener, when I go to Cambridge, when I go to Windsor, when I go to Ottawa, when I go to Cornwall—which is where I'm going this weekend, and very much looking forward to it—when I'm at home in Hamilton, when I go

to Timmins, when I'm in Sudbury, when I'm here in Toronto? What are people telling me? They're telling me that they don't want the government to implement this tax. They're telling me that they think it's the wrong thing to do. They're telling me that they don't believe that savings will be passed on. They're telling me, as small business owners, that this tax is going to hurt them, too. They're telling me, as single parents, that they can't afford to make ends meet for them and their children right now. They're telling me, as senior citizens, that there isn't enough money to pay the bills as it is. And they tell me they're afraid. They tell me they're afraid of what the impact is going to be when this tax is levied upon them in the middle of next year, if this government has its way.

**0910**

I say "if the government has its way" because there really is still time to change course. There is time for this government to change course. I urge every MPP—not necessarily every government member, but every MPP—to go back to your ridings and look your people in the face, the people who put you here, and understand and listen to their concerns. Because if they're telling me when I go into your ridings, then I know darned well they're telling you too. If hundreds of thousands of them are responding to our requests on the Internet to join our campaign through our [unfairtaxgrab.com](http://unfairtaxgrab.com) website, then I know that they're calling you as well. Whether you're responding to them, I don't know. Whether you're hearing them—I can tell you, the evidence up until now is that you're not. And you need to. That's your job; that's your obligation; that's your responsibility.

I wanted to put a few things on the record from people who have actually sent me some comments about the harmonized sales tax. I can debate the merits from the perspective of the legislation itself, but I think it's important that, as this government continuously refuses to hear from the people of this province in a public hearings process that is simply democratic, the alternative is, granted, a poor alternative in some ways, but at least it's an alternative to get some of their voices on the record here in the Legislature. Because, unfortunately, this government has not only chosen to shut down debate on this bill, but also to avoid going to the people, to avoid every opportunity to hear what people have to say by refusing to take it to public hearings. It's one of the biggest tax changes in the province's history, and this government refuses to take it out to public hearings. Talk about dampening of democracy; talk about shutting down democracy in this province. It's absolutely shameful.

Nancy Bailey from Sault Ste. Marie says: "We are barely on our feet now and the last thing all of us need, especially in northern Ontario, is another tax." Why does Nancy say "especially in northern Ontario"? Because in northern Ontario, people already pay more for pretty much everything. People in northern Ontario have to use their cars to go everywhere. They don't have the same kind of transit system that centres like Toronto have. So they're filling up their tanks much more often than the people in southern Ontario. And guess what? Their gas

prices are already higher than the ones in southern Ontario—by about what, Mr. Bisson?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** About 10 to 12 cents.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** So, 10 to 12 cents. The member from Timmins–James Bay is corroborating the fact that, on average, about 10 to 12 cents per litre higher is what people in northern Ontario have to pay for their gas. Now that 8% is going to hit them that much harder. That's why Nancy Bailey is really worried in Sault Ste. Marie, as are many, if not all, of the people I've spoken to in northern Ontario.

Don Warner, from Windsor: "As a lifelong citizen of Ontario, I wish to express my deep displeasure with our Liberal government. Please vote this legislation down."

Doug and Kathy White, from Stratford: "We are a small seasonal business that is taxed enough. With the tourism from the USA down over the last nine years, all we need is something else, the HST, to drive away more guests. B&Bs—bed and breakfasts—are just getting by in Stratford, and the number has dropped over the last five years."

This is not specific to Stratford. I have spoken to people throughout Ontario who are in the travel and tourism business. They do not want this tax. They have told me specifically, directly. In fact, I was at the farmers' market in St. Catharines not too long ago. A small business couple—two people who own two small businesses—approached me and said, "You keep fighting that tax. We're small business owners, and we think it's the wrong thing and it's going to hurt us."

The government likes to say that business supports it. There is no homogeneous group of business people who support this. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business did a survey, and almost 60% of the small business members of that organization say they can find nothing of value whatsoever in the harmonized sales tax. Other businesses are telling me that they have to switch around all their accounting practices and all their invoicing processes and their cash registers and everything else, and it's going to be a big pain that they simply don't need.

This government claims to want to talk to businesses. They claim that this is a big tax move that is supported by all business. They are not telling people what is really going on out there. But guess what? The people are telling us, and that is extremely important. And I value their opinions, obviously much more than the government does.

S. Hendry, of Toronto: "I am opposed to the HST, as are all other Ontarians who must try to make a living while running a small business, and trying to keep above water."

Robert Jones, Amherstburg: "I oppose the HST as it is a regressive tax against consumers, particularly middle- and lower-income Ontarians. I do not believe companies will pass on any PST savings. Consumers ... will be burdened with much higher costs, particularly on gasoline, electricity and services previously exempt."

This is a pile of responses that have come in to my office, and it is a mere sampling of the thousands upon

thousands of people who have contacted us and begged us to do everything we can to get this government to do the right thing by the people of this province. The right thing is to get off this tax track. The right thing is to make sure they listen to the people of this province. They can do that in two ways. They can do that by simply walking away from this wrong-headed move, but the other way they can do that is to actually give the voters of this province the respect of having an opportunity to tell their government directly what they think about this move.

Shame on this arrogant bunch that they refuse to go out and listen to the concerns, the issues and the worries that the people of this province have. Shame on them. We all know that at the end of the day this government can ram this bill through as fast as they want, and they can shut down debate and they can silence the public, and that's what they are doing—I don't know what ever happened to democracy in this province, but I haven't seen it in a while.

But another thing has to happen: The federal Parliament also has to pass legislation to make this bill live here in Ontario and actually make the changes that need to be made. All I would say is that I expect the members in this Legislature who have influence over that particular House—that particular Parliament, our federal Parliament—to go there and talk to those MPs and tell them that although they were forced to vote in a certain way in this chamber, perhaps in the other chamber they can save the day and not approve either the \$4.3-billion poison pill, I guess, that the other opposition party talks about. Don't let that \$4.3 billion flow, because, guess what? This government can't implement the tax. But also don't allow the legislation to pass that enables this change to take place.

My requests are simple: I want this government to listen to the people of this province and do the right thing: Go on public hearings. If you refuse to do that, then the next thing you can do is shut down this harmonized sales tax once and for all and forever.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Questions and comments? The honourable member for Pickering–Scarborough East.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** My thanks to the member from Hamilton Centre and leader of the third party, and to the member from Beaches–East York for their lead off speeches yesterday and today, and particularly to say how pleased I am that over the past few days they have used a modest amount of time available to them for the purposes of speaking to Bill 218 and not having used other tactics that have been used in this place, which I may get 30 seconds to speak on as well.

Let me suggest, as well, to the members opposite in the third party, and to the members of the official opposition, that this is the place for debate. We are each here representing our constituencies and representing the parties to which we are elected in the positions they have. It's a wonderful opportunity for us to speak on behalf of those positions and, effectively, on behalf of thousands of

constituents, all of whom may not agree with each of our individual positions, but nonetheless it's an opportunity for us to do that. So I'm happy and pleased they have had that opportunity provided to them.

**0920**

I said yesterday, and I'll say it again today in the 40 seconds I have left, that we would have had much more opportunity if members had five minutes each to speak. In the two hours of dead air that we had while bells were ringing from the official opposition, that would have been 24 more speakers in this place, in addition to those who have spoken already. There's been more opportunity available than has been provided to us.

I want to take my last 20 seconds to acknowledge the member from Nepean—Carleton, who got up this morning to indicate that she had misinformation yesterday in regard to the region of Durham and the impacts they said the HST might have on them. As a member who represents an area in Durham region, it's important for me to reinforce that. The figures that were provided to us yesterday were tenfold wrong: not \$7 million but, as the member said this morning, some \$700,000, a very—

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

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I appreciate the member from the third party, the leader, making her statements. In my minute and 50 seconds, I'm going to read some comments from people from Liberal ridings who are being under-represented here today.

From Scarborough—Rouge River: "With the regressive HST applying to most goods and services, will Ontarians be able to take advantage of this generosity? Getting to Tim Hortons for a coffee and a bagel may be problematic if an outlet is not nearby and someone can't afford to put gas in their vehicle to get there. If one decides on takeout, will they return home to a cold, dark house because they couldn't afford to pay their utility bill?" That's from Warren Dalton.

Let's move on to London: "When revenue minister John Wilkinson said the HST will make Ontario more competitive and will attract investment and jobs, he must be reminded of one thing. It will cost us, the taxpayers, dearly, while it helps the Liberals make good on promises they never should have made." That's from Paul A. Leinweber.

From Algoma—Manitoulin, Larry Killens writes, "There is no harmony with the impending implementation of the harmonized sales tax between Ontario and Canada."

From Barrie, Rick Winson writes, "This new sales harmonized tax (SHT) will only serve to drive Ontario's economy further underground than it already is. With the number of people who are, or soon will be, unemployed, it's going to be very easy to find someone willing to provide services under the table for cash."

I'll move on to Belleville: "I am worried about it. I've got to get gas in my car and I'll be paying more for it. I have to heat my home and I'll be paying more for that too. I think it'd be better if they'd just leave it alone." That's from Art Lynas in Belleville.

From Windsor: "I think it stinks.... It's going to hurt a lot of people." That's from Betty Cooke.

Steve Peters—not our Speaker—from Windsor says, "The business community will realize a minor savings in their bookkeeping costs, but the net result will be increased costs resulting in increased prices for consumers."

Finally, Doug Chivers from Oakville: "Harmonizing the PST and GST is simply another cash grab for an already inept, out-of-fiscal-control government body."

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It is my pleasure to add a few words to the ones that were spoken by my leader this morning. She has spoken for the people who won't have a voice because this government is refusing to go out and listen to them.

In my riding alone, I have hundreds of people who are contacting me. My riding is very close to the riding of Sudbury, held by a Liberal member, and 750 people, residents of Sudbury, came to me because they cannot be heard by their own member in Sudbury. They came to me because they want their voice to be heard. They don't want this tax.

For the people of northern Ontario, to have 8% more to pay on gas, 8% more to pay on heating fuel represents a huge amount of their budget. We do not have public transit. There has never been a bus in Whitefish, and there will probably never be one, for a number of reasons. We need our cars to go anywhere. That means we fill up twice a week. That means 8% more on a \$50 fill-up. I will let you do the math; it adds up really quick. It adds up to people right now who don't have a job, who are on strike, who have a hard time making ends meet.

We have lots of professional services right now. You're looking at chiropractors and massage therapists who have a hard time making ends meet because of the financial hardship situation that Sudbury and Nickel Belt are in right now with the strike and the recession. They come to me, sometimes crying, saying, "When this 8% comes, France, it's going to mean the end of my business." One of them has been in business in the Hanmer mall for a long time, and she wants her business to continue, but that will be the end of her, and lots of professional services that are barely hanging on through the recession—that will be the end of them. Why are we killing those jobs?

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

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** It's a great pleasure for me to comment on the member for Hamilton Centre's speech. Let me tell you, I do believe that people are opposed to the HST—because they are misinformed. At the present time, if we were to tell the truth to the people—93% of the people of this province will benefit from a tax reduction.

Let me give you a good example: a trucking company at the present time that has to purchase a truck for \$70,000. Did you tell them that in the end, after the purchase, he will receive \$5,600 back? That is an amount

of money that he used to pay to the government, and today this is coming back to him. The elderly are going to get a \$500 deduction on their municipal taxes. Low-income families—we are telling people that they will be—I was listening to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He was saying that this is going to be an increase of 13%—completely, completely false. When we're saying that everybody is going to pay an 8% increase in taxes, that is completely false.

Can we tell the people the truth, what they will benefit on top of that? Any seniors who are getting even \$100,000 will benefit on the first \$37,000 with a deduction on their income tax, and if they qualify as low-income people, they'll get up to \$260 per head, and on top of that, they'll get a \$500 deduction on their municipal taxes. So why don't we tell the truth to the people of this province on what is the effect of the HST?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The honourable leader of the third party has up to two minutes for her response.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I appreciate and want to thank the member from Pickering–Scarborough East, the member from Nepean–Carleton, the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for their remarks.

One thing that's very clear is that it appears that the government members, because this is their bill, this is their initiative, this is their effort, like to talk in terms of theory and in terms of these companies and individuals who aren't real but who are scenarios. What they need to do is look at the real scenarios on the ground of the people in this province and what they're facing with the implementation of this harmonized sales tax. What they need to do is what we're doing, which is get out into the community and talk to real people and real businesses about how they see the impacts of this tax.

My colleague from the Nickel Belt riding did exactly that. I've attempted to do that as well, in some of the issues that I've brought forward not only in my debate today but every single day in question period. I'm bringing real issues from real businesses, from real people, to this table. Unfortunately, the government likes to read a lot of studies and theorize about a lot of impacts, but what people are saying is that the real impact of this harmonized sales tax is not going to be all smelling like roses, the way the government says it's going to be. It is going to hurt people when they're already hurting. It is going to reduce the rate of job growth in this province by some 40,000 jobs. It is going to dampen down consumer spending at the very time when we need to see more consumer spending to stimulate our economy. It is a wrong-headed tax. It's shifting the tax burden from the corporate sector to consumers. It is the wrong thing to do. New Democrats oppose it, and so do most Ontarians.

0930

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

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I'm very pleased to enter into the debate. I just wanted to give a bit of a history lesson before I start into the specifics.

We heard a lot of the same conversation that we're hearing from the other side of the House with regard to the budget and the economic stimulus. There was not only the harmonization but also a stimulus package in that budget. We heard how it was the wrong plan, the wrong time, and everything was wrong. But you know what? I pick up the paper today and I read, "Good News' for Oshawa as GM Announces up to 700 Jobs."

I say to the people across the way: The fact that we are not agreeing with their position does not mean that we are not listening to our constituents. We in fact are listening to our constituents, and we gave the people the opportunity by making it a part of our budget many, many months ago. As members, we have gone out, we have sent out householders, we have held public meetings, we have been to every event and gone to chambers of commerce and Probus. We have done so much, and we have done that because we know that it's the right plan, the right time, to grow Ontario, to make Ontario strong.

I say to the members across the way: You fought us so hard when we brought forward the budget. It was a very multi-faceted budget. But as they would say in my riding, the proof is in the pudding: "Good News' for Oshawa as GM Announces up to 700 Jobs."

I say to the members across the way: You were wrong then and you're wrong now. We have a plan, and we have a strong drive to move our plan forward because we know that it is the right plan for the people of Ontario.

I look at the negotiations with the federal government, because that's an important component that we need to speak to. I just want to share with the House that my federal member is firmly on board with the harmonization. He comes from a manufacturing background himself, in the auto sector. I can tell you, because he worked in finances for the auto sector, that he can cite chapter and verse how important it is for my local company, called Wescast, and what that represents in savings for him.

I say to you, when I stand up in this House, my municipality of north Huron—they're laughing across the way. This is no joke. I tell you, my communities in north Huron, they're hurting, the auto sector. They know that the stimulus package we put in place, the harmonization, is what we need in our community to grow Ontario. That's why I see "Good News' for Oshawa."

People know that we have to change how we did business. Things have changed. One hundred and thirty countries around the globe know that things have changed. They recognize that how we have done business must change. We must plan for the future. I am concerned about the ability for my children to have a job and, hopefully, some day, grandchildren that don't have four legs.

We know that we have our plan in place. I know that across the way, and now the third party, they have stuck to their position. I tell you, I'd probably get whiplash from how quickly the position of the official opposition changes: They were, they weren't, they were, they weren't, they were, they weren't, and they're back at "not" again. But I'm thinking that they're going to be in favour again in a few short months, especially when we see how

effective our budget was, when we pick up the paper and we see jobs coming back. That's what it's about: having a commitment to a plan and then ensuring that that plan moves forward.

We realize in Ontario that the manufacturing sector must strengthen. So, then, what can we do within the manufacturing sector to strengthen that? Certainly, the harmonization is an important component of that plan.

Mr. Speaker, you know that in the riding of Huron–Bruce, one of our main economic drivers is agriculture. So I say to the Speaker: What, then, as a good member, do you look at in any package coming forward? How does that affect my agricultural community? And, yes, they have told me.

One of the things that we've heard from the other side of the House is with our farmers: "Oh, that's what they do in Quebec, that's what they do in Quebec, that's what they do in Quebec." That's important. They supported their agricultural community. But I say to the members across the way: Where do you think a lot of those tax advantages came from, for the farmers? They came from the harmonization. By moving forward with a harmonization package, a lot of the tax incentives that were given to the Quebec farmers which you cited in the House day after day—we come forward with a package that reflects that, and where are you now? You're opposed to it. But I don't think that will last long, because I think you'll flip, and then you're going to be in favour again, once the farmers—one thing I would like to say is, I think it's important, when we look at point-of-sale exemptions and how it was in the province—possibly that's something that the federal government would like to look at as the harmonization moves forward: point-of-sale exemptions. That is a concern of my agricultural community.

What are the other economic drivers in the wonderful riding of Huron–Bruce? Energy. I can tell you, in order for energy to remain strong as an economic driver, it needs to be producing energy for something. What would it be producing for, if it wasn't doing it for the manufacturing sector? The manufacturing sector is such an important component, and we can have people who stand up and say, "I don't have this; I don't have that," but we recognize that for all of our ridings, having a strong manufacturing sector, specifically part of the auto sector, is an important component of our financial security within the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Carol, did you see this? General Motors is recalling workers.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** That's what I said, yes. You know, this is so important; it's critical. One of the things that I know from my community, the ag community, is that they see the auto sector as such an important part of that.

Mr. Speaker, I just have so much more to say, but unfortunately—I just wanted to reinforce how important it is that we bring this tax package forward to move Ontario forward. Thank you for giving me the time today.

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

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's interesting to note that the member opposite thinks that their budget and their economic plan is actually good for the province. I guess there's this side, that side and the truth. I think the truth speaks for itself with the numbers. Since this government took office, they have gone from first to worst in economic growth in the nation, even behind Prince Edward Island. They have lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs. So, yes, we should be welcoming the ones that were announced yesterday by Jerry Ouellette, the member for Oshawa. But we must always remember that they lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs. Next week, we will be celebrating the one-year anniversary of the largest province in Canada being on federal welfare.

Now is not the time to raise taxes—not 8% on consumption. That's why we know, for example, that the people in each of the ridings, particularly in the backbenches, are opposed to this tax. They don't feel that their voice is being heard, and that's why they're reaching out to the Progressive Conservative Party, that's why they're reaching out to the third party, and that's why they're writing letters to the editor and calling talk radio—not just because that's what Mr. McGuinty views as the only option to put forward your views on the HST. That was, of course, callous, to tell Ontarians, "If you don't like the HST, don't come to Queen's Park; don't call me. Call Bill Carroll, call Steve Madely, call Lowell Green." In fact, he just told people to write a letter to the editor and go to the water cooler and gripe about it.

The reality is, I think Ontarians are too smart for this gang of troublemakers next door and across the hall here. They know that this group here has no mandate to shove this tax down our throat, and they're expecting public debate. You know, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to continue to call for public hearings into the legislation, and we don't think it's done. After they decided to shove this through, it's not over, because we are going to continue the fight right through their budget.

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

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** You know, it's fascinating—yesterday on CBC, on the Andy Barrie show, they had the Minister of Revenue, who has been doing the song-and-dance routine selling the HST across Ontario; he spoke. Then, today, they had the response to his words. The VoxBox, as everybody who listens to Andy Barrie knows, was just full of response. And guess what? It was uniformly negative.

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It particularly rang with one woman who phoned in. She was a senior who lives on a fixed income, and she said, "I don't know what this person"—the Minister of Revenue—"is talking about. First of all, I'm not going to get any tax rebate because I don't pay any tax; I don't make enough to pay any tax. But I'm certainly going to be paying tax using the HST: I'm going to be paying tax on my utilities and paying tax on everything I purchase at the store, just about." And she said, "Quite frankly, I



can't afford it. I don't know who he's speaking to," said this woman who's a senior; an intelligent senior.

The folks opposite like to characterize seniors as not understanding, not being able to read, not quite comprehending the intricacies of the HST, but the reality is that seniors are incredibly intelligent. They're very smart. They read, they understand how the tax is going to affect them and they respond.

There was also a small business owner who phoned in. He said that it's going to kill his business. It's going to drive his business—he is a small contractor—underground. He competes with those who currently are in the black market; they don't pay any tax at all. He said they'll win and revenues will go down.

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

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** First I want to stand up and congratulate the member from Huron–Bruce for outlining the importance of the tax reform. That was a very important speech. I want to thank you very much on behalf of my constituents and all the people listening to us this morning.

She's right. She talked about the opposition; the opposition flip-flops all day. We don't know where they stand. To the member from Huron–Bruce: You're right. I guess in the end they're going to come up and support it. As a matter of fact, they support it now. But they see an opportunity to attack the government, and that's why they can take positions to attack us. As a matter of fact, the deputy opposition leader is the wife of the finance minister of Canada, who is the author of this issue and who has always been pushing for it because it's good for Ontario and Canada.

For the honourable member from Huron–Bruce: You are also right; this one starts to see the effects of the tax reform. Oshawa GM is rehiring 700 people back to work. It's important news.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Ingersoll.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Ingersoll. The member from Oxford, I think, knows the impact of our government on the Oxford region, where we worked very hard to get the Toyota plant to come to Woodstock, and many other components.

The member from Huron–Bruce talked about farmers and agriculture. They have a right now to claim more than ever for their equipment. I think it's an important step to support the agricultural centres. We believe, as a government, that this tax reform will affect farmers, education and health care for the people of Ontario.

I read a lot of articles about it. Maybe at the beginning, because of the confusion about how it's going to be implemented, people got scared because of something they're not used to, but in the end people kind of like it, because it's going to come back to Ontarians with more jobs, more comfort and more competitiveness nationally and internationally.

Again, I support this bill, and I want to thank you again, member from Huron–Bruce, for outlining the importance of this tax reform for the people of Ontario.

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

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'm pleased to add some comments to the debate on Bill 218—the member for Huron–Bruce and her speech. But I first of all would like to apologize that I rose yesterday on a point of order and suggested that the member from Beaches–East York had missed his lead because he was at a reception. That was true, but he had been invited by Advocis to speak to that reception a month ahead of time. So really he wasn't missing in action; he just couldn't be in two places at one time.

On Bill 218: You know, it's interesting. The Minister of Revenue was on CBC Radio yesterday. I heard him making his pitch—and he does a good job of selling why he thinks Bill 218 is a good bill. But I also listened this morning, and the only calls coming in to CBC were from people who—actually, one lady called in and said, “You know, he made a good pitch. He talked about tax cuts, but I don't pay any income tax so it's only going to be money going out for me.” I think that's true, and I've read a lot of e-mails into the record to that effect.

Another person was in business, and I've read a lot of e-mails into the record to do with the underground economy and how it's going to grow. The other call was a businessperson calling up to say that they already are competing against the people who don't want to pay the 5% GST; now there's going to be an extra 8%. So this person, a legitimate businessperson, will be at a 13% disadvantage in terms of competing against the underground economy. I've certainly had many e-mails from people worried about an increase in the underground economy as a result of this move by the McGuinty government to bring this HST in.

I would still like to say that they should be doing public hearings. We've been asking for public hearings. Instead, they've filed a time allocation motion to ram this through—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you.

The honourable member for Huron–Bruce has up to two minutes for her response.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I do want to thank the speakers from Nepean–Carleton, Parkdale–High Park, London–Fanshawe and Parry Sound–Muskoka, and I do appreciate your comments.

I wanted to say that the members from across the way, the official opposition, have started their day with two apologies, and I think that speaks volumes.

One of the things that I wanted to speak specifically about was the misinformation that we started off with, with the region of Durham. Quite frankly, I've known Roger a long time, so I bet you he was on the phone straightening things out plenty quick. I have 19 municipalities, so I hear a lot from my municipalities as well. But the fact that two apologies were required already speaks a lot.

From the riding that I represent, we like to call a spade a spade. We like to mean what we say and say what we mean. When we talk, we like to talk with authority. So I

say to the members from across the way: If you are so convinced that we are on the wrong path, stand in your place and say that you will reverse it if you have the honour and the privilege to represent the government, because I'll tell you, from my riding, if you don't—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Order. I'd ask the member for Nepean–Carleton to refrain from yelling at the member from Huron–Bruce. The honourable member for Huron–Bruce has the floor.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I think we were both raised in the back 40. But anyway, one thing that I will say, and I want to reinforce this: If you are so firmly convinced, stand in your place today, stand in your place, stand up, and promise the people that if you have the honour and the privilege, you will—

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

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak briefly to Bill 218 this morning on behalf of my constituents in Wellington–Halton Hills. Of course, this Bill 218 is entitled An Act to implement 2009 Budget measures and enact, amend or repeal various Acts. As we all know in this House, this is the infamous bill, probably the most significant piece of legislation that the government will introduce during this term of office—without question the most significant piece of legislation that they're going to introduce in this term of office, to implement the harmonized sales tax.

It's important that the members hear some of the context upon which we discuss and debate this issue. I recall very vividly and distinctly in the 2003 provincial election when the television ads were on and the Leader of the Opposition at that time, Dalton McGuinty, was on television with his ads. He looked into the camera and he said, "I won't raise your taxes." And again in 2007 the commitment was made: "I won't raise your taxes." Here we are today talking about a massive tax increase yet again.

Of course, the government would argue that this bill has offsetting tax cuts, but the fact is that the people of Ontario cannot believe this government when it comes to any statements on taxes. Fundamentally, that's what this debate is all about. In my riding, people don't believe the Liberal government on taxes; they just don't believe you. In fact, even if this bill passes, as you have the majority and you wish to do so, I suspect and would suggest that even if tax cuts are brought in as a result of this bill, if the government is re-elected in 2011, we'll see yet again the Liberal government going back on its previous track of raising taxes yet again.

As we know, this government has tabled a time allocation motion to try and ram this bill through the House. They're fearful of listening to the people through the public hearings process. They used to be a party that espoused the idea of public hearings, extensive public hearings on bills. Certainly, when they first took office in 2003, they were always prepared to send controversial bills through the public hearings process, and certainly we were glad to participate in that process.

**0950**

Why is it that today they won't allow any meaningful public hearings on Bill 218? I think the answer is fairly clear: They're afraid to hear from the people. Government members, even in their own ridings, I'm sure, are hearing from their constituents. I'm sure they're getting dozens of e-mails every day, as most of us on this side of the House are receiving. They know that they've got a real problem, and they know that there has been a poll taken that something like 76% of the people of Ontario are opposed to this tax.

The Minister of Revenue was assigned the task of going around and explaining this and selling it to people. I heard him on CBC radio yesterday as well, and although I thought some of his comments were quite disingenuous and replete with half-truths, in fact, he did his best to explain this to people. The fact is that the calls that were coming in today, from what I understand, on the CBC were expressing opposition.

Our party continues to call for public hearings. We will continue to use the means that are available to us through the standing orders to call for public hearings, to try to get this government to slow down, to try to get this government to listen, because I believe there still is an opportunity for modifications to this bill, and I would encourage the government to listen to it.

Let's talk about that. The government House leader talks about whether or not our party would repeal it if we formed the government. As you know, our critic for revenue has pointed out that it would be absolutely impossible because of the poison pill that's in the contract: the more than \$4-billion penalty that the government of Ontario would have to pay.

But let's talk about what we would do, or what we would have done, going back to 2003, had we formed the government. First of all, had we formed the government in 2003, I believe that we would have made a sincere, concerted and successful effort to balance that budget in 2003-04. I know that we would have tried, and I know that you guys didn't try. The fact is, over the course of the 2003 to 2007 mandate, had we formed the government during that time, and were we still in government now, we would have restrained government spending over the last six years. We wouldn't be in this situation, where there's a \$24-billion deficit. We wouldn't have promised the people that we wouldn't raise taxes and then in fact do it. We would not have done that. We would have continued on our approach that we'd done when we were in government from 1995 to 2003, which was on a path to reduce personal income taxes, to reduce corporate income taxes and, at the same time, balance budgets year after year. We wouldn't have been in this situation at all. So we wouldn't have to even talk about that argument right now, in terms of what we would do if we were in government today. We would be in a totally different fiscal situation.

Again, in the limited time I have available to me, I call upon this government to withdraw the time allocation motion, the draconian and drastic time allocation motion

that they've presented, to rethink this whole thing, to go back and understand that they're here to represent the people of the province too, that the people of the province need and deserve to have a say on this issue before this Legislature votes on this bill at third reading.

The fact is, we need to have extensive public hearings across the province. I know that the people of my riding would welcome the opportunity to come to hearings in communities like Georgetown or Acton or Fergus or Erin or Puslinch township or Rockwood. All of my communities would welcome that opportunity, and I know that in every community across the province there would be a significant number of people who would want to express their views on this.

I acknowledge that there are some voices out there that are supporting this. The government has done a job to try to get some third party endorsements: Certainly, the chamber of commerce, through Len Crispino's efforts—I think some of the chambers of commerce across the province see some advantages in the HST, and I acknowledge that. But the fact is, we are sitting on this side of the House, and it's our obligation, constitutionally as well as politically, to speak on behalf of the people who will be hurt by this legislation. Certainly, seniors are going to be hurt. We've heard from the housing industry. We've heard—

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Tell the truth.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Order. The member for Northumberland—Quinte West, I'd ask you to withdraw that comment.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I'll withdraw, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** You cannot imply that an honourable member is not telling the truth.

The honourable member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** I've obviously struck a nerve with the member for Northumberland, who, quite frankly, is not bringing forward his constituents' views on this issue, without question.

We understand, on our side of the House, that this bill represents a \$3-billion tax grab that the people of Ontario cannot afford. We know that the government is unwilling, through reasonable public consultations, to listen to the people. Our caucus is disappointed but not surprised by the tactics of this government with respect to this bill. That's why we're going to continue to call for public consultation and use every tool at our disposal to try to prevent the swift passage of this bill and make sure that the people of Ontario have their say. I would suggest to the government House leader that this is not over, and we will continue to use whatever means we can to slow the government down in this respect.

I would like to take a moment or two to read into the record some of the comments that we have received from, for example, the tourism industry. I know that the government House leader is interested in this. I would hope she has had a chance to consult with some of the tourism industry folks because they have some serious concerns.

I would read a quote from the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, where they say the present tax structure on a

hotel room is 5% PST, 5% GST, and the destination marketing fee in many communities, for a total of 13%. Harmonization may cause the new tax structure to be a total of 16%, or an additional 3% on the cost of a room in Ontario.

The Greater Toronto Hotel Association recommends that if harmonization of the existing GST and PST occurs, the provincial government commit that no additional tax burden be placed on the consumption of hotel rooms in the province of Ontario due to harmonization.

In the rounds when I'm finished speaking—I only have a minute and 22 seconds left—the government House leader and the Minister of Tourism perhaps could speak to that; perhaps she could commit to the Greater Toronto Hotel Association that this bill is not going to further harm their industry. I doubt she will.

We have heard from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. I'd like to quote Kevin Gaudet:

"We think it's problematic that the government is looking at a tax reform policy that will benefit business at the expense of individuals and families. In principle, we like the idea of a blended tax, but not on the backs of individuals and families and put in during a recession. It's the wrong time."

I would come back to one of the points that I've been making on this debate with my constituents who have e-mailed me repeatedly. The economic recovery that we hope we are in right now is fragile. I would suggest that any new tax increase at this time is likely

to put us backwards in terms of economic recovery and make it tougher for our businesses,

families, seniors and communities to strengthen themselves as they want to in terms of economic recovery. Again, I call upon this government to allow for full and extensive public hearings on Bill 218 before we vote on it for third reading. I plead with the government to do this.

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

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I find this quite an amazing debate. I've had an opportunity to go door to door in my riding to ask people about the HST. To be honest, I've been going door to door, not trying to sell a position—although if people ask me, I tell them what I think—but to ask them, "What do you think about this bill? What do you think about the HST?"

What's interesting to me is talking to people who have small businesses. As the member from Parkdale—High Park was saying this morning when she talked about Andy Barrie's show and the businessperson who called in, I have people who have one- and two-person operations, who know that in the environment they operate in they're going to have to eat that tax. They are going to have to take it on, and it's going to cut their income; they are going to face a loss of revenue that is going to make it very difficult for them to carry forward.

I was talking to a man Monday night, a contractor, who just said, "I deal with too many people in my busi-

ness who are fly-by-night, who can charge really low. If I've got to charge 13% on top of my bill, I'm in trouble."

I talked to a photographer on the weekend. A similar situation: He's a one-person operation in a competitive environment. He's looking at a cut to his income. I talked to people who are musicians, and in fact, we had Jim Biros here, the executive director of Toronto Musicians' Association, who talked to me about musicians who play weddings, who go to parties, and who have enough trouble collecting any tax now. The thought of having to collect or actually having to send in payment to the government at 13% just means that their take-home is going to drop.

The reality of this tax is, it will drive down people's standard of living, it will make things far more difficult for seniors and for small business, and it is a large-scale mistake.

**1000**

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

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I listened carefully to the comments of the member of Wellington–Halton Hills. I'll just provide a little different perspective on this.

Last Thursday I had the pleasure of being in my riding of Peterborough with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the Honourable Sandra Pupatello, to announce an investment in GE Peterborough of \$100 million.

Let me explain that. GE Corporate Canada are investing \$85 million. The government of Ontario, through the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, will be investing \$50 million. That's \$100 million, the greatest investment in the Peterborough operation in four decades.

That morning, the CAW, which represents those hard-working men and women—remember, these are jobs paying \$25, \$30, \$35 an hour. The investment we're making in Peterborough is to make the Peterborough operation the global leader in large motors, green energy projects, to put Ontario on the map. They're doing it right in my hometown of Peterborough.

Elyse Allan, a very distinguished president of GE Canada, said that morning in Peterborough, with the media there, "It's because Ontario is providing a new, improved, competitive jurisdiction in which we can invest that money."

Remember, GE worldwide has 320,000 employees. They have operations in every corner of the world, but they chose Peterborough to make a \$100-million investment in the future of my community.

It is an enormous achievement, solidifying high-skilled jobs, solidifying engineering and other design functions in Peterborough to provide that platform for future growth. That's what our comprehensive tax policy is bringing to my community in Peterborough.

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

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I want to commend my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills for his explanations

and discussion on the HST bill and the imposition of this tax on the people of Ontario, who don't want it.

One of the things I was most impressed with is his insistence that, if nothing else, the government should have public hearings to let the people of Ontario speak, to be heard, about what they think about this new tax.

What I find interesting is that the government has been insistent, and now, having tabled a closure motion, has insisted that they're not going to hear from the public at all. They want to push this through as quickly as possible. The only way that the public can get into this Legislature and be heard is through their representatives here in the Legislature.

What I find interesting is that everyone on this side of the House has been speaking about comments they've heard from their constituents—in fact, from constituents in many of the Liberal-held ridings. In all the debate that I've sat here and listened to, I haven't heard the government side talk about any of the people in their ridings who are talking to them and letting them know what they think of this taxation.

I have come to the conclusion that what they're hearing is the same thing that I'm hearing, and I'm hearing nothing but comments from people—seniors and low-income people—who see this as a dramatic increase in the cost of living for them, and they want us to do whatever we can to stop it. I'm sure that the government members are getting those same things on their petitions and in their e-mails, but they're not bringing them here.

I want to say that the people who are represented by the government members are definitely not being heard in this Legislature through this process. I stand up here and I'm proud and happy to present the petitions that come from the Liberal-held ridings and let their voices be heard in this Legislature. But I really think there should be public hearings so we can all hear them.

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

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Questions and comments, or debate?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** One more.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Okay; I thought I was actually going to be up in debate.

I would just say the following, just to pick up on some of the comments that were made earlier: I know that a number of government members have gotten up and have spoken to how this is great for various businesses. I can tell you, a lot of the businesses I've been talking to, where I've been travelling around, have a completely different view.

One is Lloyd Richards, who owns L. Richards Moving and Cartage, up in Timmins. I've known Lloyd for a number of years. We're fellow pilots and I've known him for a number of years in that capacity, but also as somebody who is fairly involved in our community. For him and his trucking business, he's been pretty clear about this not being a good thing. On the one hand, the government is saying this is going to assist business when it comes to how you're going to be able to remit taxes for

goods and services in a much more efficient way, and he's saying that at the end of the day, nobody has even communicated with him or other businesses about what that new process is going to be, and the date is fast coming. That's one of the complaints. The other one is that at the end of the day they're going to end up having to pay taxes on things that they've never had to pay for before—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Well, it's administrative. His argument is that the government says, "Oh, yeah, but then you can file a form and you can get your money back." He says, "Jeez, all I'm doing is filing forms to the government for all kinds of things, so this is not making my life any easier," and that's pretty well the thing that I'm hearing from everybody. From the real estate agencies to people who are insurance brokers, people who sell financial products, the barber shop, retail services, a number of businesses that I've talked to not just in my riding but in other ridings that I've been travelling in around the province, it's pretty clear. So when I hear the government get up in the House and say, "This is a boon for business. Business is on side and we have their endorsement," I don't know who the heck you're talking to, because people are volunteering to me, without me even asking them, that they see this (a) as a tax grab, and (b) not necessarily as a thing that's better for business.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The honourable member for Wellington—Halton Hills has up to two minutes for his response.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** I want to thank and acknowledge the members who responded to my presentation this morning, especially my colleagues on this side of the House. I want to use this opportunity also to congratulate and commend our leader, Tim Hudak, our finance critic, Norm Miller, and our revenue critic, Lisa MacLeod, as well as the rest of my caucus colleagues who have done an outstanding job, I believe, on behalf of the people of Ontario on this issue.

As my friend the member for Oxford, Ernie Harde- man, just said to me, surely the government members are hearing from their constituents on this. Surely they are getting the same petitions that we're getting—they're not presenting them. Surely they are getting e-mails from their constituents. I get at least a dozen a day, it seems, on this issue, and I would say that they are individualized. It's not like there seems to be an organized campaign out there. People are spontaneously getting up in the morning and sending me an e-mail to express their concern and their opposition to this initiative. Surely the government members are hearing from their constituents. Why are they not speaking up on behalf of their constituents? Why aren't they going to a caucus meeting and telling the Premier what they are hearing in their ridings? Why are they all looking at their desks and trying to ignore me while I'm speaking now, when they were heckling me before?

I know why. They know what they are hearing from their constituents, and many of them are concerned about

losing their seats over this. Quite frankly, this bill is so significant and it is so important, and because of the way the government is handling this issue, most of them do have a real fear and a legitimate fear of losing their seats over this issue. I suppose that if nothing else motivates them, hopefully because of the fear that they have of their constituents and facing their constituents in 2011, maybe some of them will speak up. If there are caucus meetings over the next few days—and I'm sure they'll have an opportunity to come together—maybe some of their members will speak up and urge the Premier to allow for public hearings on this issue. Give the people a chance to have their say. Give the people an opportunity to express their views. As we know, some people are in favour of this bill and there are some organizations that are for it. Why are you afraid to hear from the people? Why are you afraid of your constituents?

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** As Frances Lankin, a former member in this House, used to say, "Don't feed the bears."

The honourable member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Well, there are some pretty big bears around here, and you wouldn't want to feed them either.

I just want to take the time I have in debate to put on the record the observations that I've had in discussions both with consumers and people who run businesses that I've been in touch with ever since this HST debate started.

The government goes out of its way to say that this is a great thing, that this is going to be the thing that's going to really enable the province's economy to move forward and create more jobs: It will be a boon for the manufacturing sector, a boon for the retailers and everybody else, and a boon for the consumer.

I've got to say, from my observations as a result of talking to many people who are going to be affected by this tax, that completely the opposite is what we're getting back as feedback, first of all from the consumer. We live in a northern climate. It doesn't matter if you live in Toronto or—I guess it matters if you live in Timmins or Moosonee; I know it's a heck of a lot colder than it is down here. But the point is, we all pay heating bills.

Just on the fact alone of having to pay an additional 8% on your heating fuel, on your electricity or on your natural gas, it's going to be another cost to the consumer that they've never had to pay before. On gasoline that you buy for your vehicle, there will be taxes that you've never had to pay before. On many services—I'll get to the goods later—where you've not had to pay the PST but, yes, the GST, you're going to have to pay more in taxes.

**1010**

So the government is saying that this is going to be good for the taxpayer because the government is giving you a tax break on the income tax side, on one end, and it's going to offset the losses that you're going to get on the HST on the other side. I don't buy that for a second,

because the reality is that consumers have certain expenditures that they must make, such as paying rent, heating the house, paying the telephone, paying for services at your house, buying goods in order to keep things going in your home etc., all of which are going to be subject to this new HST. And at the end of the day, whatever you get in tax savings on the income tax side is, for most people, going to mean that they're going to actually be getting less because they're going to end up paying more on the HST side.

When it comes to business, it's much the same story. I've had a chance to talk to a number of insurance brokers in my riding who have talked to me about this particular issue and have said, "You know what's going to happen? We're going to end up having to charge HST on items that were not applied before, especially on financial products. What's going to end up happening is that the person who is buying the product is going to get mad at us, and we're not the ones that are increasing the costs." So they're concerned that they're going to be catching a lot more flak from the consumers that are buying their products as a result of having to pay more taxes, and, quite frankly, they don't see it as fair that people should have to pay this additional tax.

To people working in the real estate business, it's the same thing. I have had a chance to talk to a number of real estate agents across my riding, and I've been in contact here because of the lobbying that has gone on around Queen's Park from the realtors. It's the same thing with them. They're saying that all kinds of things now will be applicable to the new HST that weren't applicable before, and at the end of the day, it's going to cost the consumer more money.

The government's saying, "Don't worry. We're going to exempt houses up to a certain amount," but you're going to have to pay on a whole bunch of things: your legal fees, your land transfer tax. All of that kind of stuff is going to be subject to the HST—things that you haven't had to pay before. As you know, many of the real estate fees, for example, are based on a percentage of the sale of the house. So if there's a 6% realtor's fee on a \$100,000 or a \$200,000 or a \$1-million home, you're going to have to pay an additional 8% to that realtor as a result because of the taxes that are going to be charged. The question becomes, who's going to pay for that? The realtors sure as heck don't want to, so it's going to be the consumer. So for the government to say that somehow or other the consumers are ahead with this thing—completely the wrong thing.

The moving business: I was talking earlier about Lloyd Richards, who runs Lloyd Richards Moving and Cartage, up in Timmins. Everybody who knows Lloyd knows that he is not shy for words, I guess is the way I would put it for Lloyd. He is apoplectic about this, because he's saying, "I'm going to have to charge HST on the services that I provide to the customers that I service, and it's an additional 8%." He says, "I don't want to have to pass on an additional cost to my

customers at this particularly difficult economic time." He says, "This is really a recipe for disaster." And as Lloyd would say, what's the matter with McGuinty? I ask myself the same question. What is the Premier thinking about, in the middle of a recession, introducing such a tax that really could end up becoming, I believe, a damper on the economy?

It's much the same debate as we saw under Mulroney when he did the GST with Finance Minister Wilson. Wilson at the time introduced the GST in the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney. The same arguments were made on the government side of the bench. It was going to be a real boon for Ontario and Canada. As a result, we now pay more taxes than we've had to before, the savings have not been passed on to consumers, and the Tories went from a majority government down to two seats.

I think you guys on the other side should start ringing the bell and recognize that this is not exactly a political winner. This is something that people are going to remember each and every time they go to purchase a service or buy goods somewhere in Ontario. It's going to be: "Mulroney"—excuse me, McGuinty—"made me pay what? How come I'm having"—well, it's Mulroney or McGuinty; it's kind of the same thing, right? But in the end—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Well, it is. You guys are like buddies when it comes to this issue, right? There have been successive governments since Mulroney that have refused to implement the HST in Ontario. I was a member of a government that said no. The Conservatives were a government for two terms that said no. We had a choice in Ontario, and we decided not to because we thought it was a bad idea.

The last point, because I've only got about a minute before the House recesses for question period, is the issue of point-of-sale exemption. Here in Ontario, we're going to give up the ability to determine retail sales tax policy. For First Nations, that's an issue because they now have a point-of-sale exemption on PST but not on HST. So that means that now, whenever First Nations go to buy goods and show up with their status cards, they're going to be paying the full amount.

Some people might think that's a great thing, because I know the debate around this issue, but I can tell you that for First Nations, it's a problem. Go live in Attawapiskat, go live in Fort Albany and tell me if you can afford to pay an additional 8% on any goods you buy, because quite frankly, things there are far more expensive, and even if you get on Air Quebec and fly down to Timmins or Sudbury or North Bay to buy something—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

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

*The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I'm delighted to introduce page Nicolas McWatters' guests, his family sitting over in the members' gallery: Kathy McWatters, Gord McWatters and the grandmother, Loredana Semenzin. We're delighted to have them here, as we're delighted to have him here.

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** Good morning. I want to introduce a good friend and neighbour of mine from my riding, Rick Attridge, who's in the gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park, Rick.

**Hon. Michael Chan:** I want to welcome youth from the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation. They are here today in Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I would like to welcome the mother of page Jamie Sheidow. Lori Sheidow is going to be joining us today. Welcome, Lori.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I would like to welcome Gail Ballard from my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, who is seated in the Speaker's gallery. Gail, welcome to Queen's Park today.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** My question is for the Premier. Premier, Anzen Consulting submitted two separate bids for an eHealth contract in what was supposed to be a competitive tendering process. Ordinarily, this disqualifies both bids, but the McGuinty government still managed to hand Liberal-friendly Anzen the deal. Premier, why is it that even when you tender a contract, your Liberal friends will still end up with the deal?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I'm very happy to talk about our response to the Auditor General's report. As the member opposite knows, the Auditor General raised some important issues. We have responded to those issues. We have made significant changes in our procurement policy, but we're moving ahead with eHealth. EHealth is an extremely important initiative of this government and of governments around the world. We take the Auditor General's findings extremely seriously. The board of eHealth went above and beyond the call of duty and got independent legal advice to further explore some of the situations raised in the Auditor General's report, and I was very happy to share those letters the day before yesterday.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** Back to the Anzen contract, which was the subject of my question: There was a legal opinion obtained by eHealth with respect to some inappropriate practices, which we have obtained. The legal opinion notes that Mr. Patrick Lo, who is the acting VP of security of eHealth, was instructed by Mr. Allaudin Merali, then eHealth Ontario's senior vice-president of

corporate services and privacy, to telephone Anzen Consulting Inc. to ask Anzen to resubmit its proposal at a lower price. Premier, can you explain how this is possibly acceptable in a competitive tendering process?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** In fact, it is not an acceptable practice. The Auditor General raised the issue. We have responded to the issue. It is not an acceptable practice, and eHealth got independent legal advice to confirm that it was in fact not a criminal issue but it certainly wasn't an appropriate practice and one that we are absolutely committed to having learned from.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** The legal opinion which we obtained raises more questions than answers and certainly does not dispose of this issue. That's precisely why we need an independent public inquiry. The legal opinion mentions this obvious breach of the competitive bidding process but fails to deal with the ramifications of it.

Why did Mr. Merali give the instructions that he did? Who else did he speak to? Did anyone else know that the competitive bidding process was not being followed? All of these point to the need to ask serious questions that Ontarians deserve answers to. So my question is: Based on this new information, will the Premier do the right thing and finally call the public inquiry so that the people of Ontario will know what really happened?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. The member from Peterborough will watch his comments, please.

Minister.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** The member opposite knows full well that this was a situation that took place prior to the Auditor General reporting on eHealth. We have learned from that. We welcomed the Auditor General's recommendations and have acted on every single one of them. This will not happen again. It should never have happened, and we have put in place the right safeguards to ensure that it does not happen again.

We're moving forward on eHealth. It's critically important to the sustainability of our health care system that we have electronic health records, electronic medical records. It's the way of the future, and we on this side of the House are committed to moving forward, having learned the lessons we have learned, to bring eHealth to this province.

### GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Mr. Frank Klees:** My question is to the Premier. Given this government's track record of awarding contracts under suspect circumstances at the Ministry of Health, we now learn that the Ministry of Transportation has been engaged in its own questionable contracting practices.

Two major contracts were put out to public tender. The ministry ignored its own tender conditions and awarded the contracts to companies which were clearly non-compliant with the tender process. In both cases the matter was appealed to the courts and in both cases the

court ruled, “MTO failed to fulfill its duty of fairness to all bidders.” I want to know from the Premier: Why were these awards made when it was very clear that the conditions of the tender were not met, and why, after the Premier committed to an open and fair tendering process, are these continuing to happen in this government?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I don’t know what contract the member would be talking about in this particular case, because the contracts I’m aware of have been—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Is this the new voice of the Conservative Party over here, constantly nattering on that side?

The member has a serious question and a good question. He always asks in an appropriate manner. I’d be interested in further detail, because I’m not aware of a contract that would be in the manner which the member has described. The contracts that we’re involved in are free, open and transparent. If the member would give me some detail, I’ll be able to help him out, I think, in some subsequent answers to the supplementaries. He addresses a good question, all the time.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I’m surprised that the Minister of Transportation would not be aware of two major contracts which were referred to the courts to be resolved.

One of those contracts was worth \$20 million. It was awarded to Thomas Cavanagh Construction Ltd., even though its bid was non-compliant with specifications of MTO’s tender contracts. It took an appeal to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice to have the award of this contract quashed. Again, I repeat the words of the judges in this matter: “MTO failed to fulfill its duty of fairness to all bidders.” It ordered that the award of that \$20-million contract be quashed. I would like to know from the minister: Why does this practice continue in his ministry, and who will be held to account for these decisions?

1040

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I would like to be able to help the member more. I think the way he’s described it—and to be fair to him, I think he asks good and relevant questions in this House. Is this matter—the member can help me out with this—still before the courts? Is there an appeal going on at the present time? Because normally, we’re unable to discuss those if they are before the courts. But I’m very interested in what the member has to say.

I can tell him that as a result of the auditor’s recommendations, for instance, there is a situation where the Premier has prescribed that all contracts go through an appropriate procedure which is an accepted procedure. Under my mandate, that is what I am supposed to follow.

I’m very interested in what the member has to say. He can help me out and tell me whether the court proceedings have been completed at this time.

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

**Mr. Frank Klees:** It’s not up to me to brief the minister.

What I would like to know from the minister is whether or not he will commit now to the House to research not only this particular contract but the second contract, which his staff will be prepared to brief him on, and tell us today whether he will hold people in his ministry accountable, or will he be complicit by explaining this away in the same way that it has been done at the Ministry of Health?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I have a note that says there’s one. Highway 417 at Arnprior is before the courts at the present time.

There are a number of these that go to court when people who are not successful in them decide to go to court because they’re dissatisfied with the manner in which this has happened. Then the court makes its rulings.

Of course, I am prepared to look at all of these that have some history to them, but I can assure the member that at this time our policy is to have a free and open process. Oftentimes we’ll employ a third person, as you know, who is a referee, I guess the word would be, who looks at it from some distance and makes sure that it’s compliant with all government policies.

I would be delighted to continue this conversation with the member tomorrow.

## TAXATION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. As the holidays get closer, Ontario families are wondering how they’re going to make ends meet during these tough economic times. But the only gift that they can expect from the McGuinty government is a new tax that’s going to make life more expensive, a new tax that’s being rammed through this Legislature before the end of the year, even though the House of Commons won’t be debating it until next year.

My question is a simple one. Why the urgency? To the Premier: Why the urgency?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I know that my honourable colleague is nothing if not consistent in terms of not sharing the good news with the people of Ontario about their tax cuts. She knows that the package of tax reforms, yes, does include the harmonization of the provincial tax and the goods and services tax, but it also provides for a tax cut.

Were it within our power, we’d deliver that tax cut for Christmas, but we can’t. We’ll have to wait until the new year, the very beginning of the new year. With the able assistance of my honourable colleague, I know that we will have this matter completed before the House rises at the end of this year, to ensure that Ontarians can benefit from their tax cut, beginning on January 1, 2010.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** This Liberal government likes to pretend that it can just ignore the growing political storm that’s brewing in Ottawa over the HST. The Premier is betting that the federal HST legislation will sail



through the minority Parliament. But his friend, Michael Ignatieff, is holding a trump card that he refuses to reveal.

Will the Premier provide some clarity and tell the people of Ontario: Does he have Mr. Ignatieff's support or not?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I can't say anything other than I am very confident that the government of Canada will honour the wishes of the people of Ontario, as expressed by their duly elected Parliament, their Legislature and their government.

We are going to continue to debate this bill. There's going to be another vote. I expect that the result will be respected by the people of Canada, as expressed through the government of Canada. I have that confidence, and I'm sure that my honourable colleague does as well.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The Premier doesn't like to talk about the tough decisions his friends in Ottawa will need to make about the HST, and I understand that. Could it be because his federal Liberal cousins are listening to their constituents and getting cold feet about supporting a tax that the people simply don't want?

The Premier knows that without federal legislation, Ontario won't see a dime of the transition funding to implement the HST. Given that it's anybody's guess whether or not the federal HST bill will survive this minority Parliament, will the Premier commit today to shelving his plans for the HST if the House of Commons refuses to support it?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'll tell you why we have such continuing confidence and faith in our members of Parliament, from all political parties, to do the right thing in the circumstances: because what we're talking about is 600,000 more jobs for the people of Ontario, we're talking about \$47 billion more by way of investment in new business, and we're talking about increases of income of up to 9% more as a result of our package of tax reforms.

I think members of Parliament in the House of Commons understand that Ontario in particular has suffered greatly. Our families and communities have suffered greatly as a result of this global economic downturn. They know that we need to take strong action. They know that we need to be rather dramatic in terms of the reforms that we put in place. They know that we've given long and hard thought to what needs to be done, so I'm confident that we'll have their support, as I say, to create those 600,000 jobs for the people of Ontario.

#### TAXATION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The Premier may have faith in that. I wonder if he also has faith in Santa Claus bringing him a good gift this Christmas.

My next question is to the Premier. The Premier insists that prices are going to go down—

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** There are children watching. Leave Santa alone.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** There may be children watching, but children would not be acting the way some of you are acting right now.

**Interjection:** Does the Speaker have a list?

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The Speaker does have a list, and he has been checking who is naughty or nice.

Please continue.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. The Premier insists that prices are going to go down with the introduction of the harmonized sales tax, but yesterday he insisted that electricity prices are going to continue to rise. Would he like to correct the record and announce hydro rate cuts, or is he admitting that life is actually going to get a heck of a lot more expensive with the harmonized sales tax?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** First, let me say that, yes, Andrea, there is a Santa Claus, just so that we're clear on the record; I want to remove any doubt. I had hoped that was an issue that was beyond debate, for which there is a global consensus.

What I indicated yesterday was that, notwithstanding the fact that electricity prices have been frozen for five years in the province of Ontario, and we're very proud of that, over the course of the next several years—in fact, over the course of the next 10 years, when our package of tax reforms creates nearly 600,000 more jobs—it is likely that the price of milk will go up, the price of gasoline will go up, the price of electricity will go up and rents will go up. That's just what happens over the course of an extended period of time, and I think Ontarians understand that. But most importantly, in terms of hope, they can count on 600,000 more jobs.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Everyday people are writing to me and to the Premier about the impact of higher electricity prices and what that's going to mean for them and their families.

Grant Fraser writes this: "Adding this tax to necessities such as hydro is completely without reason, or caring about the citizens of Ontario...."

Pam Ross of Exeter writes this: "Hydro One has already increased their rates so much.... The cost of living has already increased enough and our wages are not increasing."

More of the tax burden is being shifted onto everyday people. If the HST is supposed to lower prices, why is this Premier not announcing hydro rate cuts?

1050

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I think what my honourable colleague is asking for is, in the circumstances, unreasonable. She is asking that we cut the cost of electricity. I think we've done the next best thing: We've held those rates steady for five continuing years. We think that's pretty important. I think it's a significant achievement and a real accomplishment.

Again, I would remind the honourable member that in addition to the harmonization of the provincial sales tax

and the federal goods and services tax—something that has long been called for by her party, this party and economists generally—we are cutting income taxes for the people of Ontario. Ninety-three per cent of the people of Ontario are going to have a permanent income tax cut. We're taking 90,000 Ontarians at the low-income level off the tax rolls forever.

So there is a balanced approach that we're bringing. In addition to holding those electricity rates steady for five years, we're now going to cut people's income taxes.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Sharol from northwestern Ontario puts it very simply: "This HST will put a lot of hardship on the people from this area who are already having a tough time due to the mill closures, high electricity bills, high prices at the grocery stores ... and it appears to me that this Liberal government just doesn't give a damn."

Can the Premier explain to Sharol and other Ontarians like her how an 8% tax on electricity is going to make her life more affordable?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** My colleague made reference to mill closures. My sense is that the individual who wrote to the leader of the NDP would not have sent that letter were the mill open today.

This is about jobs. It's about 600,000 more jobs for the people of Ontario. It's creating those economic conditions that lead businesses to expand, to make further investments in machinery and equipment and in people. That's what this is all about.

When they put harmonized sales taxes in place in the Maritimes, that led to a 12% increase on the part of business in new equipment, new machinery and new jobs.

This is all about creating more jobs. We've had a very strong consensus.

If the opposite parties were to check their records, they would see that on many separate instances in the past, they've been very much in favour of the kind of tax reforms that we're putting in place. I'd ask for their support once again, this time in a more public way, as we move forward to create 600,000 jobs for Ontarians.

#### GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Mr. Frank Klees:** To the Minister of Transportation: A company named Coco Paving received contracts for construction and repair of Highway 402, despite being submitted after the competitive bidding process was closed. It's more than a little odd that staff who are very accustomed with processing bids would make such a flagrant breach of tendering law. I want to know from the minister why his ministry awarded this contract, knowing that it did not comply with the tender terms of his ministry.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** As you would know, the ministry evaluates all of the bids that are put in. These are ministry officials who have some long experience in the development of highways in the province of Ontario,

or the repair or expansion of highways. They do an evaluation according to the materials that are provided and many different circumstances. These are public servants who have done this—when you were the minister, when my good friend Norm Sterling was minister, when everybody was a minister. They look at all of the bids that are put forward. Sometimes it's the content of the steel, for instance—whether there's Canadian content or no Canadian content—and these officials make the decision on that basis. There are, from time to time, companies that will go to court to challenge this. That is their right.

In the Highway 417 situation, that is still before the courts. These companies have that right to go before the courts, and when the courts make a determination, the ministry will comply—

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

**Mr. Frank Klees:** This matter, too, was referred to the courts because it was such a flagrant breaking of tendering law. I would suggest to the minister that his staff knew full well that this bid came in after the closing of the bid.

What is interesting is that Coco Paving went from receiving \$1.6 million of work from the province in 2002 to \$113 million last year. Did the fact that Jenny Coco is a big donor to the McGuinty Liberals and that she is a former president of a Windsor riding association for the Liberal Party have anything to do with the faulty decision that was obviously made by the Ministry of Transportation?

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment of impugning motive.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I withdraw that.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** It's the old story of the opposition: They state it and then they withdraw it, and of course it's out there on the record for people to hear.

I can assure the member that when the ministry is letting contracts, the ministry goes through the procedure that it has. It's entirely done by the ministry officials, who are civil servants who have served under your government, under the NDP and under Liberal governments. They make the determination, they make the recommendations, as to which contracts shall be awarded. They do not take into consideration any of the material that the member has mentioned in his supplementary at all. These are fine public servants who over the years have served your party when you were in power, the Liberals and the NDP when they were in power. Companies that are unsatisfied with the procedure have the opportunity to go to court, and do, and the ministry complies with the court rulings.

#### SKILLS TRAINING

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. After the first seven months of the Second Career program in

2008, only 1,100 unemployed workers were enrolled in the program. Under pressure from the NDP, you changed the rules and you got more people. Last summer you said, "Holy cow, what are we going to do with all these people?" And so instead of dealing positively with all the new applicants and the greater number of applicants you had, you decided to reduce the number of applicants.

Minister, why have you decided to return to the bad old days when Second Career was just a token program?

**Hon. John Milloy:** It's unfortunate that I only have a minute or two to correct the record on what the member brought forward.

I'm very proud that our government brought forward a training program to help unemployed individuals who were looking to pursue long-term training in a college or a private career college. We set up a program for 20,000 spaces over three years. After approximately 15 months, we could report to the Legislature and to the people of Ontario that we had 21,000 people come forward. This government, under the leadership of the Premier and the Minister of Finance, made a decision that instead of declaring victory and moving on, we were going to continue this program.

Over the last number of months we have continued to accept individuals into the Second Career program on a limited basis, and just recently, about 10 days ago, we brought forward a new framework for the program under which we are assessing applicants that have come forward—

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

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I read on the Second Career website where it says, in answer to the question: "Do the new guidelines mean fewer people will be able to receive Second Career support?" "Yes," says the website. And also the website says—his, not mine—"Participants may be asked to make a greater contribution to their training, depending on their financial situation." I wish I had more time to read more from the website, and I don't.

All the analysts agree that there can be no complete recovery while unemployment hovers at around 9%. You have qualified applicants and you have spaces. Why would you limit access to a job creation program that you claim is working? Do you not want Ontarians working and contributing to the economy?

**Hon. John Milloy:** We welcomed 21,000 people into the Second Career program, and a little over a week ago we announced our plans to welcome 8,000 more people into Ontario government training programs. I am not going to apologize for a program that he stood up and made fun of day after day.

At the end of this program we will have 29,000 people in training in the province of Ontario, preparing themselves for new careers, preparing themselves to move forward in an economy that is under transformation.

I am proud of the leadership of this government; I am proud that we have been able to reach out to almost 30,000 people to make sure that they have the retraining opportunities that they need.

## VOLUNTEERS

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. A recent column in the Toronto Star speaks about the future of volunteerism and the lack of opportunities that will be present for baby boomers upon retirement. According to the column, in just over a year, Canada will start experiencing the largest wave of retirement in its history. There is concern that organizations don't have the infrastructure to manage volunteers. They are currently facing difficulties with orienting, training and integrating volunteers.

We're all aware of the economic and social benefits of volunteering, and baby boomers have so much to contribute. It's Ontario that stands to gain from their contributions. What does the minister intend on doing to assist the non-profit sector to keep volunteerism both strong and viable here in Ontario?

1100

**Hon. Michael Chan:** I want to thank the honourable member from Oak Ridges–Markham for her question. John F. Kennedy once said famously, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." After all these long years, it is still relevant in the lives of the five million Ontarians who volunteer and give so much to this province day in and day out. We understand their level of commitment. This is why we have helped hundreds of volunteer organizations through 60 partnership projects to retain and manage volunteers.

I'm proud to say that Ontario is a better place because of our volunteers, and we are here to support them.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Active citizenship and volunteerism is at the core of our way of life in Ontario. Ontarians who are actively engaged in the public life of the community have a positive impact on the quality of life and on our economic and social well-being. Communities across Ontario depend heavily on volunteers.

Governments of all levels need to support these individuals and organizations to ensure that there are necessary resources available to welcome volunteers with open arms. However, in order to further volunteerism to thrive at its highest levels, we also need to recognize volunteers and commemorate their outstanding work in our communities.

What is the government doing to ensure that these remarkable citizens are getting the recognition and appreciation they truly deserve?

**Hon. Michael Chan:** Our government recognizes outstanding citizens for their accomplishments through the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. Recognition applauds both commitment and hard work. It also becomes a symbol of inspiration for many to follow.

The Lieutenant Governor recently honoured 11 such outstanding individuals. Among them was Bilaal Rajan. One of many accomplishments was fundraising more than \$5 million. He is only 13 years old. Another individual, Barbara Edwards, has served as a foster home mother for 63 years. She continues to provide a loving

home for children in need. Ontario has many wonderful volunteers, and we are proud of them.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Norm Miller:** My question is for the Premier. Two weeks ago, a company by the name of Coco Paving played host to a tour stop for your so-called HST consultations. Jenny Coco, the CEO of Coco Paving, is a past president of the Windsor West Liberal Riding Association and also a big donor to the McGuinty Liberals.

Premier, how many other so-called consultations were set up by big Liberal donors?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** That is, in fact, the case; in fact, Ms. Coco was the past president of the Windsor West Federal Liberal Association, that's absolutely correct. Like a number of other business people and like people like Jim Flaherty who have been speaking out in public in favour of the harmonized sales tax, this government will continue to advocate on behalf of the tax reform package we brought forward.

It will create some 600,000 new jobs and it is the right plan for Ontario. It is the right plan. It is the right plan going forward to strengthen this economy so that people in Ontario can find work as we come out of this recession and we can grow a better and stronger, more prosperous economy for the future.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** To the Premier: If it's the right plan for Ontario, why don't you proudly go around the province and listen to the people of Ontario?

This isn't the first time Coco Paving helped you orchestrate so-called consultations; you did the same thing in Sudbury. But according to Northern Ontario Business, what you call consultation was nothing more than "a press conference in Sudbury."

Premier, will you give up these sham consultations and commit to holding real public hearings on the HST?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** The Ontario Road Builders' Association, I can assure you, has a lot of Conservative representatives, including Ms. Coco, and that's who sponsored that forum. My goodness.

I did find some interesting quotes here that I thought I would share with the House in terms of other people. Here's what the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills said, and this is in Hansard: "The Ontario government should harmonize its provincial sales tax with the federal goods and services tax." And here's what the same member said in standing committee: "I think that a good statement would be that the committee now agrees with the Conservative position in a minority report two years ago, that we combine the GST and the PST."

You can cast aspersions against Ontario road builders, people who create jobs, people who act fairly. You shouldn't do that. We are having a debate—

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

#### COMPOSTING

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des soins de longue durée. The McGuinty government is proposing to allow composting companies to mix sewage sludge—which is full of toxics, heavy metals, PCBs and disease pathogens—into its compost. There will be no restriction as to where this compost is spread or how it can be distributed. Since companies get paid to dispose of sewage sludge, they will add the highest allowable level of toxic material to our compost, which will find its way to our farms, our backyard gardens and our parks, and also find its way into our water and our food.

My question is, has the minister explored the potential health and disease implications of this deregulation of compost?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I want to thank the member for the question, and I certainly will raise it with the Minister of the Environment at my earliest opportunity.

I can assure the member opposite that the health of Ontarians is of paramount importance to this government, and that's why we've moved forward on many initiatives to protect their health. I would much rather protect Ontarians' health than treat them once they become ill. I know that's a philosophy shared by all members of this House. So as we move to reduce toxins in our environment, we have banned pesticides. We are continuing to improve the health of Ontarians. It's critical to the sustainability of our health care system and, more importantly, to the health of Ontarians.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** There have been constituents from the village of Vernon who have contacted the minister and asked her to take action to put a moratorium in place. Sewage sludge is becoming more and more toxic. The US Environmental Protection Agency found pharmaceutical products, steroids and flame retardants in sludge. That's in addition to the heavy metals, the bacteria, the viruses and the allergens we all find in this. A study has found that sickness from airborne pathogens now can be found up to a kilometre downwind from the sludge-spreading area. Yet the government still does not collect information about sludge-related health complaints.

Once the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe has been contaminated, it will be too late. Why won't the minister call for an immediate moratorium on sludge spreading until we know that it is safe?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** As I said earlier, I will raise the issue with the Minister of the Environment. What I can tell you is that the composting and green bin programs are a very important part of our waste diversion program. Organics make up about a third of our waste. We know there have been some challenges and that there is work to be done. We want to do more to encourage organics diversion, and we want to make sure we do it right. That's why we're proposing new standards that would ensure that compost is produced and used in Ontario in a manner that protects the environment and public health.

The new guideline includes best practices for compost facilities, as well as new categories for compost material, and there will be different categories for material and appropriate standards. Our proposal is encouraging more composting while ensuring that it's done in a manner that protects our people, our communities and our environment.

1110

## TAXATION

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** My question is for the Minister of Revenue. We've once again heard allegations that there has not been enough public consultation and debate regarding the harmonized sales tax. But it has been my experience that since the budget was introduced, Ontarians in every corner of the province have been fully able to voice their concerns and discuss tax reform with their MPPs, which we also hear about in this chamber.

Each member of the opposition and the third party has spoken at length in opposition to our tax cuts and job creation, but important debate on this issue continues to be delayed. As the leader of the third party has said, "I would put my requests to Mr. Hudak and ask him to actually stop playing the silly games."

Minister, can you tell us how you are conducting the public debate and consultation on the HST?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** I want to say to my friend that of course I've been fortunate to have many, many invitations from right across Ontario. I think I've done well over three dozen of these consultations across the province. I've made sure that I've been able to get to every corner of Ontario, and I have been able to go into parts of Ontario that are represented by those opposite.

For example, on September 25 I met with the North-western Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce in the riding of Kenora-Rainy River. As a matter of fact, I believe the member for Kenora-Rainy River was there. I saw him there. On September 30 I met with the Simcoe and District Chamber of Commerce in the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk. On October 20 I spoke at the Wasaga Beach Mayor's Breakfast, organized by the chamber of commerce in the riding of Simcoe-Grey. I know my good friend from Simcoe-Grey wasn't able to be there, but when I was introduced by a friend of his, he wanted everybody to know that he thought that I was a pretty good guy. I really appreciate the member from Simcoe-Grey passing that along.

But at every one of those—

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

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** Those opposed to the HST and our package that will cut taxes and create jobs have been actively fear-mongering and spreading mistruths. Some of the common false arguments that they present include: that the HST is an excuse for producers and service providers to gouge consumers; that the HST will raise costs for small businesses; that the HST will hurt lower-income Ontarians; that the HST is just a tax

grab; that the HST isn't business-friendly; and that the HST should be delayed until the recovery is underway.

Minister, these are serious claims that have Ontarians very concerned. Could the minister please address these claims? Is anyone going to be hurt by the HST?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** I would say to all members that Roger Martin, the dean of the Rotman School of Management, and James Milway, the executive director of research at the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, authored an article in today's Globe and Mail entitled "Debunking Myths about the HST." And what do they tell us about these claims that are being made? Well, first of all it says:

—"the experience in Quebec and Atlantic Canada was that market forces pressured" companies "to pass on their savings to consumers";

—"the costs for small businesses ... will decrease, because they will no longer have to pay" PST on their inputs;

—"the tax reform package provides for sales tax credits aimed" specifically "at lower-income Ontarians";

—"the province is reducing"—oh—"personal and corporate income taxes and providing tax credits to help compensate for higher sales taxes paid by lower-income Ontarians"; and

—"the HST is Ontario-friendly."

A recent study done by tax expert Dr. Jack Mintz says that the tax reform will estimate some 591,000—

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

## ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** A question to the Premier: The Caledonia standoff is in its 1,367th day. Three and a half years ago—on May 9, 2006, to be exact—I stood in this House and I warned you about the breach of security with respect to the power system in Caledonia. Just two weeks later the lights went out.

Three and a half years ago the Niagara-to-Caledonia hydro tower project was ground to a halt by militants. Premier, what headway have you made since 2006 with respect to keeping this power tower project moving forward?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'll refer this to the Attorney General.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** We know it's a very difficult and very challenging situation in that part of the province. We know that emotions in these situations can run very high. We have a number of different agencies, the police, working with the community, working very hard with my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and his officials to try and not only defuse situations but to try and ensure the long-term resolution of this, which, of course, at the end of the day, involves a federal land claim where we need a long-term federal solution and assistance on this area. I'll be pleased to refer—

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

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Look, it's been three and a half years. We've had trestles from these power towers being used as blockades. This Niagara reinforcement project is massive. It runs the length of the Niagara peninsula, from the Allanburg transfer station at Thorold up to the Caledonia transfer station and beyond to Middleport—800 megawatts of transmission capacity. I'm told that it was meant to serve 300,000 people, but we've had Mohawk warriors on top of these towers, not Hydro One workers.

Premier, or various ministers: After three and a half years, just how much longer will this project be blockaded?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** It's a very difficult situation, but it's not just been three and a half years; it's been 200 years. If there's a 200-year-old dispute, and the federal government has jurisdiction over land claims, I know my friend would want to join us, would want to ask the federal government to become as engaged as we are, and get to the table as we are. Assist us in finding the resolution that all of the residents in that area, and in the province of Ontario, want. It's a very challenging issue—three and a half years, my friend refers to, and the other 196 and a half that this issue has actually been alive. It's time for all to come to the table in good faith and find the way forward.

#### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. The number of Ontarians receiving out-of-country medical treatment is skyrocketing. An investigation by the Metroland newspaper chain found that OHIP approvals for out-of-country care have risen 450% in the last eight years—and so have this government's contracts with American health providers.

My question is, will the Premier explain why there has been such a dramatic increase in out-of-country care?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** The member opposite is absolutely right: There has been a dramatic increase in out-of-country health care provided and covered through OHIP. We are very focused on bringing that number back down.

I'd like to talk about one of the big investments that we have made, and actually, it's headed by a renowned physician from Hamilton. We're investing \$75 million to provide in-country, in-Ontario, bariatric surgery. We currently spend significant amounts of money sending people outside of Ontario for that bariatric surgery. We can do it for less money and we can provide the service right here in Ontario, where we can also provide the follow-up support that people need after they've had that surgery.

We're committed to bringing back down the number of dollars that we spend out-of-country. That's just one example. I'll have others in the supplementary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The reality is that Ontarians are facing cuts to their local hospitals—to beds, to staff,

to services, and even entire emergency rooms. Patients are losing access to local care as the McGuinty government shells out more money to private American providers. Rather than sending more and more Ontarians out-of-country for medical basics like MRIs and CT scans, why isn't this government investing more money to improve services for a greater number of Ontarians right here at home?

**1120**

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** If the member had listened to my answer to the first question, she'd understand that we are investing a lot more here, not just in programs that were previously covered out-of-country, but in the full range of health care services. By any measure, health care is significantly better now than it was when we took office in 2003.

One of the other areas where we have seen tremendous growth in out-of-country expenditures is in the area of genetic testing. We are working on a plan to repatriate genetic testing back to Ontario—the five most common forms of genetic testing we think can be done right here in Ontario. The new program is expected to be up and running within the next several months, sometime in 2010.

Another area where we've made great investments is in new cancer care and drug treatments, which will save taxpayers some \$15 million in out-of-country expenses. There's more—

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

#### UNIVERSITY FUNDING

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, here in Ontario, enrolment at our post-secondary institutions is growing. More and more people are choosing to go on to college, university or an apprenticeship, and they are choosing Ontario schools.

In my community, the University of Guelph has seen a tremendous amount of growth over the past four years, and I know that this is the case for most institutions across the province. Although this is welcome news, there is no doubt that it is creating additional pressure on our universities.

We are all aware of the studies that cite the need for a highly educated, highly skilled workforce to compete in the new knowledge-based economy. In fact, it is estimated that 70% of future jobs will require some form of post-secondary education. Minister, what are you doing to assist universities so that—

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

**Hon. John Milloy:** I want to thank the member for the question, which I think is very appropriate considering the fact that we have representatives from the Council of Ontario Universities here with us at Queen's Park today, and I know that all members want to welcome them as they undertake meetings with various MPPs.

The honourable member is quite right: Since 2003, we have seen a tremendous increase in post-secondary education of about 100,000 more students; 84,000 of them have been in Ontario's universities, and I've been very proud of the support that our government has offered these institutions. Since 2003, operating funding for universities has increased by 64%, while at the same time we have significantly increased per-student funding.

I was very pleased that the most recent budget contained an additional \$150 million to help our colleges and universities alleviate growth pressures. At the same time, over the course of the summer we rolled out \$1.5 billion—

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

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** Recently, we've heard a lot about the green economy and what that will mean for the future of Ontario. I understand that Ontario universities are pledging to do even more in the future to engage in best practices in all areas of sustainability on their campuses.

Our universities play a key role in promoting sustainable practices, integrating sustainability concepts into teaching and research, and going greener right across their operations. In fact, at the University of Guelph, students even voted to support energy conservation retrofits through a charge on their student fees; I have a very green campus. And universities across Ontario are conducting research that will not only help us tackle climate change, but create businesses and jobs that will make Ontario a global leader in this high-demand sector.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How is the government helping Ontario universities fulfill this green commitment?

**Hon. John Milloy:** I'd like to congratulate the leadership shown by both the administration and students at Ontario's universities, and to just give a few examples of how we're partnering with them to make sure they can continue to put forward the green agenda.

I mentioned in my first answer the \$1.5-billion knowledge infrastructure program. Let me give you a few green examples from that capital program. Through KIP, the University of Guelph, to cite just one example, will develop a local environmental cluster, and at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, a \$45-million investment will help build the energy systems and nuclear science research centre. In addition, the Ministry of the Environment is providing \$800,000 annually for three research environmental chairs. Two chairs in green chemistry and green engineering will focus on emerging fields of science that aim to develop greener approaches and processes—

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

#### HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** To the Minister of Community Safety: The growing scourge of human trafficking and exploitation of vulnerable young women in this province is a human tragedy and a societal issue that

must be confronted. All too frequently we learn of young, vulnerable women being lured to Canada by organized crime groups with false employment promises, or smuggled across our border, and then mercilessly exploited for profit. Minister, this is a unique crime calling for a unique response that recognizes the special circumstances of victims.

Tamara Cherry of the Sun newspaper chain has documented these cases across the country. Just three weeks ago she detailed that of the six provinces analyzed, only one, Ontario, had no special program in place to deal with human trafficking. Minister, what possible explanation do you have for ignoring this growing problem?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** Well, the exact opposite is in fact the truth. The member outlines a very real problem, but what he says that is incorrect—or not perfectly accurate, I should say—is that we are ignoring the problem. He's saying that the Ontario Provincial Police and police services across Ontario are ignoring this problem. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our Ontario Provincial Police service and municipal police services across the province are in very active discussion and deployment of many different techniques to ensure we do all that we can to eliminate this very vile act and crime.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** The member may object to one word that I used, but the reality is that the analysis showed that Ontario, of the provinces analyzed, is the only province without a special program. Minister, human trafficking will continue to ruin lives and negatively affect communities while you and your government take your Caledonia look-the-other-way approach. There was a time years ago, when you sat over here, when the sexual abuse of young women moved you to propose measures to rescue victims from exploitation. That's the kind of can-do approach we have to see today.

Minister, will you commit to reviewing actions taken by other jurisdictions involving police, immigration, victim services and community groups to help rescue the victims of human trafficking, and to take action to ensure the full force of the law is brought to bear against those who exploit them?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** There's absolutely no question that we are constantly looking at ways of ensuring that community safety is enhanced.

With reference to my life over in opposition, we formed the government and we established a ministry responsible for children and youth services, something the previous government refused to do.

I do take exception again to him even proposing in his innocuous way that the OPP are ignoring this issue. The OPP, municipal police services—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd ask the honourable member from Leeds–Grenville to withdraw that.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** It's accurate, but I withdraw.

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

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** He withdrew the comment.

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** You didn't hear what he said before, but that's all right. It doesn't make any difference, because I'll stand behind our police services across the province of Ontario any day. I'll stand behind their interaction with Canadian Border Services and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I'll stand behind the unique and original approaches that they're using to combat this crime, any day and—

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

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I rise today to ask the minister responsible for women's issues a question about violence against women. According to the government's own data, eight out of 10 victims of spousal abuse are women, and in order to escape violence, women are using temporary support shelters in record numbers, with over 30,000 women and children in shelters in 2008. Later today, Ontario women's shelters will be asking for a written commitment to end violence against women. Since the women's directorate wasn't mentioned in the 2009 budget, is this government prepared to make the investments necessary to make this commitment?

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten:** I'm very pleased to have an opportunity in this House to speak about this government's commitment to protecting women and children. That commitment comes from the highest levels. As you might know, this is an area that I have worked on for more than 25 years. I was very pleased a number of years ago to be able to lead the consultations on the government's domestic violence action plan, and that action plan is why we are now investing more than \$208 million this year to protect women from violence and to support victims of abuse. This includes \$87 million for the domestic violence action plan and \$18.8 million in investments in women's shelters.

We've made a lot of progress, but we are not naive to the realities of women's lives across this province. We know there is more work to do, and we're committed to doing that work.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** The truth is that this government is not addressing women's economic independence. In Ontario, women earn 71 cents for every dollar earned by a man. Over a lifetime, this pay gap adds up to astonishing financial losses for women, ranging from \$700,000 to \$2 million, depending on levels of education. Because this government underfunds the Pay Equity Commission, neglects child care, and is not raising the living standards of women, they are left in a financial trap and vulnerable to domestic violence.

Minister, when will this government address these serious issues facing women?

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten:** If I had more time, I would have an opportunity to provide the member opposite with some of the details about the important work that this government has done since we were privileged to take office in 2003.

But let me just say for the moment, speaking directly to employment services, that our government is making changes to employment services and training networks, so that services are easier for women to access and use. The new employment service models will offer a one-stop shop that will put clients first.

We are working across ministries, and that is the approach we have taken since 2003, under the leadership of the Premier, bringing all ministries to the table to better protect women and their children, to give them economic independence. It is something that we focus on each and every day. It's something that I'll be privileged to talk to with the group joining us in the Legislature later today. It's work that we're proud of, it's work that we're continuing to do, and it's work that we will not stop until women are not in harm's way. That's our commitment.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1132 to 1300.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** It's my pleasure today to welcome to the House Sharon Mousseau. She's the deputy reeve of Beckwith township in Lanark county. She's here today with a group of fine individuals. She's also with Lanark County Interval House, and is here with Interval House for their lobby day today. Thank you very much for being here.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I have special guests here today, but a very special one—first of all, my grandson Nathaniel. This is Nathaniel, who's 14 months old, along with mother Julie and father Chris and mother-in-law Jackie McVeigh. Of special note, Jackie, who is a mediator with the Ontario Labour Relations Board, is retiring as of Monday, so we should thank her for her work.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have the very special honour of recognizing one of Mississauga's leading citizens: Jim Murray, who is here in the members' east gallery as my guest.

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht:** Mr. Speaker, I am very delighted to introduce to you Mrs. Appoline Aldea. She's a director of the Silayan Filipino community centre. She tells me she came here especially to watch you rein in those rambunctious MPPs.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I can assure your guest that I'll work very hard at reining in the member from Davenport.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### TAXATION

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I rise today to get on the record still more concerns from the people in Parry Sound—Muskoka regarding the proposed harmonized sales tax.



Theresa, a pensioner from Parry Sound, sent me a one-line e-mail: "Can't afford the hydro bills now ... this new tax will cost so much, I may lose my home. Please have a heart and stop this tax."

John of Port Carling e-mailed this:

"My wife and I are close to 64 years old, with no pension money coming our way other than early CPP.

"My wife was laid off as of [the] end of August 2009 and unable to find other employment.

"What appeared to be our living money has gone to hell in a handbasket with the decline in the financial markets in Canada. Our utility bills—as we know it now—subject to the new proposed HST would be on approximately \$6,500 at 8% equals \$520."

Allan, a concerned taxpayer, writes:

"I am very concerned about the upcoming HST.

"As a middle-class Canadian, I cannot afford to pay more taxes.

"With each day the Liberal government increases the burden on our shoulders. Why do we have to pay for their incompetent management of the province? As far as I can tell, the Liberals have done nothing to improve the standard of living amongst Ontarians. Rather, they have made it harder for us to survive, especially in this challenging economy.

"Please do whatever you can to put an end to this madness."

If Mr. McGuinty refuses to take hearings to our communities, then we, as legislators, must continue to bring their concerns to this House.

#### ROUGE VALLEY AJAX AND PICKERING HOSPITAL

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** This past Friday saw the opening of phase 1 of Ajax and Pickering hospital's largest expansion ever. MPP Wayne Arthurs and myself, and my wife, Donna, who is a past RN at the hospital, also attended this large gathering.

Our great staff have been treating over 40,000 emergency department patients per year in a space designed for 20,000. This new, ultra-modern emergency department is built for growth capacity to treat some 60,000 patients. It leaves one more major opening within the year coming to complete Ajax's largest hospital ever, costing approximately \$100 million.

This massive redevelopment project, primarily funded by the province of Ontario, has had ongoing tremendous business and community support.

Guests included Janet Ecker, Rouge Valley Health board chair; Wayne Arthurs, our MPP for Pickering–Scarborough East; myself for Ajax–Pickering; Deborah Hammons, CEO of the Central East LHIN; John Wiersma, Rouge Valley Health Foundation chair; Gordon Simmonds, chair of Rouge Valley's Vital Links campaign; Sonia Peczeniuk, vice-president of medical affairs; and Dr. Gary Mann, chief of emergency, whose wife and family joined him on this special occasion. Our two mayors, Mayor Dave Ryan and Mayor Steve Parish,

from Pickering and Ajax respectively, joined us for the photo op, and our Minister of Health was so impressed, she's going to join us tomorrow for a tour of that same hospital.

#### ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I would like to draw your attention to frequently asked questions on the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs website. Under Douglas Creek Estates, a question is posed: Why are water and power still being supplied to the site, and who is paying for this? The answer is: "Phase 1 of the proposed Douglas Creek Estates was already serviced with water and hydro as it was under construction. For safety and health reasons, the province has kept the power and water working on the property for several months.

"The utility bills are currently being sent to the Ontario Realty Corp., as the property manager."

However, just a little while ago, the last line of that same answer read, "... the Ontario Realty Corp. is in turn sending invoices to Six Nations band council for reimbursement." That answer had not been altered in three years, until we filed FOI 202, which asked for copies of the bills for gas, water and hydro in the possession of the ORC for the Douglas Creek Estates.

It is my opinion that this government realized we were on to them that the Ontario taxpayer had been footing the bill for utilities for all three years, not the Six Nations, even though it was suggested that that was actually the case. So instead of coming clean, Mr. McGuinty has edited his own Web page, hoping the Ontario taxpayer would not notice. My question: Is that not deceitful and misleading?

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw both comments, please.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I respectfully withdraw both comments.

#### ORLÉANS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PEOPLE'S CHOICE BUSINESS AWARDS

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** Last week, the business community of Orléans celebrated its accomplishments at the seventh annual Orléans Chamber of Commerce People's Choice Business Awards. This year's program was extremely successful, with many businesses being nominated for the first time and with voting up 40% over last year.

I would like to congratulate the following award recipients selected by their peers for being the best in their field: LMNOP Toys and Games, new business of the year; Cedar Valley Restaurant, family business of the year; Cuisine et Passion, retail business of the year; Pilon Hamilton Real Estate, service business of the year; Dr. Michael Mattinen, professional of the year; Arts Ottawa East, community support non-profit organization of the year; Rangoli Indian Cuisine and Sweets, restaurant of the year; Joanne Springett, customer service excellence

award; Leslie Scott, young business person of the year; the Mortgage Centre, corporate citizen of the year; Eric St. Cyr of Eric's Academy of Music for business person of the year; and finally, Gerry Dust of Dust Evans Lawyers/Avocats, who received the Chamber Champion award for his years of service to the local business community.

Congratulations to the nominees, the organizers and the executive of the Orléans chamber, including their chair, Mark Thibault, and executive director Peter Stewart.

#### DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I rise to urge members of this House to support my bill to end the 14-week-old DriveTest strike, which has affected over 370,000 people so far, and thousands more with each passing day.

Since I introduced the bill, my office has been flooded with calls and e-mails from people from across the province concerned with the effects this strike is having on their livelihood. One of those people is Nancy Wilder, whose daughter is forced to pay \$20 for each day the strike continues in travel expenses just to get to college and to her part-time job. She wrote, "Something must be done. In light of the economic times, a strike is not in the best interest of anyone."

Diane Hodges, who operates driver education centres in St. Thomas, Aylmer and Tillsonburg, writes, "Findley's Driver Education has been in business for over 35 years. I have now worked here for 30 years and took over the ownership three years ago. I have never seen business so bad. Our enrolment is the lowest it has been in years. I really don't know how much longer we can stay in business if there isn't a turnaround by Christmas."

Even Aurora DriveTest examiner David Sepejak said in the York Region News, "I can't speak for the whole union, but I get the feeling everyone is ready to go back to work."

It's time for the government to step in and help the struggling small businesses, their employees, students, truck drivers and those who need to see this strike ended in order to pay their bills and keep their jobs or in fact get a job in the first place.

1310

#### HEALTH PROMOTION

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Today I want to talk about the lack of leadership in health promotion by the McGuinty government.

The smoke-free Ontario program was cut by \$17 million, yet treating tobacco-related illness costs us \$1.7 billion each and every year. These cuts make no sense. They are penny wise but pound foolish. Last December, this House voted to ban individually sold candy-flavoured cigarillos that are very popular among young people and hook them onto tobacco, yet, a year later, the Minister of Health Promotion has failed to enact the law.

The Legislature voted to support my private member's bill that would force large chain restaurants to post calories on their menus—calorie labelling. This bill seems to have died in committee while the obesity epidemic keeps growing.

A Liberal MPP brought forward a private member's bill that would prevent minors from using tanning beds, yet despite evidence that tanning is more dangerous and carcinogenic than arsenic, the minister has let this bill gather dust for almost two years.

Ontario still doesn't have a coordinated breast-feeding strategy: 90% of women want to breastfeed; 20% are successful.

We need to do more. A proactive health ministry would save billions of dollars down the road. This minister is failing. We need one who is ready to act.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. David Zimmer:** We have heard a lot from the opposition recently that Liberal members are not consulting and meeting with their constituents regarding Bill 218, the tax reform package, including the HST piece. The fact of the matter is that Liberal members have been meeting with their constituents. I've been meeting with members of my riding in Willowdale to discuss the tax reform package and how it will benefit families and businesses, and I know that my Liberal colleagues in our caucus have been doing the same thing on a regular basis.

I began with a post-budget breakfast in Willowdale shortly after the budget was announced. I continue to hold weekly meetings with individual constituents every Friday of every week. I have had the following group meetings in Willowdale: the West Lansing Homeowners Association, the Silverview Community Association, the Yonge Corridor Condo Association, the Bayview Village Homeowners' Association, the Newtonbrook United Church, and, just last night, the Bayview-Cummer Neighbourhood Association. I've got upcoming meetings planned over the next two months.

These meetings have been both frank and productive. People understand that we have to rebuild our manufacturing economy and that our tax reform package is the key to rebuilding our manufacturing economy, an economy which supports jobs, health care, education and our social services net. It's about saving jobs; it's about saving our economy. It's not about, as the Tories are doing, deserting this House, deserting the debate.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** My colleagues and I believe the people of Ontario deserve to hear the full truth about how our government's tax reforms will impact families and businesses. That is why I have already met with 11 community organizations and ratepayer groups in my riding, free of charge, to discuss Ontario's tax reform package. More than 1,000 Mississauga South residents have taken advantage of these public meetings to participate in open

discussions and to present their views. They also give me the opportunity to dispel some of the myths and fictions about the HST that have been circulating.

Our tax reform package, which includes \$10.6 billion in personal income tax cuts and \$4.5 billion in business tax cuts, will result in a \$3.4-billion decrease in provincial revenues. That is not a tax grab.

I have also shared with them independent reports like the one from TD Economics which predicts that consumer prices in Ontario will increase a modest 0.7%, given the associated cost savings. At the same time, Jack Mintz's report estimates that the increased economic activity resulting from these tax reforms will cause annual incomes of workers to increase up to 8.8%.

Experts agree that harmonizing the inefficient provincial sales tax with the federal GST is the single most important thing we can do to stimulate our economy. It will create 600,000 net new jobs and increase capital investment by \$47 billion.

I will continue to meet with residents and businesses in my riding to discuss and answer questions about tax reform. I encourage all members from both sides of the House to do the same and to tell the whole truth.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** On New Year's Day, Ontarians stand poised to receive the largest tax cut in the province's history. Before the Legislature stands a budget bill to permanently cut personal and corporate tax rates, permanently double seniors' property tax grants and implement permanent sales tax credits. The Conservatives and the NDP are opposed to having Ontarians receive the cuts to the taxes they pay. The Conservatives and the NDP are opposed to a comprehensive program to create an estimated 591,000 net new jobs, attract \$47 billion in new investment and see real incomes rise by nearly 9%.

Across Ontario, more than 160 business groups, service clubs and ratepayers' groups have heard from their MPPs throughout the year, but the Conservatives and the NDP have disingenuously called for public hearings in order to stall the legislation and deny Ontarians the tax cuts their government has proposed for them. More than 300 members of both the Mississauga and Brampton boards of trade heard from seven of their MPPs at a large public post-budget breakfast. All our Rotary Clubs in western Mississauga have had the chance to ask questions. Seniors' groups, ethnic communities and business groups have all been heard. Now it's time to cut costs for Ontarians and build our province for the 21st century.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd ask the honourable member from Mississauga–Streetsville to withdraw the comment he made that, in my mind, was unparliamentary.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Well, Speaker, if you feel one was improper, I will withdraw it.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I want to commend the member from Mississauga South

for conducting his consultation without charge, which is—

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

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

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

Bill 203, An Act to allow for better cross-border policing co-operation with other Canadian provinces and territories and to make consequential amendments to the Police Services Act / Projet de loi 203, Loi visant à permettre une meilleure coopération avec les autres provinces et les territoires du Canada en ce qui concerne les services policiers transfrontaliers et à apporter des modifications corrélatives à la Loi sur les services policiers.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1317 to 1322.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gélinas, France	Pendergast, Leeanna
Albanese, Laura	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Barrett, Toby	Johnson, Rick	Rinaldi, Lou
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Ruprecht, Tony
Best, Margaret	Kular, Kuldeep	Sandals, Liz
Bisson, Gilles	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Levac, Dave	Sterling, Norman W.
Dickson, Joe	Mangat, Amrit	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Opposed?

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 44; the nays are 0.

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

*Report adopted.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent from this House to bring

forward for immediate debate Bill 225, brought forward by my colleague from Simcoe North, that would end the current DriveTest strike.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member from Newmarket–Aurora seeks unanimous consent to bring Bill 225 forward. Agreed? I'm afraid I heard a no.

## PETITIONS

### TAXATION

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised Ontarians he would not raise their taxes and then broke that promise after getting elected; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty also said it would be ‘silly’ to raise taxes in a time of economic challenge; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s new plan to blend the provincial sales tax with the GST into one harmonized tax, the 13% Dalton sales tax (DST), scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2010, represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when Ontarians are still feeling the effects of the recession; and

“Whereas the 13% DST will increase the cost of a long list of items not previously subject to the provincial sales tax, including electricity, cable, gas, transit fares, haircuts, newspapers and magazines, your morning cup of coffee—all things Ontarians depend on every day—making it even more difficult for families and seniors to make ends meet; and

“Whereas the 13% DST will also raise the cost of carpentry and plumbing services, heating and air conditioning repairs, landscaping and snowplowing, renovations and other professional services, meaning that home prices, condo fees and rents will all go up, and businesses will have a harder time paying the bills;

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

“That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I’m pleased to support my constituents in Kitchener–Waterloo and to sign my name to this petition.

### DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from the people of the city of Greater Sudbury, the riding of Sudbury and Nickel Belt.

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service.... ; and

“Whereas, by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury

Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

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

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

### HISPANIC COMMUNITY

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht:** The subject of this petition is to proclaim April as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Canadians of Hispanic origin have made outstanding contributions in the building of this great province; and

“Whereas the Hispanic population is among the fastest-growing communities in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Hispanic population in Ontario represents 23 countries across the world, such as Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estados Unidos, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela; and

“Whereas Hispanic Heritage Month would give Ontarians the opportunity to participate in various cultural and educational activities that would strengthen our diversity; and

“Whereas the proclamation of April as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario is an opportunity to recognize and learn about the contributions Canadians of Hispanic heritage have made to Canada and to the world in music, art, literature, films, economics, science and medicine;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming April of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month” and support the private member’s resolution by Mr. Ruprecht and Mr. Colle on December 3.

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign this petition.

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### TAXATION

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** “Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe–Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000 ... electricity ... magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances,

vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax 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 consumers.”

I will sign this, and I agree with it.

#### SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly submitted by the Royal Bank's Mississauga regional office. I especially want to acknowledge Walter Sinclair, Laurée Murray and Carolyn Hamm for having gathered the signatures. 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.... ; 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'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Nicolas to carry it for me.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I have a petition here signed by a great number of my constituents in the great riding of Oxford. At the bottom of the petition, it has been added that there are some signatures on here that: “Although not in your constituency—we believe this HST is the ultimate stealth tax grab—it must be stopped!” I present that on their behalf even though they're not from the riding. The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition on their behalf.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that has been sent to me by the Effort organization of Pakistani professionals. I especially would like to acknowledge Jawwad Khushid and Hassan Chaudhry for having gathered some of the signatures on it. 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 sign and support this petition and to ask page Maggie to carry it for me.

#### HISPANIC COMMUNITY

**Mr. Mike Colle:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Canadians of Hispanic origin have made outstanding contributions in the building of this great province; and

“Whereas the Hispanic population is among the fastest-growing communities in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Hispanic population in Ontario represents 23 countries,” from Colombia to Paraguay to Peru; and

“Whereas Hispanic Heritage Month would give Ontarians the opportunity to participate in various cultural and educational activities that would strengthen our diversity; and

“Whereas the proclamation of April as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario is an opportunity to recognize and learn about the contributions Canadians of Hispanic heritage have made to Canada and to the world in music, art, literature, films, economics, science and medicine;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming April of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario.”

I support this petition and I’ll affix my name to it.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I have hundreds more petitions regarding the McGuinty sales tax. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is planning to merge the 8% provincial sales tax and the 5% federal sales tax; and

“Whereas the new 13% sales tax will be applied to products and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax such as gasoline, home heating fuels, home renovations, haircuts, hamburgers, television service, Internet service, telephone and cell services, taxi fees, bus, train and airplane tickets, and dry cleaning services; and

“Whereas rural and northern Ontarians will be particularly hard hit by Mr. McGuinty’s new sales tax, as will seniors and families;

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

“That the McGuinty government should eliminate the new sales tax.”

I’ve signed this petition and I’ll give it to Hadhy.

#### SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

**Mr. Kuldip Kular:** This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on population-based social services funding.

“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 youth violence is rising; 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 the petitioners, so I’ll put my signature on it.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in Simcoe North do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

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

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to sign it and give it to Connor.

#### LUPUS

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I’m pleased to read this petition on behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and signed by an impressive number of his constituents in Niagara Falls. It reads as follows:

“Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness;

“Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease

are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity;

“Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

“We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Paisley to carry it for me.

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for a motion regarding committee business.

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

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated November 17, 2009, the following amendments be permitted to be moved on Bill 212 in the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs: that subsection 12(6) of schedule 18 to the bill be struck out, and that subsection 35(2) of schedule 18 to the bill be struck out.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All members have heard the motion. Agreed? Agreed. Carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

#### VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Hamilton Mountain, to welcome the students from St. Jean de Brébeuf high school to Queen's Park today. Thank you for joining us.

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2009

#### LOI DE 2009 SUR LE JOUR DE LA SENSIBILISATION À LA CARDIOPATHIE CONGÉNITALE

Ms. Jaczek moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to proclaim February 14 in each year as Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day / Projet de

loi 178, Loi proclamant le 14 février de chaque année Jour de la sensibilisation à la cardiopathie congénitale.

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

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** It's my pleasure to start the debate on second reading of Bill 178, An Act to proclaim February 14 in each year as Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day.

This is a bill that is of some importance to guests sitting in the west members' gallery. I'd like to introduce, from the Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance, Shelagh Ross, Ted Thaler and Taryn Simbrow; from the Toronto Congenital Cardiac Centre for Adults at the Toronto General Hospital, Qunyu Li, Adrienne Kovacs, and Dr. Erwin Oechslein, who is the director; and from the Hospital for Sick Children, Sherry Ree Stevens and Jackie Hubert.

We also have another very special guest, Trish Johnson, the daughter of our colleague Rick Johnson from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. In the course of the debate, you will come to understand why she's here.

This bill is the result of some very effective communication from a former constituent of mine, Mr. John MacEachern. As president of the volunteer charitable organization the Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance, he convinced me that congenital heart disease, or CHD, was an area of medicine that deserved particular attention, and that all the medical miracles of the last 50 years in relation to CHD need continued public awareness and ongoing research. John has now retired and moved to Nova Scotia, and I do hope he is watching us online as I proceed to tell his story.

John MacEachern was born on October 17, 1941, in Toronto, and was immediately diagnosed as having tetralogy of Fallot, better known as blue baby syndrome, a condition that is not conducive to life. There were four things wrong with his heart: a hole in the wall between the two ventricles, a narrowed pulmonary valve, an overriding aorta and an enlarged left ventricle. Doctors advised John's devastated parents that his life expectancy would not be any more than eight years, as there was no cure for his condition. John had to be carried upstairs and would squat down to get oxygen into his system every time he tried to run or exert any kind of energy.

At the age of four, late in 1944, his parents, Gordon and Dorothy MacEachern, met Dr. Gordon Murray by chance at a Christmas party and explained to him their problem. He vaguely recalled that just a couple of weeks earlier he had read that Dr. Alfred Blalock and Dr. Helen Taussig had performed the first Blalock-Taussig shunt on a blue baby at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland. Dr. Murray took it upon himself to travel to Baltimore, and met with Doctors Blalock and Taussig to learn about their history-making surgery. He returned to Toronto and met with John's parents and advised them that there was a slim bit of hope for John. He would perform the Blalock-Taussig shunt surgery if they wished. As it was strictly experimental and long before the days of OHIP,

he said he would not charge them. They agreed, as it was John's only hope of survival. For their part, they had to collect blood from all their relatives, neighbours, business associates, teachers in nearby schools, parishioners in their church etc., as there was no blood bank in those days. The surgery took place at the Toronto General Hospital in 1945 and was a great success.

John became a very well known businessman in York region. He married and had four children and to date has three grandchildren. However, in 1991, at the age of 50, he collapsed while skiing with his family. He was operated on by Dr. Bill Williams, a senior cardiovascular surgeon from the Hospital for Sick Children, who took his team over to Toronto General Hospital for the emergency surgery. He removed John's 46-year-old shunt, patched up the quarter-sized hole between the ventricles with a piece of Dacron, and replaced the pulmonary valve with a pig's valve.

John has not been idle since. He has been working on an international CHD patients' organization, the International Congenital Heart Coalition, which now has 21 member countries and recently met here in Toronto. This is an organization representing those patients affected by CHD who are advocating for more research and support for their lifelong problems.

Ontario has been a leader in the treatment of CHD for more than 60 years. The Hospital for Sick Children hosts a world-class CHD clinic, and the Toronto General Hospital University Health Network is home to the world's largest and internationally renowned adult congenital heart disease clinic, headed by Dr. Erwin Oechslin. He recently updated me on statistics in Ontario related to CHD, and those in the preamble of the bill as it stands, as I knew the stats at first reading, have been somewhat revised.

First of all, congenital heart disease is the world's leading birth defect. CHD affects one in 70 Canadian newborns. Twelve Canadians are born each day with a congenital heart defect. Now, there are many types of congenital heart defects: abnormal passages in the heart or between blood vessels, problems with the heart valves, problems with the placement or development of blood vessels near the heart, and problems with the development of the heart itself. So it is now estimated that some 180,000 Canadian adults and children live with CHD. Of those, 80,000 are in Ontario, and of those, we have 40,000 children and 40,000 adults. In Canada there are about 100,000 adults who as children had surgery to correct congenital heart defects, and at least half of these face the prospect of complications, multiple surgeries and/or premature or sudden death.

Historically, the focus of CHD care was confined to newborns and children whose life expectancy was limited to weeks, months and, in a few cases, several years.

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The amazing progress over the last 50 years in diagnosis, surgery and in the newer interventional catheter-based procedures has vastly improved survival, so that now more than 50% of people living with CHD are

adults. The proportion of adults with CHD will continue to increase, because currently 98% of children born with heart defects will survive to adulthood.

There are eight cardiologists in Canada who have specifically trained in the field of adult congenital heart defects, and of those—we are particularly fortunate here in Ontario—we have seven. We also have some four surgeons in this province who actually have expertise in adult CHD.

Clearly, there are far fewer resources for the specialized care of adult CHD patients than for other cardiac patients. As a result, wait times for clinical visits and surgical intervention are much longer than for other cardiac patients, leading of course to increased anxiety, added risk and potentially even death.

So our focus now must turn from survival to improving the health and quality of life of people with heart defects. It is absolutely clear that research, education and ongoing support from stakeholders is needed. In fact, if anyone knows any medical student, any resident in cardiology or cardiac surgery—this is clearly an area that truly is needed, to extend expertise to service this growing number of individuals suffering from CHD.

My colleague from Etobicoke North will certainly be giving us a little more detail in relation to some of the medical issues facing these patients.

I think it's good for people to know that only some 10% of heart defects are caused by specific genetic abnormalities. For the remaining 90%, there's a poorly understood combination of genetic predisposition and environmental factors that are thought to be responsible. Some congenital heart defects result from abnormalities in the mother's health during pregnancy, and in some cases it's possible that there might be some prevention that could be brought to bear. Certain infections: If a mother gets rubella while pregnant, her baby has a 35% risk of developing a heart defect, something that should be easily solved with rubella immunization. Certain chronic conditions such as diabetes or systemic lupus erythematosus may also contribute to a baby suffering from CHD. Alcohol, street drugs and a number of prescription drugs, such as seizure medications, may be involved. No matter what the cause, specialized treatment is clearly what is required.

In conclusion, I would just like to comment on: Why February 14? We all know that February is Heart Month. Valentine's Day is a day that symbolizes love. For any of us who have had children, I think as we looked at our newborn and we counted the fingers and toes, we earnestly hoped that everything inside was also as physically healthy as possible. So I think it's a particularly fitting day when we consider the love that parents have for their children, the type of care that children with CHD do require, and the anxiety of those parents as their child moves through a medical system that obviously is dedicated to doing its very best.

We need to ensure that Ontario's proud tradition as a leader in the treatment of CHD is preserved, and so the importance of ongoing research, clinical expertise and



support for patients and families must be recognized. I hope that some of the debate today will allow for some further public acknowledgment of this very important condition.

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

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I am pleased to rise today in support of Bill 178. I would like to commend the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for bringing attention to the issue of congenital heart defects by designating February 14 as Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day. I think it is a very important issue.

Congenital heart defects affect more infants and children in Ontario than I think most people realize. As the member mentioned with a few statistics, congenital heart defects affect one in 70 Canadian newborns, and they will be born with one of the 35 known types of congenital heart defects. In fact, in some parts of Ontario this ratio is more like one in 50. Congenital heart defects kill more children every year than all childhood cancers combined. They are the number one birth defect and the number one cause of death from a birth defect in Canada.

Unfortunately, there is currently no cure, so early detection is essential. A routine level 2 ultrasound done during pregnancy and an echocardiogram done routinely after birth could save many lives, yet in Ontario there is no routine prenatal or newborn screening for congenital heart defects. That's why this bill is particularly important: to bring attention to congenital heart defects and to advocate for improved detection and treatment options.

The statistics are one thing, but I would like to speak just for a moment about a little boy in my area who was born with a congenital heart defect and the journey that he and his family embarked on as a result.

Wyatt was born on April 27, 2007, and minutes after he was born he began to have problems breathing and began to turn blue. He was immediately transferred to the cardiac critical care unit at the Hospital for Sick Children, where he was diagnosed with a serious congenital heart defect known as pulmonary atresia—most of these things will make more sense to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham; she'll be familiar with this—with ASD, VSA and MAPCAs, which are major aorto-pulmonary collateral arteries; TOF, tracheo-oesophageal fistula; and DiGeorge syndrome. In other words, Wyatt was a very sick little boy, but his joy for life was boundless.

He became known as the little warrior, as he underwent five open-heart surgeries, two cardiac catheterizations, two airway stints, a tracheotomy, and countless other procedures and tests. His mother and devoted family were with him every step of the way, and in fact for his mother, her entire world became the Hospital for Sick Children for a number of months as she lived in hospital with him. While there, his mother wrote of him, "He works so hard, he is determined and has the heart of a fighter. I am so thankful and proud to be the mother of such a wonderful boy. Wyatt is so brave and strong. I watch him and all the other kids go through more in a

day than most adults in a lifetime. Amazing, absolutely amazing." And so Wyatt was, but sadly the odds against him were too great and he died on May 16, 2009.

Wyatt's mother and family are determined to honour and remember his courage and determination. In January 2008, Wyatt's Warriors was established by his family to try and make a difference in lives of other children with congenital heart defects and their families. Specifically, the goals of Wyatt's Warriors are to: (1) raise awareness, not just to the general public but also to the government, and lobby for some changes in prenatal screening and newborn testing; and (2) fund various projects at Sick Kids to help children with congenital heart defects and their families. Their ultimate hope is that one day no family will have to suffer through the loss of their child due to a congenital heart defect.

Wyatt's aunt, Laura Celsie, has been instrumental in establishing Wyatt's Warriors and is extremely active in several roles, both in fundraising and advocacy. They have achieved amazing success already with their first golf tournament and their first Have a Heart Valentine's Gala, which was held in the Durham riding on February 13 of this past year. This is very apropos of the private member's bill.

They are doing their bit. They have been doing all they can both to raise money to help other families and to raise awareness of this. So at this point, I'd say it's up to all of us as legislators. I would urge all of the members of this House to not only support this bill, which I wholeheartedly support, but also to do our bit by making the changes and doing whatever we can do to make sure that we support prenatal screening, prenatal testing to assist all of these families and to advocate for anything else we can do to make sure that we try to eliminate the congenital heart defects or to allow people to have a chance at a normal life expectancy.

**1400**

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It is my pleasure to rise today about—I have to call her by her riding, sorry—the member from Oak Ridges–Markham's private member's bill, Bill 178, the Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day Act.

We certainly support this bill, and as this opportunity arises, it is my pleasure to talk a little bit about congenital heart disease as well as some of the concerns that we in the NDP have regarding people living with congenital heart disease and their families who support them.

I guess if I am going to talk about this, I need to explain a little bit about what it is. A congenital heart defect is a structural problem or defect in the heart that is present at birth. Most of the time, it manifests itself quite quickly, and sometimes a few days later. CHD, congenital heart disease, can involve the walls of the heart, the valves of the heart, the arteries and the veins near the heart. Congenital heart disease can disrupt the normal flow of blood through the heart. The blood flow can sometimes slow down, sometimes go in the wrong direc-

tion, sometimes go to the wrong place and sometimes be blocked completely. None of those options are good; all of those options require treatment.

There are many types of congenital heart defects and they include abnormal normal passages in the heart or between blood vessels, problems with the heart valves, problems with the placement or the development of blood vessels near the heart and problems with the development of the heart itself. The severity and degree of medical assistance often varies, although surgery is often required, and often on the newborn.

Some of the facts: Congenital heart disease is considered to be the most common birth defect worldwide, and it is the leading cause of birth-defect-related death. It is a serious issue, and a lot of people die from CHD.

As was mentioned, 12 Canadians are born each day with a congenital heart defect, and it will affect one in 70 Canadian newborns, although 90% of the babies who are born with congenital heart disease will grow up to be adults—90% of them. That's wonderful. We sure wish that it was 100%, but 90% of them will make it into adulthood.

But that means that it results in a growing population of young adults who require lifelong cardiac care. We are very fortunate that we are able to help those infants develop, and you should see the amount of—in French we say *le branle-bas de combat*—work that is often required really quickly after birth to ensure that those infants live to see their first day.

All of those resources are pulled together. Very high tertiary and quaternary care teams are pulled together to help those infants so that they live. But it is important that we continue that level of care throughout the years, because as they age—just like everyone of us—because they have a congenital heart disease, they will often require care as they grow to continue to be healthy, productive members of our community, certainly like the example that the member from Oak Ridges–Markham brought forward today, which had a very happy ending.

So 180,000 Canadians are the number of people presently living with congenital heart disease in this country—180,000 people. It is very common. And for about 130,000 of them, there is very little to support them and very little access to care. Certainly, the access to care is not equivalent to what was available to them at birth and not equivalent to other people who suffer heart disease.

There are only 15 regional facilities in Canada, and there are really only five regional centres of excellence that have been identified in our country: five centres, and we've already said we are dealing with 180,000 people who live with this disease and will need ongoing care.

As was mentioned, we have eight cardiologists here in Canada who have specialized and trained in the field of adult congenital heart defects. Historically, the focus of congenital heart disease care was confined to newborns and children whose life expectancy was often measured in days, weeks, months and a few years, but things have changed in the last 50 years and the miracle example that

was given is now repeated many times a week in this province and in this country. The amazing progress of the last 50 years—in diagnosis, surgery and other interventions—has drastically and vastly improved the survival rate, which is great news.

Presently, as I mentioned, 130,000 adults living with chronic congenital heart disease in Canada have no program equivalent to what they had at birth. If you look at the heart program that is being brought forward, it often targets what is called “lifestyle acquired”; that is, people who have a heart problem later on in life, either infarctus or another heart problem. Those people have access to top-notch care, but adults living with congenital heart disease do not have that level of access. As was mentioned, there is a wide variety of heart defects, each requiring different levels of intervention and monitoring.

In summary, adult patients have far fewer resources than children, and in general, they wait as much as 33 times longer for surgical intervention than patients who have an acquired heart problem—they've had a cardiac arrest or a heart problem such as a blockage etc. They can get access to care, but the people with congenital heart disease have to wait, and often this wait is very long.

We all know that the patient who waits faces the prospect of complications, faces the prospect of premature and often sudden death, and the numbers are growing. Right now, 50% of the people living with congenital heart disease are adults, which is great news because, a few decades ago, most of those patients didn't live to see adulthood. So, in one sense, it's good news. We've made progress. In the other sense, we also have to realize that we have an obligation to give ready access to them for the care that they will require for the rest of their lives.

To me, this is an obligation through the private member's bill that was introduced by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. We have an opportunity to bring awareness. Awareness is a good thing, because in the long run, it will help people living with congenital heart disease and their families by keeping this issue in the forefront.

#### 1410

C'est important pour moi aujourd'hui de vous parler du projet de loi de la députée d'Oak Ridges–Markham, parce que c'est le type de problème que l'on rencontre souvent. En fait, un problème congénital du cœur touche une naissance sur 70 ici en Ontario, comme au Canada et comme ailleurs. Cela arrive dans plusieurs familles; c'est arrivé dans ma famille, à mon cousin Martin Gélinas. Je ne vous dirai pas les détails de son problème à lui, mais il a un problème cardiaque qu'on a découvert à la naissance. Il a maintenant 40 ans. Il est ingénieur. Il vit une vie pleine et peut participer, mais il a beaucoup de difficultés à assurer un suivi.

Au cours des années, pendant l'adolescence, dans la vingtaine et dans la trentaine, plusieurs problèmes se sont développés, l'un après l'autre, toujours assez compliqués, et les problèmes d'accès se sont multipliés. Il y a très peu de centres d'excellence pour aider les gens qui sont nés

avec un problème cardiaque et qui vivent avec pendant toute leur vie.

Si on regarde il y a quelques années, ces gens-là, les bébés qui naissent avec ce genre de problème-là, on leur donnait des jours, des semaines, des mois, au maximum quelques années, à vivre. Maintenant, la technologie a progressé tel que l'on peut maintenant s'attendre à ce que 90 % de ces gens-là vont pouvoir se rendre à la vie adulte, être productifs et mener une vie très semblable à celle de tout le monde ici, mais ils auront besoin de soins. L'accès aux soins est extrêmement difficile; on est chanceux, nous, en Ontario, que nous avons des spécialistes—on en a sept ici en Ontario—mais même avec sept cardiologues spécialisés, il est difficile pour les adultes d'avoir accès. Ces gens-là ont des problèmes complexes et compliqués, et la rémunération fait en sorte que les chirurgiens ne peuvent pas se spécialiser seulement là-dedans. Ils doivent faire un peu de tout pour assurer un salaire adéquat.

La proposition tombe à point, parce que plus on en parlera, plus on aura l'opportunité d'y amener des changements, et le changement, quant à moi, sera pour le mieux. On doit continuer d'appuyer les gens; ça vaut la peine. Les succès qu'on a eus lorsqu'ils étaient tous petits, on peut les multiplier lorsqu'ils seront à l'âge adulte, et ce sera pour le bénéfice de tous.

Je félicite ma collègue d'Oak Ridges–Markham pour cette initiative. Les néo-démocrates vont voter en faveur. Merci.

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

**Mr. Shafiq Qadri:** First of all, it's an honour, a privilege and, of course, a responsibility here in this chamber to rise and speak in support of my honourable colleague Dr. Helena Jaczek from Oak Ridges–Markham on the congenital heart disease awareness day and week proclamation that she has brought forward, Bill 178.

Of course, as a physician myself, as a graduate of the University of Toronto, class of 1988, I'm also honoured and privileged to welcome many of the members from institutions that I happened to train at: Toronto General Hospital as well as the Hospital for Sick Children.

I can remember, for example, I believe in probably first year, maybe second year, of med school cardiology rotations, when we had the privilege of actually visiting individuals who had congenital heart disease and had come for surgery and aftercare after surgery and operations and the various other rehabilitative measures, that we had the opportunity to, as we say, listen to the chest, or clinics of auscultation, which is a fancy word for the doctors taking out their stethoscopes and listening to the various patients and examining them.

I have to say that it was, first of all, not only an extraordinary teaching opportunity, learning opportunity, but it was probably, from our perspective as relatively young and green medical students, frightening because we had been used to hearing the chest sounds, the heart sounds, in a particular way, often not with excessive amounts of pathology—the heartbeat and maybe an

occasional extra sound, which we physicians might call things like heart murmurs. But when we listened to the individuals with congenital heart disease, the best way to describe it was as if machinery—or probably Jurassic Park or motorcycles gone awry. You can imagine listening to individuals who had these kinds of heart sounds, when we all did a sort of double-take, wondering how these individuals were actually functioning and how they were actually going about their day-to-day activities and calling upon the reserve capacity of the heart.

So when I see this particular bill, Bill 178, An Act to proclaim February 14 in each year as Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day, I think it's a very commendable act. I would commend not only the member for Oak Ridges–Markham for fusing or conflating her professional expertise with her parliamentary abilities here in bringing this health and welfare bill forward, but I'd also, for a moment, like to commend our colleague from the Conservative Party, the MPP for Whitby–Oshawa, Ms. Christine Elliott, as well as Madame France Gélinas, la députée de Nickel Belt ici à l'Assemblée provinciale, for not only their support of this particular bill, but also for their very lucid and comprehensible explanations of medical terminology. I enjoyed relearning some of the information that you presented.

As has been mentioned, this is the most common cause of all birth defects. Approximately one in 70 Canadian newborns have it; something on the order of almost 40,000 adults in the province of Ontario have congenital heart disease. Just to make it clear, first of all, heart disease as a domain is, as you can appreciate, a collection of illnesses. We would tend to think of heart disease as perhaps a group of disorders more towards the middle age of people, say 35, 40, 45 and above; things to do, for example, with smoking, cholesterol, poor exercise, high blood pressure, sugar diabetes and all the rest of it. This is the opposite: This is heart disease that one is actually born with—“de la naissance,” or right from birth. That's, of course, what makes it especially acute, especially poignant, from an emotional point of view, because you're dealing not only with very young children, but also the emotional turmoil that the parents are going through. That's why it's very important for all of us in our various domains to support this type of legislation.

J'ai le plaisir aujourd'hui de me mettre debout pour soutenir ma collègue l'honorable D<sup>te</sup> Helena Jaczek, députée provinciale de la circonscription d'Oak Ridges–Markham.

La maladie cardiaque congénitale est une des plus grandes causes de la malformation à la naissance. Elle affecte un enfant sur 70 nouveau-nés; 12 Canadiens naissent chaque jour avec cette maladie cardiaque. Il y a beaucoup de sortes de ces malformations : des connexions anormales dans le cœur ou entre les vaisseaux sanguins, des problèmes avec les valves ventriculaires, ou des problèmes de développement ou de mauvais emplacement.

Comme médecins, nous évaluons presque 200 000 Canadiens, tout âge confondu. Au Canada, il y a plus de 100 000 adultes qui ont subi une intervention chirurgicale

à l'enfance pour corriger cette malformation. Malheureusement, plus ou moins la moitié de ces gens font face à beaucoup d'interventions chirurgicales, ou à une mort précoce ou subite.

Je veux exprimer et partager avec vous, et avec tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes, les signes suivants de ces maladies : murmure cardiaque, décoloration un peu bleuâtre de la peau, ce que les médecins appellent « cyanose », respiration rapide, malnutrition ou malabsorption, disproportion entre l'âge et le poids, et fatigue pendant l'exercice physique.

That's why it's so important to support this particular bill.

I will yield the floor to my honourable colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Mr. Rick Johnson.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** During private members' time, we go in a rotation, so I will ask for further debate.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I want to warmly congratulate the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for bringing forward this bill. I think already today in the House, as I've listened to the comments from all of my colleagues here, that we have made progress in doing what it was that she was hoping that we could do, and that was to raise the awareness about congenital heart disease. Of course, which she's asking for is that every year on February 14, we would proclaim that day as Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day. So I do want to congratulate her. Thank you so much.

I want to thank the people that are in the audience today, whether you are someone who suffers from CHD or whether you're one of the outstanding health providers who really do enhance the quality of life for people. We really appreciate your presence here today in support of this private member's bill. I will certainly be supporting it.

We hear about congenital heart disease often when children are born. I know it often strikes fear in the hearts of parents who are informed that this is something that their child will be living with. One of the things I don't think most people probably understand is that it is the most common of all the birth defects, and that one in 70 newborns suffer from and have this birth defect. So the problem is, it's large; there are many people in the province. We know there are 20,000 children and, of course, about 37,000 adults in our province who have CHD.

1420

We know that there isn't currently a cure, and obviously we need to not only raise awareness of the disease, but we also need to continue to do research and ensure that governments everywhere—in our own case, particularly here in the province of Ontario—do all they can in order to put forth the measures. We've talked about the need for early detection, and that need is certainly there; the need for prenatal screening. Then, of course, we need to ensure that throughout the lives of these individuals, we give them support, provide them with the services that are necessary and hope they will have a normal life expectancy.

This is a very significant bill, and I applaud all of the people who have spoken: my own colleague from Whitby–Oshawa, the health critic for the NDP and, of course, those in the Liberal Party. I think everyone would agree that this is a private member's bill that we can all support, and hopefully, at the end of the day, we can continue to increase public awareness of CHD, but also ensure that there are enhanced resources and more research done in order that we can help those families.

I would just say, in conclusion, that I was quite touched by the personal stories that were delivered today—it certainly gives you a greater comprehension of life for those people who do have CHD and their families—by both the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, who put forward the bill, when she talked about the influence that someone had on her life and on her bringing the bill forward, and of course my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa when she spoke about Wyatt and Wyatt's Warriors.

I applaud all those who have participated. Hopefully we can move this forward, raise awareness, do more research and provide the support that is so desperately needed.

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

**Mr. Rick Johnson:** I'm very proud to stand up and support this bill. I think that anything we can do to raise awareness of this condition is a great thing to do.

I'd like to just tell a personal story that started 21 years ago at Lakeridge hospital when my daughter was born. She always has been a unique young lady. She chooses to do things a little differently. When she was born, she was born face up, ingested a whole bunch of fluid and didn't breathe, which was probably a disguise for the heart condition that we didn't know she had.

She was the first code pink at Lakeridge hospital; they called in the crash team and got her going. She was extremely blue. They assumed it was because of the fluid she had ingested. When they got her going, if you remember the movie *E.T.*, she turned pink from the centre of her chest out; we still have pictures at home of her with blue fingers. So for the first year or two of her life, we referred to her as our Smurf.

When she was growing up, she was very athletic, participating in soccer, dance and figure skating. A great little soccer player, she played indoor and outdoor soccer. When she was a teenager, the soccer team—it was an all-girl soccer team, the first from the city of Kawartha Lakes—lost two games over a four-year period. So they were very successful. One year she was the top scorer in the Durham Soccer League.

Then, we were at a soccer tournament in Alliston, Ontario—she was 15. They set her up perfectly; she got a great breakaway. It was a hot summer day, and 20 feet in front of the goal she passed out. The paramedics got her going, and they said, "Has she eaten today? Is it a lack of water? Is it the heat?" Whatever. Anyway, that was the first time we'd ever seen anything go wrong.

We went to the doctor and went through a bunch of tests. They talked about it maybe being stress-induced

asthma, not eating properly that day, a panic attack, teenage drama. Then, after a whole series of tests one day we were in one of the specialists' offices, because she would occasionally get tingling fingers. He said, "Her lungs are okay. Neurologically it's okay." He said, "She has a hole in her heart," and then he went on describing other things, and we said, "What are you talking about? A hole in her heart?"

They determined, in conjunction with our family physician, Dr. Dave Fitzpatrick, from Oshawa, that she had a ventricular septal defect. We ended up at Sick Kids hospital, where she was brought to the attention of Dr. Rajiv Chaturvedi and Dr. Claudia Almeida. Through a process, a month before her 18th birthday they repaired the hole in her heart. Ten years earlier, we were told, this would have involved open-heart surgery. When she had the procedure done—I'll give you the Reader's Digest version that I was given—they basically did a tiny incision in the groin, inserted a wire through her artery up into her heart, pressed a button or something and a little umbrella opened, the size of a dime. They pulled it back against the hole in her heart. Another button released the other side. They screwed the two pieces together, plugging the hole in her heart, pressed the button and pulled it out.

My daughter is sitting back here.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Rick Johnson:** The piece that they inserted, we were told, was made out of platinum, so she refers to herself as a true platinum blonde. As a matter of fact, when I was coming here and I mentioned who was speaking and I mentioned the member from Whitby–Oshawa, she said, "Oh, we share the same hairdresser."

One of the unique things that happened out of this was that Trish has suffered from migraines when she was little and all through her life. When they did the procedure, because all the blood was now flowing in the right direction, they said that for the next couple of weeks she was going to have very strong headaches, which she did, but she hasn't had a migraine since. I don't know if there's a connection. They're talking about a number of things.

We were pleased to have had follow-ups since then. It's been four years since she had the procedure done. Listening to the tragic story you told, we feel fortunate. We're tremendously happy with the service, treatment and care that we've received from Dr. Oechslin. You're her follow-up surgeon, her doctor, and it's great to meet you today. I know that she's in great hands. We really appreciate the work that was done, and in particular I'd like to mention Susan Johnston and the staff at the Sick Kids cath. lab. for describing the procedures and what she was going to go through in such a great way.

For this procedure, which 15 years ago would have been open-heart surgery, she was checked into the hospital at 9 in the morning and she was out at 6 o'clock in the afternoon. That's such a credit to the surgeons we have and the treatment that we have in Ontario and in Canada.

I just think this bill is so valuable because it's going to let parents know about the procedure and what could possibly be there, because we all want our children to grow old, so that they can look after their parents, just as my daughter has promised to look after me.

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

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I didn't realize there would be much extra time left over, but I just wanted to say to the member that we'll be supporting this piece of legislation. It's very unfortunate that we don't get along with all legislation in this House in such a friendly manner.

My only concern, when I went over and talked to you earlier, was whether or not it would do away with Valentine's Day, and I understand that Valentine's Day is still there. But I think it's so nice to hear these stories from Mr. Johnson and the stories we've heard here this afternoon about the wonderful things that can lead to awareness, and why we're actually proud to be members of this Legislature. Whether we draw awareness with this piece of legislation today, or even if there's just a debate taking place today, it means a lot to those families that have suffered, and it means a lot to the young people to be born in the future as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Further debate? The honourable member for Oak Ridges–Markham, you have up to two minutes for your response.

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** I'd like to thank my colleagues, those from Whitby–Oshawa, Nickel Belt, Etobicoke North, Kitchener–Waterloo, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Simcoe North, for their kind comments. It is indeed a pleasure to have some consensus in this often turbulent place.

**1430**

Just to elaborate a little bit, my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock doesn't necessarily talk about his daughter's condition. We had not known each other very long when he came and showed me a photograph that Trish had taken. I had done a member's statement on congenital heart disease maybe two years or so ago, just after I was elected. Trish had attended Dr. Oechslin's office, saw the member's statement and took a photograph of it. Rick came and showed me that, and I thought how interesting it was that we stand up in this place and obviously want to celebrate residents in our ridings and important contributions to society, as we do in our members' statements, but that led to Rick's telling me his daughter's story.

Trish, I'm sure that not a day goes by without his thanks for the gift of your life. He's incredibly proud of you.

The member for Simcoe North apparently would like to attend the next Wyatt's Warriors fundraiser. I just want to make sure he doesn't feel that that's any kind of excuse to avoid his usual generous gift to his wife on Valentine's Day.

Of course, most of all, we'd like to thank our visitors here today, those members from the Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance, the professionals working at the Hospital

for Sick Children and the Toronto General Hospital for what they do each and every day for what we've been able to discuss for some 50 minutes in this House, which is congenital heart disease, the world's leading birth defect. In this way, we have raised awareness, and we simply want to thank you for what you do.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** For those visiting Queen's Park in the galleries today and those watching at home, we'll vote on this ballot item in about 100 minutes.

PENSION BENEFITS  
AMENDMENT ACT  
(TRANSFERS ON WIND UP), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE  
(TRANSFERTS À LA LIQUIDATION)

Mr. Sterling moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 213, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act respecting transfers on wind ups / Projet de loi 213, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite en ce qui concerne les transferts à la liquidation.

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

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I want to lead off by saying that this bill was initiated at the request of many Nortel pensioners who are facing an uncertain future with respect to the pensions they now have in Ontario.

There are approximately 17,500 Nortel pensioners, and a good number of those reside in Ontario and are subject to the laws of Ontario. The scope of Bill 213 is very, very narrow; it deals with only one issue. That issue is: If the Nortel pension is wound up—which it probably will be, unfortunately—what are the choices left to the pensioners who are out there in Ontario?

Right now, there is only one option that the Financial Services Commission of Ontario can do on their behalf; that is, they can purchase a life annuity for these individuals. Unfortunately, life annuities are very expensive, and that means the benefits are very, very low. So it's a double hit to the pensioners of Nortel. If their pension is wound up, they will (1) not get 100% of the value, because the pension fund is underfunded, and therefore they may receive only 70% of the value of their pension, but (2) the second hit is that the only option available to them is a life annuity, and right now, with interest rates so low, life annuities will not yield much in the way of a monthly income to these pensioners.

As well, it was pointed out to me by the finance minister of the province, whom I talked to about this issue, that there isn't that much of a market for annuities at this time. So if, all of a sudden, there is a need to purchase 17,000 annuities in the province of Ontario, it will be very, very difficult to actually do that.

As well, I am told that there are other companies that may be facing the same fate as Nortel, and therefore there could be a need to buy even more annuities in the future.

There are other issues that are of great importance to Nortel pensioners. This would certainly not be their first choice. Their first choice would be to have their pension continue on, as is the case in the province of Quebec. That way, the pensioners would continue to receive their monthly payments, as they have in the past, and that would continue for at least five years, as is the case in the province of Quebec.

They would also have issues, as we found, at the federal level with regard to the priority of pensioners with regard to the bankruptcy proceedings. However, that's not in our jurisdiction.

They also have issues with regard to the pension benefits guarantee fund, which they fall under in our province, which is basically insolvent at this time. They are expecting that the pension benefits guarantee fund will help them with regard to the pension shortfall that they are going to suffer.

But I have not included, purposely, those particular issues in this bill. I have only included one issue, and that is the issue of the pensioner having an option with regard to what happens to his or her value after a pension would wind up.

I would like the option, which is included in my bill, to be added to what is there already; that is, the life annuity—to have the ability of the pensioner to choose a registered savings plan, commonly known as a RRIF, rather than take a life annuity. Under a RRIF, at least the pensioners could wait until the stock market regains its past glory and the economy comes back a little bit.

Under the current rules, when a company ceases to exist and its pension plan is wound up, there's only the one choice for pensioners, and that's a life annuity. However, if you're a pension plan member who is presently working for Nortel or you haven't yet received any pension payments, you actually have three choices. You have a choice of rolling what value you have in the pension fund over into another pension fund, which I expect Nortel employees will do—those who are lucky enough to get new employment with Ericsson, which bought part of Nortel. They will probably be able to roll over their value into that pension fund. As well, those people can also take on an RRSP or a RRIF. Or they could buy a life annuity. So they have three choices, whereas those who are receiving a pension only have the one choice, and that choice, a life annuity, is a very poor choice at this time because of what I mentioned before.

You might ask, "Why are you excluding these other issues from Bill 213?" I'm excluding them because it's my hope that the government side will see that this issue is of immediate importance.

The pensioner doesn't have any choice as to when the pension fund is wound up. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario, which is an arm's-length body from the government and from this Legislature and only acts on legislation—which would include Bill 213, if

passed—makes an objective determination as to when to wind up the pension fund. They wind up the pension fund when they believe that Nortel Networks is no longer going to exist.

**1440**

We heard this week that another part of Nortel was sold off. In the Ottawa newspapers there was an announcement that some of the land with regard to Nortel Networks in the former township of Nepean had been sold off. So I don't believe that this arm's-length body is going to have much choice but to claim in the very near future that this pension fund is at an end, unless there is some immediate intervention by the government.

We do not have any legislation in this House at this time intervening in this situation, save and except for my Bill 213. I really hope that members will allow this particular bill to pass and will also request that their respective House leader call this bill fairly early as we go on.

There can be arguments against the whole notion of giving an existing pensioner the alternative of a life annuity. That is the argument which could be put forward, and has been put forward in the past, that an existing pensioner might, if he got control of the money in a RRIF or a registered retirement savings plan, deplete the capital all at once.

We have had in our past history in this Legislature, in our governments, this paternalistic attitude toward pensioners with regard to the control of their own pension funds. That is the argument the government could put forward and say, "Well, we want to continue with this control over the pension funds of individuals as they go forward."

I think you have to balance that, number one, against the fact that that kind of paternalistic thought doesn't really exist with 70% of the people, who do not have defined benefit pension plans anyway. Most of the population has RRSPs or registered retirement plans as it is. At the present time, that 70% of our population does have control over their pension plans. They could deplete the principal all in one year if they chose to take it all out and pay all that tax.

Therefore, I think the argument, the paternalistic argument, of the past has really seen its day. We must say to seniors, "You are capable of handling your own pension fund. You are capable of determining how much you're going to withdraw each year," save and except, under federal income tax, at least in the instance when you hit your 72nd year, you have to take out 7.5%, and then roughly that amount rises to about 8.5% for the next 10 years of your life. Notwithstanding that, that is the argument against passing this particular bill.

The balance is: Do you want to give what I call inexplicable support to an old policy that is dated? That's one side of the ledger. On the other side of the ledger: Do you want to give Nortel pensioners, and other people who find themselves in this particular position, a very low monthly payment? Because the only instruments that can be bought on their behalf out of their share of the

pension funds are life annuities, which are paying very little at this time.

I urge members: Please, please consider this very seriously. This is a tremendously important issue to the Nortel pensioners. They are distraught at this time. They need some hope. We need to help them just a little bit at this time. We need to consider those other issues in the very near future as well, and I look forward to the government bringing forward legislation in that regard.

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I'm pleased to be able to take part in this debate. I want to congratulate my colleague for bringing forward this legislation and for trying to create some awareness of the tragic situation that Nortel employees, now many of them former Nortel employees, find themselves in. I also want to thank him for delineating some of the problems with the existing pension legislation in the province, which is very much responsible for the sorry situation that these Nortel workers find themselves in.

Having said that, I want to be very up front with my colleague in the Conservative Party and tell him I cannot support the bill, and I'll delineate my reasons for that in a minute.

I think this bill is timely because we are at a critical juncture in terms of people's pensions in this province. Almost a year ago, Harry Arthurs submitted his report to the government wherein he suggested far-reaching pension reforms. If the government had acted on the Arthurs report when it was submitted almost a year ago, perhaps some of the people who are in the Nortel situation would not be in as grave a situation as they're in now.

Let me go into some more of the details. First of all, I want to be very clear with my colleague in the Conservative Party as to why we think this solution is second-best. First of all, this bill would transfer the pension risk to the individuals. You're very much at risk of, "This investment might do well, that mutual fund might not do well," and the problem with that is most people have real difficulty today sorting out what is a good investment from a bad investment. Just look at all of those people—it's notorious now—who thought that Bernie Madoff was somehow a saviour in terms of providing pension opportunities. All kinds of well-meaning organizations turned over their money to Mr. Madoff and his associates, only to learn that he was enriching himself.

Closer to home, we have the sorry situation that's gone on in Montreal where, again, an individual who somehow had a sterling—sorry, Norm—somehow had very bright reviews as an investor, and all kinds of people turned over their life savings to this individual, and he literally enriched himself, leaving people without their life savings and without a pension. That is very much the sorry state that we find ourselves in.

Most people really have difficulty differentiating between mediocre investments and good investments. I could, I think, refer to some members and former members of this Legislature who took the modest RRSP

money that is allowed in terms of retirement benefits here and put it all into the dot-com companies just a few years ago, and now have discovered that their pension investments are not worth much.

That's the problem with this bill. It simply says to the individual, "You're on your own, and good luck to you." I think we have to do better.

Second problem: This bill creates what I call adverse selection risks for those who say, "Well, I'm not sure about what I should invest in so I'll just stay where I am." What I mean by "adverse selection risk" is, those who stay and wish to purchase annuities may be the riskier of the annuitants—again, driving up prices for those who remain. So it creates that kind of problem, too.

**1450**

Thirdly, to use pension benefits guarantee fund money to support these kinds of outcomes, I think, is again the wrong direction to take. Allowing pension benefits guarantee fund monies to go into questionable retirement savings vehicles is simply bad public policy.

What should be done? What should we as members here be doing? Most of all, what should the government be doing? Well, we really ought to take a look at what Quebec is doing, because I think Quebec has come forward with a superior plan. What Quebec is essentially saying is that they're prepared, as a matter of public policy, to provide some risk insurance—to share in the risk—so that former Nortel employees in that province will not be thrown to the wind and their pensions will not be thrown to the wind. I think it's a very creative solution by the province of Quebec, and I think we ought to be pursuing that here in Ontario.

To follow up on my colleague Mr. Sterling's earlier comments, it will not just be Nortel; there are dozens of other pension plans in this province that are going to face a very similar difficult situation, and I think that, as part of provincial policy, we ought to be looking at the direction Quebec has taken. Following the Quebec example would give the plan as a whole more leverage. It only stands to reason: A large pension fund has the ability to spread some risks internally, and as a result the pension plan members as a whole fare better. I am left to ask the question: Quebec has come up with a creative solution. What's wrong with the government of Ontario? Why can't the government of Ontario come up with a similar creative solution?

But Ontario needs to do far more, and let me use this opportunity to lay out what I think really needs to be done. Only 35% of Ontarians today are covered by an occupational pension plan. This means that there are all kinds of Ontarians who are, in effect, living for the moment, because when they do leave the workforce, they are simply not going to have sufficient income to retire and stay above the poverty line. This is going to be a really serious problem. I hear the government say every day that it's taking action to fight poverty. Let me tell you: What is growing in the background is a number of now middle-aged Ontarians who will not have the income to avoid falling into poverty when they leave the

workforce or when they're forced to leave the workforce. Ontario ought to be taking action on that now.

The government argues that this should be done federally. Well, yes, it should be done federally. But the fact of the matter is that if you look at the federal government right now—a minority government situation—they have great difficulty setting out any sort of longer-term vision or longer-term plan. The reality is that Ontario is large enough—like Quebec; probably like British Columbia and Alberta—to go it alone. Ontario has sufficient population to be able to put in place a provincial pension plan and to put in place the regulatory body and the investment body to make it a success. I believe that's what we ought to be doing. This is exactly what we ought to be doing.

Again, this is not rocket science. The Arthurs report recommends the establishment of an Ontario pension authority that would have the capacity to look after the pooling, administering, investing and disbursing of stranded pensions, and have a larger role as well. In addition, we support the recommendation of Professor Arthurs that the level of monthly pension benefits eligible for protection by the pension benefits guarantee fund ought to be increased. We believe that the monthly guarantee covered by the PBGF should be increased to a maximum of \$2,500 to reflect the effect of inflation on the original maximum of \$1,000. Does that involve some challenges? Yes, it does. But these are not challenges that couldn't be overcome in the medium and the longer term.

These are some of the things which New Democrats believe need to be done and need to be done now.

I just want to go back to where I started. Mr. Sterling is dealing with Nortel workers and former Nortel workers. But let me tell you, if you look at, for example, all of those workers who have been laid off in the last four years in the forest sector, their pension funds are facing similar challenges. I suspect what we're going to see is that Quebec, once again, will come up with a creative solution, and Ontario, at least currently, offers no solution.

What I hope this debate enables us to do today is to take a broader perspective. There are literally hundreds of thousands of workers in this province, members of pension plans right now, who need to see serious pension reform. Otherwise, we are going to have hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people who have worked hard all their lives, who have paid their taxes, contributed to the community, have been very good citizens, but run the risk of living their senior years in poverty—and it is a very real risk.

I want to thank Mr. Sterling for bringing forward the bill and for enabling this debate to get started. But the solution he offers, I would argue, is second best. What we really need to see is serious pension reform on the part of the government of the day, and no more pointing the finger at the feds, no more stalling, no more studies and no more consultations.

Quebec is already offering some very creative solutions, solutions that I believe are going to work in the short term, the medium term and the longer term.



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

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 213. I'd like to start by congratulating the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills and thanking him for bringing the bill forward.

The bill seeks to amend the Pension Benefits Act, and it's important that we have this opportunity to talk about pensions in Ontario. The global economic downturn has affected many companies. Many people who work in those companies, and the retirees who depend on their company pension plans, have real challenges.

In my riding of Mississauga South, I have been speaking with members of the Nortel retirees' protection committee, who have concerns about their pension and benefits plan. As you know, Nortel is currently under bankruptcy protection. As for federal legislation, its assets are in the process of being sold.

Even though the pension plan is still active and continues to be monitored by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, what Nortel pensioners are telling us is that they're concerned about what will happen if the plan winds up. They're concerned because the Nortel plan has already lost about 30% of its value, and if the plan winds up, they will not be able to recover that value.

The member's bill would allow pensioners, upon windup, to have the commuted value of their individual pension plan transferred into a registered retirement account. Essentially they could opt out of the annuity that their plan gets converted to and put their share into their own savings plan.

I understand the member's motivations in bringing this forward and in trying to provide additional options to pensioners who find themselves in the unfortunate position of having their plans wound up.

There are, however, concerns about this particular suggestion. For example, many are concerned about the possibility that pensioners could face higher costs as a result. Today when a pension plan goes into windup, all retirees receiving a pension have the value of their plan commuted into an annuity. Under the proposed amendments, the costs of purchasing annuities for the retired members and surviving spouses would likely increase, as insurance companies incorporate self-selection among retirees, and a smaller risk pool, into the price. For plan sponsors, this could raise the costs of fully settling their benefits.

Retired members who wish to purchase an annuity on an individual basis at a later date would also face higher costs and lower payouts than if the annuity was purchased by the whole group. Individuals would also need to take on greater risk in order to pursue greater returns.

For those retirees who transfer the value of their plan into a retirement account, transfer limits under the Income Tax Act can result in large, taxable lump-sum payments when a commuted value is transferred into a locked-in retirement account, a LIRA, or a life income account, a LIF, which could, of course, reduce the value

of the asset. So while I appreciate the member's motivation to provide additional options to pensioners, I'm concerned that the result of this change would be a reduced value of the pension assets.

**1500**

As mentioned earlier, I have been working with Nortel retirees in my riding to try to find ways to address their concerns about the potential windup of their plans. It's true that the federal legislation and ongoing legal proceedings play a role in determining the future of the Nortel plan. Somewhat outside of our control, there are initiatives ongoing at the federal level to address pension issues. An effort is under way in the House of Commons right now to get pensioners secured-creditor status in the event of a bankruptcy. Right now, pensioners are treated as unsecured creditors, which means they can only be paid after secured creditors like banks and other financial institutions and bondholders have been paid. Petitions have been submitted calling for the appropriate changes to be made to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. There is also a private member's bill before the federal House that would do just that. Pensioners in my riding are anxiously awaiting the outcome of these initiatives. I will also be watching closely as they develop.

Here in Ontario, we are responsible for the Pension Benefits Act, and what pensioners are asking for is measures that will prevent windup in the first place. By preventing windup, they would also have the opportunity to rebuild some of the lost value of their plans.

I'd like to quote now from an e-mail I received from the chair of the GTA's regional chapter of the Nortel retirees' protection committee. It reads as follows:

"The NRPC understands Bill 213 to purport, in a defined pension benefit plan windup, to give the individual members of the pension plan a choice of taking their pension entitlement as either (a) an annuity (as the law is today) or (b) as a commuted value.

"As you are aware, the focus and the intention of the NRPC has been, and will continue to be, advocating for a solution that does not wind up the pension plan (of far more immediate concern to us)"—to them.

"It is our position that the pensioners, caught in a bankruptcy such as Nortel's, will be much better served by having their pension plans remain open for a period of time (five to seven years) until the markets (and the pension funds) have recovered much of the loss experienced in the recent financial crisis.

"Only then would we consider the pension plans being wound up.

"Accordingly, Bill 213 would only impact our members a number of years into the future and so has received limited deliberations within the NRPC."

This is their quote: "I can say that we do foresee a number of critical concerns with the bill.

"Situations can be envisioned where the demographics of those taking CVs would negatively impact the fund value for those opting for annuities.

"In addition, our legal counsel"—that being Nortel's retirement counsel—"our actuary and certain other

groups ... all state that the bill is very poor in aggregate in that it will enrich the finance companies (notably because of high MERs) at the expense of those pensioners who opted for the CV.”

In a follow-up e-mail, NRPC tells me that the bill “does nothing to address the primary situation that the members of many defined benefit pension plans currently face, that being underfunding.” They also ask, “If the bill were to proceed, that it guarantee that ‘actuarial evaluations’ are made that would ensure that anyone who opts for a CV at windups does not do so at the expense of those that wish to take an annuity.” That is an absolute necessity, and a guarantee that they request.

“While the bill might allow for individual decisions to take a CV at windup, the strong advice of NRPC to its pensioner group at large would be to take the annuity.”

So I say again that I am very glad that the member brought this forward, as it gives us an opportunity in this House to debate the issues around pensions. They are important issues that are affecting thousands of Ontarians and many constituents in Mississauga South. I appreciate the concerns of Nortel pensioners, and for that matter all pensioners who face similar challenges, who are looking for ways to keep their plans out of windup. I agree that pension reform is needed, and needed urgently, to help the affected pensioners. And I agree with the Premier when I say that we also need a national pension strategy. I believe that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills is coming to the debate with the best intentions and a sincere desire to improve the situations of pensioners and their families. I hope that he will remain engaged as we continue to explore ways to improve pension legislation in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast):** Further debate?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I’m very, very pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 213, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act respecting transfers on wind ups.

I want to, first of all, mention that I’m very pleased that my colleague has brought this forward. In my riding, we have approximately 150 Nortel retirees, and many of them have approached my office. I have to tell you that we’re very late in the year and we’ve only got probably another eight or 10 days in the Legislature. The same thing will happen federally. As far as I know, between Ontario and Ottawa, this is the only piece of legislation that’s actually being debated concerning pensions. I know the whole topic of pension reform seems to be on everybody’s mind. I applaud the fact that my colleague has brought this forward and is actually dealing with the 18,000 Nortel retirees who make up the people who are approaching our offices almost every day.

I can tell you that under the current rules, when a company ceases to exist and its pension plan is wound up, pensioners or survivors of pensioners who are receiving a pension at that time must roll their share of the plan into a life annuity. Pension plan members who are not yet receiving a pension, on the other hand, can transfer the value of their pension into an annuity or into another pension plan, an RSP or an RRIF.

In the current economy, with historically low interest rates, annuities are worth very little. Unfortunately, this will leave thousands of pensioners receiving very little value for the pension they contributed to for so many years, forcing them to live on much less income than they are presently receiving.

The bill, if passed, will amend the rules to allow pensioners to transfer the value of the wound-up pension plan into a prescribed retirement savings arrangement or an annuity. This means they can benefit from an economic recovery by choosing a RRIF.

It is important that this bill pass quickly, and I repeat that: It is important that the bill pass quickly because the Nortel pension plan could be wound up at any moment. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario, an arm’s-length body, makes the decision to do that when they determine that the company, in this case, Nortel, will no longer survive.

In preparing the bill, Mr. Sterling asked legislative counsel to consult with FSCO to ensure that the intent was contained in the legislation. He was completely open to amendments which would help to meet the intent of the bill.

Pensioners of Nortel have asked for this additional option should their pension plan be wound up. The bill would make this option available not only to Nortel pensioners but to other pensioners who find themselves in this unfortunate position in the future.

If the bill passes second reading, it is the intention, after consulting with the House leaders of all three parties and the legislators, to ask for unanimous consent for third and final reading shortly thereafter.

As the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills has mentioned, this is by no means a comprehensive solution to all the issues surrounding our pension system. However, it is one simple change that, without costing Ontario taxpayers any money, would make a big difference for anyone receiving a pension from a company facing bankruptcy.

When we think back at these people who have worked for Nortel and companies like that over the years, if we look back 15 years, 18 years and we look at the kind of company Nortel was, a proud company that was driving the economy of the province, who would have ever thought this sort of thing would happen? However, these people who are now retired counted on that income as part of their compensation as a salary and now they may be in the unfortunate position of having very, very much less to live on as a result of the economic conditions.

As far as I can see at this point, the only person I know who’s stepping up to the plate right now to try to help the Nortel pensioners is Mr. Sterling. He has already repeated over and over again that this is not the solution for all pension reform. However, it is a measure that would help Nortel employees and lay out an option on the floor.

**1510**

I just want to take a minute to show the kinds of letters I’ve been getting. Many, many of them came from my office, but I want to read this one:

“My wife and I attended the demonstration by Nortel retirees at Queen’s Park on October 7.... There were between 1,500 and 2,000 people at the demonstration. Speakers ranged from Bob Ferchat, a former CEO of Nortel, to Ken Lewenza, head of the CAW.

“Speakers called on the Ontario government to support Nortel pensioners through the pension guarantee fund, and by not winding up the Nortel pension plan right away but to manage it for a period of five years until, hopefully, the economy and the pension fund is in better shape. (The Quebec government—I think Mr. Hampton mentioned this—“has agreed to manage the plan for Nortel retirees who live in Quebec.)”

We haven’t seen that kind of leadership coming from the Ontario government.

“The US and UK governments are guaranteeing the pensions of their Nortel retirees, and have submitted claims through the bankruptcy courts to recover this money.

“The Nortel Retirees and former employees Protection Canada (NRPC) is asking the federal government to amend the bankruptcy laws to put former employees further up the priority list for fund distribution. There will be a demonstration in Ottawa on October 21.

“Neither the Ontario nor federal governments appear to be showing any interest in this issue.

“I know you”—referring to myself—“are interested in seniors’ issues. There are nearly 150 Nortel retirees living in the riding of Simcoe North.

“Nortel retirees are not asking for a handout. They are just asking for help to get the pensions (i.e. their deferred wages) and benefits that they were promised when they were working hard to make Nortel the great company it used to be.

“Thank you for your help.”

That came from a Nortel employee in my riding, whom I don’t really want to identify by name on the record right now.

As I said earlier, I think the member from Mississippi Mills is trying his best to put something for debate in front of the House. It is an option we can look at. As he said earlier, it’s not the final answer and the solution to all pension reform, but it’s the only one that is being debated right now, and I’m very concerned that if this bill does not pass and we do not make some movement toward protection of these employees, then we may not see any kind of action in any of our Parliaments until long into the new year. I’d ask all members of the House to support Bill 213, and I’m very pleased to say that I will as well.

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

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Talking about pensions is an important topic. I know this issue has been brought to this House many different times. My colleague before me spoke in detail about our government’s position on this issue.

I know the member’s intentions are great; he wants to help the pensioners. But I’m not sure we can help the

pensioners in this way. We cannot create some kind of burden. We cannot go to a risky approach.

I listened to the member from the third party speaking about the risk approach in this regard. He talked specifically about the pensions we have in the province of Ontario. It’s an outdated pension plan. It didn’t work and it’s not working, and will not work or remain the same way.

I believe this pension has to be reformed and has to be brought up to modern times. I think we need it badly, because it’s not just Nortel retirees’ issues here; it’s many different companies. I know that a small company in my riding just went down. A lot of pensioners lost their pensions, because there is no structure in place to protect them. I think it’s very important for us as a government to reform pensions across the province of Ontario. That’s why our Premier asked Professor Harry Arthurs to conduct a report. As you know, he has great experience in this regard. I think he commissioned a report by 2009.

In this regard, our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, asked the federal government to come to the table in order to create a national pension plan for all the people who work in the province of Ontario, all the people working in Canada, because it is very important. As we go toward the future, we have to protect hard-working people. We want to protect people who put in their effort, their sweat, and want to protect their family after their departure, or their spouse, whatever happens to them.

It’s a very difficult issue; it’s very tough. I commend the member for bringing this issue forward to this House. I agree on the principle, but I’m not sure if this is the right approach to deal with pensions. I think the best approach is to start a new pension that speaks to the modern era in which we live and that speaks to the economic times in which we live. I think it’s important to transform and reform pensions in general in conjunction with the federal government. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

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

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I want to thank my colleague Mr. Sterling for bringing this bill forward. There is a matter of urgency, which is why it is before the House now. We’ve heard honourable members make reference to the fact that pension legislation in this province should be reformed, that we need to approach pensions in a new way. That’s all fine and good, but I think we miss the point of this bill if we wax eloquent about future discussions about reforming pension plans in this province. What we need to do here is deal with a matter that is affecting people who are caught. They’re caught in a circumstance beyond their control.

It’s important that we recognize that this is their money. These are funds that have been put aside on their behalf. There were contributions that were made to a pension fund that was intended for them in consideration of many years of work that they committed to this company, to Nortel. What is now for us to decide is whether these people should have the option—that’s all

Mr. Sterling is asking—that these pensioners be given the option to take their retirement funds by way of an annuity, which is prescribed now for those pensioners who are already receiving a pension—and give those people the same rights that employees of that company have who have not started to receive their pension. We're simply asking for fairness.

To lock those pensioners into only one option, and that is to take a prescribed annuity, is to condemn those people for years to come at what are historically low interest rate returns. An annuity is a guaranteed return on investment. It is essentially a guaranteed interest certificate. Who in their right minds, for the next 10, 15 or 20 years, would lock into a 1.5% or 2% interest rate return today? No one in this room would do that. No one in this House would do that. Why would we, in that case, condemn people who are dependent on a retirement fund to be limited to that kind of return, which is all that annuities are going to afford them?

This legislation provides some hope. It provides some hope that those employees may elect to direct their retirement funds that have been accumulated into a retirement savings account, into a vehicle that allows them the benefit of an uptick in the economy, of larger returns. I just think it is the fair thing to do. I fail to understand why we would even question supporting this. I also fail to understand why we would question granting not only passage of this bill today in second reading, but to give immediate passage on third reading to this bill so that it can in fact receive royal assent, and so that these pensioners have a sense of security with regard to their future. It's the right thing to do. I'm pleased to support it, and I believe that not only will past employees of Nortel benefit from this but also other employees who are caught in the same circumstances in this province.

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

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have to say that the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills has brought forth a well-intentioned bill about a very serious issue, one in which I've heard concordance on all sides of the House on the need to be able to look into the future and say that we have to do what's right in pensions. With our generation of baby boomers all growing older, and in fact the earliest baby boomer turning 65 in 2011, this particular issue is going to not merely come back but be with us with greater and greater importance as the years go on.

1520

I think, in response, that the Harry Arthurs report tabled in mid-year, this year—in which Professor Arthurs was called upon to look at pensions in general—might disagree with Bill 213, not on its intent, because no one can quarrel with the intent of Bill 213, but in that it tries to make some rules on a case-by-case basis, where what Professor Arthurs clearly said was that major assessments are needed.

In this case, a large plan and group benefits tend to fare better in the long run, so our goal would be to help establish these conditions rather than, as the bill pro-

poses, to facilitate, push or encourage individuals to go it alone. It does bring to mind the need for a pan-Canadian pensions regulatory framework that is sustainable in the long run, which, at the moment, the status quo is not. With that, I thank you for the time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Mr. Sterling, you have up to two minutes for your response.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I don't know whether you weren't listening to what I said in the first instance, but listen, this is not my first choice. This is not Nortel employees', pensioners', first choice. This is their last choice, and I understand that, but what I want to do is ensure that if this pension fund winds up in the next two or three months, before we meet again in February, pensioners will have another option than have an annuity forced upon them.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** That's all it is.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** That's all it is. If you don't like it when you bring forward your other pension legislation, which I would welcome and participate in, then nullify Bill 213 at that time. But please, please give these people the opportunity to save some of their pension funds should this thing be wound down in the next two to three months.

This isn't in the hands of the government to wind it down. It's not in the hands of Nortel to wind it down. It's the Financial Services Commission, which is legislated to determine objectively. When they determine Nortel is no longer going to exist, they have to wind it down because there are liabilities to not wind it down.

What's the objection? The objection from my New Democratic friend is that it doesn't address all of the other issues; it doesn't maintain the pension fund. I know Nortel pensioners would like to have the fund live on, as in Quebec. But if that doesn't happen and if we don't have legislation here to do it, for God's sake, give these people an option where they can buy an annuity in the future if the interest rates go up and they get a better monthly income.

Look, why wouldn't you say to them, "The annuity is going to take your pension from \$30,000 a year to \$10,000 a year—or do you want this to go into a registered retirement savings plan?" Why wouldn't you give them that choice?

Please, please consider it from that point of view. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** We will vote on Mr. Sterling's ballot item in about 50 minutes.

## PUBLIC HOSPITALS AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

### LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES HÔPITAUX PUBLICS

Mrs. Albanese moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 216, An Act to amend the Public Hospitals Act to require the provision of information sheets to patients /

Projet de loi 216, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les hôpitaux publics afin d'exiger la remise de feuilles de renseignements aux malades.

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

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** It is a pleasure to speak before the House today on my private member's bill, the Public Hospitals Amendment Act, 2009, otherwise known as Bill 216. Managing the health care system is perhaps the most important and sometimes challenging responsibility for the government of Ontario. This bill is concise, simple and effective in its content as it seeks to improve the way in which health care is delivered in this province, especially for those who are most vulnerable and least aware about existing health care options.

Offering treatment when the need arises in communities all over this province is something that all members of this Legislature support. To that end, I hope I can solicit the support of members present here today to endorse Bill 216.

But before getting into further detail, I would just like to say how proud I am to be living in a country where health care is not a privilege but a strongly guarded right that is shared by all Canadians. Indeed, our firm commitment to universal health care is a cornerstone of our identity as Canadians. We must continuously strive to make sure that our province delivers the best care possible for all people, irrespective of their background, income bracket, age or medical condition.

Having said that, it is incumbent upon us, as politicians to listen carefully to what the people we represent are telling us. It is incumbent upon us to improve access for people, directing them to the appropriate care they need in a timely fashion. We need to build on our foundation to work together to bridge the gaps in our health care system and make health care delivery patient-centred.

Over the past month and years, I have had ample opportunities to talk to residents in my riding of York South–Weston and to really delve into how they have experienced our health care system. As a result, I have identified some common issues which I believe we can help resolve through this bill.

In short, this bill is about encouraging and empowering patients to make use of the variety of health care services that are available locally, both inside and outside the walls of hospitals and emergency rooms. At times, patients are left wondering about where to turn to when they require rehabilitative or non-medical assistance.

If passed, Bill 216 would empower patients to make use of alternate points of access to health care by requiring hospital administrators to distribute patient information sheets outlining certain services available inside and outside the hospital setting. Some hospitals in our province already provide such information and do an excellent job; others have yet to reach that same level. This bill would ensure the same standard across the province.

For better or for worse, it remains the case that many hard-working Ontarians do not have the time or the opportunity to sit down and study the complexities of our health care system. Only when a medical emergency arises and they visit or are admitted to a hospital do they face the intricacy of the system. In such instances, hospitals are the go-to public institutions for the delivery of health care, and often the first point of contact for people. And if patients are not aware of their options within and outside of the hospital, should they relapse or suffer new medical problems, reverting back to the hospital is the most common practice. The result is a greater demand on hospital resources and staff.

This bill seeks to change that by giving patients an information sheet outlining different services available to them. In essence, the references contained in the patient information sheet will be threefold. First, it would contain information about the services available in the hospital itself, including the role of the patient's advocate and his or her contact information; how a complaint regarding services provided at the hospital may be addressed; the role of the community care access centre representative and his or her contact information in order to arrange for services, which might be needed as soon as the patient is discharged; it would also indicate support available for those with special needs in getting transport to and from the hospital; and, finally, information on financial and legal assistance available to patients with lower incomes.

The second part of the sheet would contain information about services available in the community, including what is offered by community care access centres outside of the hospital and providers of health care services after regular business hours, such as a walk-in clinic or pharmacies.

Finally, each patient information sheet would also contain references to two universally run provincial programs: Telehealth Ontario, the free and confidential telephone service where people can call and obtain health advice from a registered nurse, and Health Care Connect, the phone-in service that matches family health care services to families and individuals without access to a family doctor.

#### 1530

Taken together, all these specific references would be handed to the patient in a single document upon his or her admittance; and more importantly, once the patient leaves the hospital, he or she would be able to access the services available in the community. The benefit would be that residents won't always have to go back to the hospital. What better way to empower patients than to place directly in their hands the information they need on a single sheet, website addresses, telephone and fax numbers included?

Despite living in a technologically advanced age, we must recognize that not all Ontarians in all parts of the province have access to the Internet. This is especially an issue among low-income earners, seniors, newcomers with language barriers and many living in rural commu-

ities. That is why providing this simple piece of paper would result in getting the access that is needed.

This initiative is not very costly at all. It only requires hospital administrators to conduct periodic updates of the information they present. Patient information sheets could, of course, vary from hospital to hospital and from region to region, reflecting the reality of the communities they serve. For instance, hospitals may choose to draft a version of the sheet in a foreign language to suit the needs of a particular community. As MPPs we cannot legislate every aspect of individual behaviour, but we can raise awareness and encourage our citizens to seek out what they need if they experience medical issues or challenges. The patient information sheet would provide points of contact that some patients might not use immediately but very well might find useful in future situations.

In time, some of the pressures that front-line doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers are under would be alleviated. I believe that this legislation does a good job of complementing our health care system, because it would redirect more people to specified care, even non-medical care, and would over time increase awareness about community services that people would be able to make use of. It would also increase the profile of community care access centres and the important work that they do on a daily basis, serving the needs of 14 regional areas in our province.

The Toronto Central CCAC alone serves 21,000 people and employs 500 health professionals. It's vitally important to make people aware of the important work done by community care access centres and other organizations that help people to cope with physical, medical and personal challenges in their daily lives. In a recent article, Carol Goar of the Toronto Star referred to CCACs as "gatekeepers of the non-institutional health care system." I believe we must do all that we can to get the services CCACs offer to those who need them most. Services offered by CCACs and their local partners are manifold: They include offering therapeutic care to people who have undergone surgery, providing patients with medical equipment, helping seniors with household chores like shovelling snow or grocery shopping, and offering palliative care to those who need it.

In one particular case in my riding of York South-Weston, an elderly gentleman by the name of Francesco Alfano suffered a stroke back in March. Upon being treated and released from a hospital outside the constituency, Mr. Alfano and his wife, Lidia, did not know where to turn for the corollary care he needed. The hospital did not connect him to a CCAC right away. Mr. Alfano had to get in touch with my office to get the right referral before receiving the appropriate respite care he needed. He is now seeing a therapist twice a week in his home, thanks to the arrangements made by the Central West CCAC. The therapist is helping Mr. Alfano recover his physical and mental strength so that he and his wife can return to a quality of life that is closer to the one they enjoyed before the stroke.

In this case, the constituent in question inquired about post-operative care options by contacting my office. Cases like these could be many throughout the province of Ontario, and if this bill passes the Legislature, patients and their families would be empowered to seek the services already available to them and jump-start their path to recovery. This bill would be good for hospitals, good for CCACs, good for doctors and nurses and, above all, beneficial to patients in Ontario.

I would like to thank my staff for their help in the research and their assistance in drafting this bill. Fellow members, I encourage you to endorse Bill 216, the Public Hospitals Amendment Act, 2009. Let's empower Ontarians to make use of what is available and to lead healthier and longer lives.

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

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 216, An Act to amend the Public Hospitals Act to require the provision of information sheets to patients. This bill proposes to amend the Public Hospitals Act by adding a section that would require a hospital administrator to ensure that each patient arriving at the hospital is given an information sheet outlining the services available at the hospital, in the community, as well as other provincial health services one could access for support. This bill aims to promote transparency in the hospital system by making key contacts in a hospital and its surrounding community readily available on a single document to incoming patients.

I would like to start by indicating that I do appreciate the sentiment behind the bill, but unfortunately, I won't be able to support it for reasons that I will now get into. The PC Party of Ontario and our caucus encourage transparency and accountability in health care delivery and, for that matter, in any system that is funded by public dollars. This party has long advocated that taxpayers' money be spent responsibly and for the benefit of all taxpayers. This would include the premise that taxpayers have the right to be aware of any and all services available to them, provided within our hospital and community health care system. Patients have the right to access the services they are paying for and the right to have the best-quality experience possible throughout their journey within the health care system.

With that said, I feel it is very important to acknowledge that while very well intentioned, this bill won't do much more than increase red tape on an already overburdened hospital system.

Hospitals are under tremendous pressure right now to balance their budgets and are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. As a result, as we know, many hospitals are expected to have to cut services in order to balance those budgets. It's unrealistic to expect that hospitals can further divert scarce resources from front-line service.

It should also be noted that most of the information listed in the bill to be provided on a sheet is currently already available by calling the switchboard at the

hospital in question; on websites for the hospital; at the first point of contact within the hospital system; through government advertising campaigns, such as Telehealth Ontario; and Health Care Connect.

I also had a chance to consult with the Ontario Hospital Association regarding this legislation. They agree that the spirit of this bill is certainly admirable, and I commend the member for bringing the issue forward. The Ontario Hospital Association, however, has made some good suggestions which I think we could consider on this topic moving forward.

First, given that the LHINs are responsible for integrating services within each of their mandated areas, the OHA has suggested that the LHINs may be a more appropriate venue from which to coordinate this information. I could certainly support that idea.

I should also point out that there are two websites that are quite informative. One is run by the Ministry of Health and one by the Ontario Hospital Association. The ministry site, called “Your Health Care Options,” showcases a multitude of community and public health services that are accessible to Ontarians, including Health Care Connect; Telehealth Ontario; a medical services directory that locates walk-in clinics, urgent care clinics and tips on finding a family health provider; CCACs and the services they provide; diabetes education; and much more. The OHA’s myhospitalcare.ca site is designed to make public information about hospitals both accessible and useful to prospective and returning patients and their families.

In conclusion, I support the member’s intention with respect to this bill, but unfortunately, I cannot support it in its present form. We are committed to full transparency in our health care system. All Ontarians should be fully informed about health care programs and services, both in the hospital and in the community, but I believe this information is already available. Duplicating this effort in the manner suggested by this bill is not, in my view, the best use of our already scarce hospital resources.

1540

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this bill.

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

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It’s always a privilege to stand in this House, particularly to speak about health care.

As a Canadian—a number of us were down at the state legislators’ conference in the United States recently. It was interesting that there were very few Canadians there—all parties were represented—but a lot of Americans, and all the Americans wanted to speak about was, guess what? Our health care system. They wanted the facts rather than the fiction that they were being fed, often through their news media. It was a delight to really play a rather diplomatic role and to tell them that some of the myths they’d heard about the Canadian health care system were just that, myths; and to tout again one of the wonders and joys of being Canadian, which is that we have a health care system. Thank you, Tommy Douglas.

With that, I’m going to talk about the bill.

I want to say to the member from York South–Weston that I will support this bill. I think it’s a little step.

I heard the member from Whitby–Oshawa, and she made some excellent points. Unfortunately, it will cost a bit of money to put something like this into place. That would be the challenge I would give to the folk across the aisle, the government: that hopefully if they do move this bill forward and it does become in some way law, that there is funding available as well. The last thing our hospitals need is the necessity for providing yet another service with no more dollars to provide it. So absolutely I would say that has to be part of the regulations that attach themselves to this bill, were it to get to committee and move on from there.

It’s interesting that as New Democrats, one of the real shortfalls we see in the health care system certainly does have to do with information—actually, there are two shortfalls. One of them is the fact that the Ombudsman does not have oversight over hospitals. In fact, the Ombudsman doesn’t have oversight over any of the MUSH sector. This is unfortunate. Our researchers did some study on this, and it absolutely staggered me to know that 2,366 complaints to the Ombudsman had to be turned away because they involved municipalities, universities, school boards, hospitals and long-term-care homes. Children’s aid societies and police also are not covered. The reality here is, where do you go when you have a complaint about treatment that you’ve received at the hospital? We brought forward a private members’ bill or two on this topic—certainly, it has the support of the Ombudsman, who would like to see his staff enabled to look into complaints about the health care sector. Every other province has this provision. Every other province has Ombudsman oversight of their health care, of the hospitals and long-term-care homes. We don’t. In fact, it was my cousin who came to talk about my uncle’s death from C. difficile here who really highlighted the program. Cast our minds back to the C. difficile issue and the lack of transparency on behalf of this government and the lack of oversight by the Ombudsman. It was—and she said it most eloquently—very, very difficult even to find out a diagnosis as to why her father had died. This is unfortunate. It’s worse than unfortunate. We need Ombudsman oversight.

In terms of sharing information, I would say that not only should the hospital, once you are admitted, give you information about where to get the services and perhaps supplies that you need once you’re discharged and while you’re in the hospital’s care, but they should also provide you with the health records. This is a huge oversight that we have—quite staggering to other jurisdictions.

Another story: My husband, playing on the Legiskaters, had a heart attack, unfortunately. It was a mild one, which we were glad about. He went into the hospital, and then when he did the follow-up visit with our family doctor, lo and behold, the family doctor didn’t even know that he’d had a heart issue. The records had not got from St. Mike’s to our family doctor.

The sharing of health care records, the access to health care records, is a serious problem in this province. In fact, the whole eHealth scandal is particularly scandalous not only for the money that went out the back door in untendered contracts but because, at the end of the day, we don't have eHealth records. We don't have a seamless method of sharing information from one doctor to another, from one specialist to another, from one health care institution to another. We don't have that in Ontario, and that's dangerous. That is really quite dangerous.

Another friend of mine has heart issues as well. She has taken to carrying her records around under her arm, literally; all this paper—you can imagine—a file folder like this. She carries it from one specialist to the other because that's the only way that she can be sure that the specialist will know what the GP said, the GP will know what the specialist said and the hospital will know what the specialist said. This is absurd.

She's not the only one. My adoptive mother, who passed away recently of bone cancer, had to do the same thing. She had to do it on the TTC, and she was a woman of 76. She had to carry X-rays under her arm from one clinic to another, from specialist to GP.

We are in the 21st century now. There has to be some way—this is not rocket science—of sharing information in a way that makes sense for patients. But presumably that's not the case in the province of Ontario.

What else is problematic? Certainly, apart from Ombudsman oversight, we in the New Democratic Party are very happy about the work our Ombudsman does. We think he's very non-partisan. We think he looks at issues very judiciously. We would like to give him the power to look at the health care system in the same way, on behalf of those who use it, and also medical advisory councils. We heard a wonderful submission, while looking at another bill in this House, from the RNAO, the nurses' association. They would like to see more involvement of nurses, midwives and other health care professionals on the medical advisory councils in the hospitals. In some ways, it really is still a pretty archaic, hierarchical system in our hospitals. We in the New Democratic Party would like to see that democratized a little bit so that other health care professionals can also have insight into the care of the patients within the hospital setting. That's certainly what the nurses, midwives, dietitians, nutritionists and others would like to see happen.

Then, of course, there's the question of health care itself. Tommy Douglas always said that every generation would have to refight the battle for medicare. That has been proven to be true. And he said that you can never rest; you always have to be improving the system because otherwise, again, it will be chipped away and privatized in pieces. He has been proven to be correct about that as well.

We in the New Democratic Party would like to see some extensions. This government promised a dental program. We don't see that dental program. In fact, in my CCHC in my riding—a wonderful one, Parkdale Health—they set aside a little room, waiting for the fund-

ing from this government, to be able to offer dental care for those in their community who can't afford it and who desperately need it. We're not talking about providing beautiful white smiles; we're talking about the kind of basic dental care that will make you ill if you don't get it, that will take you to the emergency ward at some point if you don't get it.

Again, it would seem to us in the New Democratic Party that this is just common sense. Why would you not pay for simple dental examinations, simple extractions, simple fillings, simple checkups, but you will pay for extremely expensive emergency ward work? This makes no economic sense to us.

The government brought forward a bill and made a promise. We don't see that promise fulfilled. We don't see a dental chair in that little room set aside in Parkdale Health, and we don't see a dentist there. We still see people walking around in my community with extremely unhealthy teeth, which impacts their health. Let's look at that as well.

Overall, I have to say that while this is a good step—sometimes you feel like a broken record in this House, saying this over and over again, because it's true of just about every Liberal, McGuinty government bill: good step, but it's an inch where we need a yard, a millimetre where we need a kilometre, right? It's the same here.

But I commend the member for bringing it forward, because a small step is better than no step. I know the constraints on backbenchers. We know as well as anybody that the only decisions that happen in this place, that get enacted, come out of the corner office, come out of the cabinet. We'd like to see the backbench in the Liberal Party given a little bit more power, given a little bit more voice, to speak up at their cabinet meetings and get a little bit more of an ear from their Premier.

#### 1550

We've seen some of this in action. In fact, last private members' day, last Thursday, we had a tie vote—miracle of miracles in this House—that the Speaker himself had to cast a deciding vote on. I wouldn't use the word "rebellion," but we're starting to see some real backbone in backbenchers, and I would like to encourage that. I would like to encourage that backbenchers bring forward bills of real substance, bills that maybe challenge what comes out of the corner office. Why not? Because, quite frankly, it's not the corner office that elects them; it's their own constituents.

This member, to her credit, is reacting and acting on behalf of her own constituents. Would that were the case for all Liberal backbenchers about all issues. I won't go into the HST; we speak enough about it. I'll speak more about it in the time allocation motion that's coming up. But again, that's an issue where, wouldn't it be wonderful—I'll hesitate to break into song, but wouldn't it be wonderful if the backbenchers brought forward the voices of their constituents on the HST? Wouldn't it be wonderful if the backbenchers brought forward some of their voices to the corner office, to the cabinet, that perhaps are in complete contradistinction to what comes



out of cabinet? That looks good to the electorate. Constituents like that. They re-elect members who do that. They re-elect members who don't just vote in unison, but who actually bring their own concerns forward.

In conclusion, will I support it? Yes, I will. Would I like to see it go further? Yes, I would. But again, I commend the member for at least representing and standing up for her community the way we'd love to see other backbenchers stand up for theirs.

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

**M. Shafiq Qaadri:** J'ai le plaisir aujourd'hui de me mettre debout pour soutenir ma collègue l'honorable Laura Albanese, députée provinciale de la circonscription de York South–Weston. Je la félicite pour avoir proposé ce projet de loi pendant la période des membres privés.

Ce projet de loi est important parce qu'il exigera que les administrateurs des hôpitaux provinciaux de l'Ontario s'assurent que chaque malade reçu à l'hôpital puisse avoir un document informatif sur les services disponibles à l'hôpital, les services dans la communauté et les autres options pour les soins de santé.

I rise first of all, of course, to commend my honourable colleague Laura Albanese from the riding of York South–Weston for bringing forward Bill 216, the Public Hospitals Amendment Act. Although that is the official title, I think it might also be called the patient information act because of the number of different questions and concerns that I think this addresses. And, yes, as the member from Parkdale–High Park said, it is part of the measures or steps brought forward to inform and empower the public.

First of all, as you consider the scenario of families taking loved ones to various emergency rooms or urgent care centres across Ontario, you can imagine that the time is one of disorientation, bewilderment and fright, and, of course, really not having their bearings right. So if we, as a government, can move forward and empower individuals with information particularly, because that's especially key in this domain, then of course all the various interests can be served.

In particular, what my colleague from York South–Weston is referring to is that, on entry to an emergency room/department, there should be an information sheet, information passed to the family or to the patients, not only to alert them as to what particular services are available at that moment within the hospital, but also the very important aspect of aftercare. As a doctor, I can tell you that when people present to an emergency room, whether it's for leaving a part of themselves, such as an appendix, or having cardiac bypass surgery or, let's say, angioplasty of the heart, a knee replacement or any of a host of procedures, that is actually just a part of the middle of the continuum of care. It may have started at the family physician level, then entering hospital, but probably the real bulk, the real re-strengthening, the real rehabilitation, actually occurs after hospital care.

One of the things that I think all of us, as members of Parliament, have found, whether it's in the health care

domain or beyond, is that there is a myriad of services that the government of Ontario and all its boards, commissions and agencies together offer to the public, but unfortunately, to this day, the broader public is probably not aware of them and how to access them. Is it through community care access centres? Are there other points of access? Is it through the Internet? Is it calling members of provincial Parliament? How does one actually access these various services? If people who are in extreme need and who no doubt are going through difficult, challenging and disorienting times can be empowered with that type of information, it will really expedite the efficiency, the efficacy and the on-the-ground effectiveness of the health care domain.

So I would commend my honourable colleague from York South–Weston for bringing forward Bill 216, the Public Hospitals Amendment Act or, as I like to refer to it, the patient information empowerment act.

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

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** I would like to compliment the member from York South–Weston for bringing this bill forward. Yes, I'd like to speak for a couple of minutes, and yes, I'd like to support it, as this moves a bit closer to bringing very much needed information into the hands of our patients.

One very important thing, when we look at the meaning of the legislation the member has introduced, is that it is not so-called access to health care as we know it. As a matter of fact, the information she is looking to provide should be provided even before someone accesses a hospital room or a hospital bed, so that not only patients but family members are immediately aware of what is available. What is better than providing someone with peace of mind when they are sick in a hospital room by saying, "Okay, you probably will be out of here in two or three days, and we suggest that you contact so-and-so and so-and-so."

Governments are wonderful at making all kinds of laws and then stashing them on various shelves, and unless you go and get them—like the member from Whitby–Oshawa said, the information is there; you've got to Google it; you've got to call; you've got to do this; you've got to do that. Come on.

The first one to call is not the person who has just been released from a hospital bed; it's probably a family member, and we do get calls. I'm sure that members get calls that say, "My father, sister, son"—whatever—"has just been released from hospital. We need this, this and this. Where can we go? Where can we call? Is anything available? How much?" I don't think it costs very much to provide a little bit of care, a little extra level of care, and make our patients feel much better, knowing where they have to go, what they have to do and whom to call, either before or even after.

I don't think this goes for our own immediate community; I think it is for people all over Ontario. In many places, they have to travel far and wide before they can access some services. There could be nothing better than

to provide those patients and family members with peace of mind: "Yes, this is what's available." As the member from Whitby–Oshawa said, we have all of this available. Yes, it is. But there is always that "but." When you need it, it's not there; it's not at your fingertips.

The information that the member from York South–Weston is trying to tell us about doesn't really cost very much. It does not cost millions or hundreds of thousands; it doesn't cost thousands. It can be done very, very cheaply, but it's very important. I think we should move on, move ahead and provide our people with this level of care, if you will, because it's another level of accessibility to health care services. Let's make it as easy as possible, especially in times of need.

I'm going to say this, and I'll probably repeat it another time: It's better to have it and not need it, than to need it and not have it.

**1600**

So I hope that we can second the legislation proposed by Ms. Albanese, the member for York South–Weston, move it along, and provide our people with much-needed necessities by increasing the level of care, the quality of care and the accessibility to care.

I thank you for your time.

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

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I'm privileged and honoured to speak on Bill 216, the Public Hospitals Amendment Act, 2009, which was brought by my colleague the member from York South–Weston. It's an important issue.

I listened to all the people who spoke before me, talking about many different issues. The member from York South–Weston mentioned some important things. When a person goes to the hospital because of sickness, for operations, the issue is that it has to be easier for them to realize there are more services, not just within the hospital but outside the hospital, whether it's a community care access centre or other providers that exist outside the hospital. It's important because when you are sick, when you are tired, you have no time to search and navigate the system to find all the services.

I want to give you an example. I represent London–Fanshawe. In my city, we have three hospitals. We have the University Hospital, we have St. Joseph's hospital, and we have the London Health Sciences Centre hospital. All of them provide services for the people of London and the region. Every one of them has specific services for specific medical procedures. So it would be important for the people who come from London, or outside London, to know what kind of procedures each hospital provides, and also, if they are sick after the procedure, after they leave the hospital, that they can seek support and benefit. Especially in this day and age, we try as much as possible to lower the pressure on the acute bed services and send people out with some kind of support. It's important to provide that information to the patients when they go to the hospitals.

I don't think this bill will cost any money. Basically, it costs nothing. The member from Parkdale–High Park

mentioned that this would put a burden on the hospitals, an expense, so we have to attach some money to it. I bet it wouldn't cost a dollar per day for every hospital across the province of Ontario, because it's basically a printed-out paper, a sheet.

When you're admitted to the hospital, the hospital will come forward and tell you, "Look, we'll provide these services: one, two, three, four, five. If you are released, then you can proceed with the services outside, whether it's a nurse coming to your house or a community care access centre." I think it's very important.

I want to commend the member from York South–Weston for raising such an important issue. I know many people are not paying attention to it. It will help us, as Ontarians and as patients, or future patients, in many different hospitals, to know what services we can get from the hospitals and what kind of services we can receive when we leave the hospitals. Then we can be comfortable.

Not all people are computer-savvy, as she mentioned. They can't navigate the system and go on the computer and know exactly which hospitals can provide better service than others, which ones have lower wait times.

It will be important to make it easier for the patients. I think it's important for the patient, on one side, and also for the health care provider, on the other. There will be fewer questions, fewer concerns.

Most of the time, when you go to the hospital and you are sick, you want to get well fast and you are concerned about your state of health. That's why you keep asking the doctor questions and you require many different nurses to come visit you: because you want to have peace of mind. In this way, when we provide the information for the patient or the people who care for the patient, when they come with them, they'll know exactly what to ask for and what can be provided. I think it's important.

I've visited the hospitals two or three times in London. I was sometimes puzzled about how much things would cost: If I asked for this room, would it cost me money?; was this one provided by OHIP or not? All this information shouldn't be a concern for the patient. It should be already provided.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Further debate? Seeing none, the honourable member, Mrs. Albanese, has up to two minutes for her response.

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I would like to thank all the members who have spoken on this bill: the members from Whitby–Oshawa, Parkdale–High Park, Etobicoke North, York West and London–Fanshawe. I appreciate their comments and their concerns.

I would like to reiterate that this bill is about linking patients to information that is, many times, already available. The hospital is the first point of contact for people at times. Many hospitals already do this. It's about creating a standard across the province. I believe the member from Whitby–Oshawa also mentioned websites that are available, and that's very true. Not everyone has access to a computer, however, and again, this would be an attempt at creating a standard.

Just like my colleagues, I'm well aware of the pressures that our hospital health care providers are under, and the patient information sheet aims, in a very simple and inexpensive way, to empower patients with information that would avoid their going back to the hospital. I believe that this legislation does a good job of complementing our health care system because it would redirect more people to specified care—even non-medical care—and would, over time, increase awareness about services that are available within the hospital setting and in the community, services that people would be able to make use of.

Therefore, I thank everybody who has spoken on the bill. Thank you very much. I look forward to their support.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The time provided for private members' public business has not expired. That two and a half hours will be up at 4:13, so this House stands suspended until 4:13.

*The House suspended proceedings from 1606 to 1613.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Members, please take your seats. The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE  
AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE JOUR  
DE LA SENSIBILISATION  
À LA CARDIOPATHIE CONGÉNITALE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** We will first deal with ballot item 49, standing in name of Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Jaczek has moved second reading of Bill 178, An Act to proclaim February 14 in each year as Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Ms. Jaczek, do you have a preference for committee?

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Yes, please, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Is it agreed that the bill go to the standing committee? So ordered.

PENSION BENEFITS  
AMENDMENT ACT  
(TRANSFERS ON WIND UP), 2009  
LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE  
(TRANSFERTS À LA LIQUIDATION)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** We will now deal with ballot item 50, standing in the name of Mr. Sterling.

Mr. Sterling has moved second reading of Bill 213, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act respecting transfers on wind ups. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

After the next ballot item, we will call in the members.

PUBLIC HOSPITALS  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LES HÔPITAUX PUBLICS

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** We will now deal with ballot item 51, standing in the name of Mrs. Albanese.

Mrs. Albanese has moved second reading of Bill 216, An Act to amend the Public Hospitals Act to require the provision of information sheets to patients. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Which committee would it go to?

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** The Standing Committee on Social Policy.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** So ordered. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1615 to 1620.*

PENSION BENEFITS  
AMENDMENT ACT  
(TRANSFERS ON WIND UP), 2009  
LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE  
(TRANSFERTS À LA LIQUIDATION)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Mr. Sterling has moved second reading of Bill 213. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the clerk.

**Ayes**

Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	
Hardeman, Ernie	Sterling, Norman W.	

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

**Nays**

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Phillips, Gerry
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qaadri, Shafiq
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Ruprecht, Tony
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Best, Margaret	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Moridi, Reza	
Dickson, Joe	Pendergast, Leeanna	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 7; the nays are 31.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I declare the motion lost.

*Second reading negatived.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 2009, on the motion for time allocation of Bill 210, An Act to protect foreign nationals employed as live-in caregivers and in other prescribed employment and to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / *Projet de loi 210, Loi visant à protéger les étrangers employés comme aides familiaux et dans d'autres emplois prescrits et modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.*

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

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Certainly it's a pleasure to speak about any bill that at least—and again, I find myself repeating myself over and over again—is an inch forward, although we in the New Democratic Party would like to see far more than an inch in this area.

But I have to say, it's not a pleasure to speak about time allocation motions ever. We in the New Democratic Party would like to see fulsome debate on all bills. We think that's part of democracy; that's part of transparency. It just so happens on this particular bill that we support it. I'm going to be voting for it and I'm going to talk about it, because it's a chance again to revisit the issue. It's such an egregious issue, and there are so many stakeholders still being so hurt by the lack of any kind of legislation that helps them that we really do need to move on this, although not as quickly as the government would like without fulsome debate.

First of all, I want to perhaps sketch out what it looks like—the experience of a nanny who comes to Canada under current legislation. Think about it. Most nannies in my riding and probably most nannies in your riding come from the Philippines. So a woman is approached in the Philippines or approaches a broker to come to Canada for a job caring for someone else's children. She leaves her family, she leaves her friends, she has to pay a substantial amount of money now—and, quite frankly, unfortunately, even after the passage of this bill, one of our concerns is that those immigration brokers over in the Philippines or in other countries will still be charging money and our jurisdiction won't catch that and this bill won't catch that. So here's a woman who is paying substantial amounts of money still to come here, to get her paperwork done, whether it's absolutely necessary that she do it or not. Unfortunately, the reality is, most of them still pay money in other lands to come here. For most of these women, it represents maybe their life savings, a substantial amount of money for them—perhaps a year's worth of salary in many, many instances.

They come here and they are introduced to their family. They are, again, separated out from other workers who do the same work, except perhaps when they meet with their charges or with their children in parks or through caregiver associations, and thank goodness for caregiver associations. But they are isolated in a home. Think about the working conditions of a nanny, particularly a nanny who is not from here, for whom Canadian ways, Canadian habits, are totally foreign, and who is already, of course, estranged from her family and possibly her own children. Remember, one of the reasons that most women come over to take positions looking after other people's children is to be able to send money back home, to help them back home.

So here they are in a home with strangers, isolated. They don't know for the most part, usually, about our employment standards. Certainly they come from places where there are very different employment standards, if any. So they are working here. They don't know what's allowable under the law or not. Part of this bill that we would like to see strengthened is that educational process, that nannies should know what their rights are under employment standards, that they should know about their right to work only a certain number of hours a week or get overtime, that they should be provided with the basics in terms of food and lodging, that they shouldn't be asked to polish shoes or scrub floors when they've been hired to look after children.

These broad employment standards need to be translated, first of all, into their own language, but at least given to them in the language of this country, in English, and it must be made clear to them how they can lodge a complaint.

Of course, we have in opposition talked about this as the Ruby Dhalla bill, because it came out of that particular instance where two nannies had the incredible courage to come forward. Remember, they came forward to cabinet ministers complaining about a federal member of Parliament, a former employer. Imagine the kind of courage that takes for women who are, as I said, usually quite isolated one from the other and who usually don't know their rights under the law. So these women came forward and complained about ill treatment in the Dhalla household, and, of course, a scandal emerged from this.

The next thing we know, we've got this bill in front of us that at least addresses part of the problem. It does, to be fair, address part of the problem, and that is the fees that are charged to them on this side of the ocean—not necessarily the fees that may be charged to them on the other side of the ocean, but the fees that are charged to them here. Quite frankly, and I have to say it, we think all fees charged to folks seeking work should be illegal—all fees. In fact, they were. I used to be in the business—that was prior to 2001—and fees were illegal back then. The fact that they were legal even for a brief period of time is particularly discouraging. So at least it addresses that one small piece.

There are a couple of issues that still have not been addressed. One is, what happens in the coverage of

employment standards for the nannies now working? The question really is, to get back to the Ruby Dhalla situation, would this bill have helped those nannies? My contention, unfortunately, and I hate to say it, is that it wouldn't. It would have maybe helped them if they had paid fees, but it certainly wouldn't have helped them with the abuse they experienced in that household. It wouldn't have helped them enforce the employment standards to which we know, as Ontarians, they are entitled, but to which they didn't know they were entitled and it wouldn't have helped them in the sense that the best possible protection for live-in caregivers in this province would be the ability to form a union. That right, the right to collectively organize and negotiate, is not given to live-in caregivers. We don't understand why that right is not part of this bill.

It's been explained to me in briefing notes from the government that, well, they're isolated. There's one here, one there. That's even more to the point that they need organization, that they need a collective bargaining voice to address some of the ills that they face in these work situations.

**1630**

I also have to say that I haven't heard any news from the Ministry of Labour about that case. What happened to the complaints of those two nannies about their treatment at Ruby Dhalla's? What happened? That falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Labour. It would be interesting to have a report, to know if an investigation has been done—it was promised to be done—and what that investigation found, and if these women, after all they have been put through—and, my goodness, they've been put through a lot, travelling to Ottawa, testifying, not only to the initial abuse itself but speaking to two cabinet ministers about another member of Parliament; that took some courage. I for one, and I'm sure many in the opposition, would like to know what happened. What was the outcome of that case? What was the outcome of that investigation?

I would ask the Minister of Labour to please respond and let us know. This is not before the courts. This is before the Minister of Labour, presumably before his investigators. Was anything established? Was any recompense given to these women? Surely, I hope it has been. Again, it would be nice to know.

Getting back to this bill, however, certainly one of our major concerns is the isolation and the fact that, quite frankly, for many nannies who come in, for many live-in caregivers, there is no knowledge of their whereabouts. Think about how isolated and how vulnerable that makes someone. So someone arrives, let's say, from the Philippines and moves into a household of strangers. Nobody knows she's there. In fact, if something happened to her, medically speaking, she wouldn't have any OHIP coverage. That might have been a point of contact, but there's no OHIP coverage for the first three months. For the first three months, basically what we're saying to this live-in caregiver is, "You're on your own. Good luck. We don't know where you are. We don't know that you're here.

Good luck." Unless the employer decides to let someone know that she's there—usually it's she—there's no way of knowing. This is something else we look forward to amending the bill about.

We wanted to see the kind of situation they have in Manitoba. In Manitoba they have a licensing system. If you want to have a foreign live-in caregiver—in fact, if you want any foreign worker; this could go for the agricultural sector as well—you need to let somebody know this person is in your house and in your employ. You simply need to register their existence. It's really quite shocking that we don't have that in Ontario, because employment standards—this bill, all of it, could have absolutely no impact at all on a nanny if she doesn't know these bills exist, or that employment standards exist, for that matter, and that she has any right to anything. Lord knows what kind of abuse is going on currently, right now as I speak, in homes because the information is not disseminated and because there's no oversight of any sort on this whole branch of labour.

Of course, the backdrop to this branch of labour—the exploitation of this sort of labour, which this bill purports to address—is the fact that we, as working women in this province, don't have recourse to child care. Quite frankly, if you have two or more children and they both need child care, you are better off and almost have to have a live-in caregiver, because if you go out and pay for child care—if you can find it, because only one in 10 children in Ontario actually has access to a space—it's going to cost you over \$1,000 a month per child. So unless you're earning quite a hefty salary, it's almost not worth it economically to work, if you're a woman. That's why many working women look to hire a live-in caregiver—and no one blames them for it—because it's simply the most economical way of looking after their children. Again, this points back to the lack of alternatives for working women in the realm of child care.

I just came from speaking to women who work in shelters and interval houses. I said that domestic violence is going to be a reality in this province as long as we live and as long as our grandchildren live, unless women can have some degree of economic independence. Unless a woman has economic independence, there's no way she has of leaving an abuser. Think about it. She is under that abuser's control every bit as much as Ruby Dhalla's nannies were under the control of that family—without recourse. For most women, the alternative of going to an interval house or a shelter is not appealing. That's not where they want to go; that's not where they want to raise their families. They want to be able to have the kind of work that would afford them independent living. Quite frankly, when women earn 71 cents on every dollar that men earn, that's not a reality. Quite frankly, when there are no child care spaces and they can't afford them, that's not a reality either. So, again, this is the wider picture within which this bill sits. The wider picture really is one of exploitation of women. So this bill, again, is a tiny step in a large sea of exploitation that has to do with the role of women in our province.

When I was a teenager, I remember marching for 24-hour free universal daycare. Trust me, that was a long, long, long time ago. Guess what? We're no closer to that halcyon day now than we were then, and we're bounded by provinces that have made significant strides on this file. We have Quebec, where you can get child care for \$7 a day. We have Manitoba, where you can get child care for \$17 a day. And then, here we sit, where only one in 10 children even has access to a space, and that space is going to cost over \$1,000 a month.

So within that general sea of exploitation of all women, might I say, here we have, in a sense, the most marginalized of the marginalized: nannies—live-in caregivers who come from other countries, who come without a great many supports, who arrive in isolation into homes that nobody knows about, on which there's no oversight, very little education, if any. What motivation is there for an employer in this instance to let the worker know her rights, to let her know she doesn't have to work past 40 hours, or to let her know about benefits, or to let her know that she doesn't have to scrub the floors or polish shoes, that she's there to look after the children? Where is the onus on the employer to do this? Again, if there's no licensing of employers, if we don't know where these employers are and who's hiring who, how do we even know that these live-in caregivers exist? I can't imagine a more vulnerable situation, quite frankly, than that.

We absolutely agree in the New Democratic Party that there should be no fees of any sort for any worker seeking a job, and certainly not the kind of heinous fees that have been charged to women who can least afford it: those women who come from developing countries—the tens of thousands of dollars that have been charged to these women. Certainly we don't condone that. But as I said earlier, quite frankly, there's nothing in this bill that prevents people in their own country, so-called immigration brokers in their own countries, from still implementing these fees. There's no way of collecting back from those countries.

I was gladdened to see a kind of test case in the papers, where a woman, a live-in caregiver, actually did recoup some money for fees paid. But again, she's one of the lucky ones and one of the courageous ones, because, boy, oh boy, does that take some courage to stand up against your employers, to stand up against the system: a justice system which often isn't very just for those with no means. That's what this woman had to do to recoup that investment.

So this is the bill that's before us. It's small. It's not very wide-reaching in its attempts to change the situation of exploitation of foreign live-in caregivers. It certainly isn't very far-reaching in dealing with women's situation in Ontario and the lack of equality thereof. It certainly isn't very far-reaching in terms of that. It certainly doesn't address the core problem, which is the problem of child care: the lack of child care in this province, and certainly the lack of affordable child care in this province. It doesn't affect that. All it does—and I should

add that it doesn't even address the two nannies who worked for Ruby Dhalla, which we're hoping is in process somewhere, we're hoping is being redressed somewhere. I'm hoping—

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I think they just got a phone number, and that's it.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My colleague to the right here, ideologically and geographically, says that perhaps all they got was a phone number. Well, I hope that's not so; I really do. I would love to hear from the Minister of Labour about that case. I hope they didn't just get a phone number. I hope they actually got redress. I hope they got some money, quite frankly, and redress in that situation.

So again, here we have a situation where this bill does little. All it does is say to a nanny that if they have paid—first of all, it makes fees to place them illegal and says that if you've paid them, you might be able to recoup them. That's all this bill does.

**1640**

It doesn't address the isolation of the live-in caregiver, all alone in a home with strangers, far from her own family, far from her own support systems, far from her own friends and probably quite ignorant, not through her own capacity but because nobody has told her of the laws that affect her—of even this law that affects her—because, again, we don't know she exists. We don't know she exists because there's no licensing of employers here.

By the way, I want to say that when we asked that question of those who briefed us on this bill, all they had to say was—and I quote on this; this is how dismissive it was—“Oh, Manitoba has, what, 10 or 20? And we have thousands,” as if that was a justification. And I'm sure Manitoba has more than 10 or 20 or 100 or 200 live-in caregivers. They somehow manage to keep track of foreign-trained professionals in their jurisdiction. We don't.

I should add that it's not just about live-in caregivers. This is also foreign-trained professionals who work on farms, who work here briefly and then leave. Do we know where they are? Do we have any kind of tracking system as to their safety? No. Again, this bill doesn't purport to do that.

Then, today we have a closure motion. We have a motion brought forward by the government saying, “We will end debate on this bill.” Quite frankly, I think that's sad. Even though I'm going to vote for the bill, I think that's sad. I think closure motions are inherently anti-democratic.

The reason we have time to debate in this House—and you would know this better than others, Mr. Speaker, expert that you are in parliamentary procedure—the reason we give time to our members in this House to debate bills is so that we can hear the breadth of opinion, because whoever sits in government doesn't hold all the answers to all the issues; they never can. The whole point of having an opposition, the whole point of having clause-by-clause and adequate debate, of having the

institution of Parliament, in and of itself, is to make bills better, to bring forth laws that have been thought about, analyzed and subjected to the scrutiny of many different political opinions so that the laws are the strongest and most protective they can be. That's what we're doing here.

This government has tried to shortchange that process and said to Ontarians—not to us, because we are simply representatives of the people of Ontario—“Time's up. Enough. We don't want to hear any more. We've heard enough. We know all the answers. We've got it down. We want to move forward.”

I'm not going to fight them on this bill. I'm going to vote for it because it's better than nothing. But I'm awfully tired of the better-than-nothing bills.

Because it's a closure motion, I at least have the freedom to talk about those bills that are particularly egregious, that we absolutely disagree with on this side of the House, and that are subjected to closure motions. Again, they want to not only cut off debate in this House—and here, of course, I'm talking about the dreaded harmonized sales tax that at least 76% of Ontarians don't want, that at least tens of thousands of Ontarians who have written to us don't want. At least in terms of that bill, there's a real reticence, and for good political reason. I can't fault the government on that. They want to ram that bill through and forget about it until it rears its ugly little head in July 2010, when people will actually have to go out and pay it. They want to get it out of here as fast as possible, because they know it's unpopular.

With all the bluster to the contrary, with all the trying to tell Ontarians what they should have and shouldn't have and what's good for them, they aren't listening to Ontarians about what Ontarians think they should have. If there's nothing else that we do in this place—hopefully it's to listen to our constituents and reflect what they want here. That is also our job as representatives of the parliamentary tradition.

I think the government has made the fatal political mistake of deciding they know best what is best for Ontarians, and they're going to tell them, educate them, inform them—these are all terms they use—and then ram the bill through. Because if it hangs around a little too much—it's sort of like food, right? The longer the HST bill sits around, the riper the smell and the worse the reaction. So they want this bill to be quickly dispensed with, and hopefully forgotten—hopefully—when people walk into the stores, fill up their gas tanks, pay their utility bills or, Lord forbid, have a funeral they have to pay for or a professional they have to pay a fee too. And all of a sudden, next July, when they find they're paying 8% more on everything, then I'm sure there will be a public relations campaign the size of which we can only dream of in the opposition benches to make that hard-to-swallow pill go down a little easier. Because if nothing else, it's about the spin.

So I understand the political motivation of ramming this through. What I don't understand is how that can be

considered, in any way, transparent and democratic. That's what I don't understand.

What I don't understand, and I spoke about this earlier in private members' public business, is the reticence of the Liberal backbenchers. I said earlier that the backbenchers should get backbones and stand up, in contradistinction to the corner office and to their Premier and to the cabinet, and defend those they've been called to defend here: their constituents. If 76% of my constituents feel a certain way about a subject, whether I agree with them or not, I feel I'm duty-bound to at least represent that voice here. But I don't hear that voice on the other side of the House. I don't hear the voice that is in adamant opposition to the HST, that says, “I don't want to pay 8% more on most of the things I invest in.” I don't hear that voice. We hear that voice, and we bring that voice forward. But where is it? Where are the concomitant e-mails to Liberal MPPs that we receive in our offices?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I don't think they bring them in—

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I ask the member from Oxford. I know that we get hundreds of them in my office; we get hundreds of e-mails against the HST. We get phone calls. We have consultations. Knock on the doors, go out canvassing in your ridings and ask your constituents what they think of the HST. I can tell you what 76% of them will say: “We don't want it. It's a bad tax, a regressive tax at the wrong time.” That's what they'll tell you. The polls aren't lying to you. That's what they will tell you.

So where is that voice? Where is the representation of that opinion across the floor? I don't hear it. I've been listening, I've been straining to hear, but I don't hear it.

I can tell you that Dalton McGuinty and the cabinet are not going to vote for you in the next election, backbench Liberal friends. They're not going to be casting their votes. No, the people in your ridings will be casting their votes, the people whom you didn't listen to, who are trying to tell you something that you don't want to hear—and I know you don't want to hear it.

That's why we in the opposition are calling for public inquiries. If you're going to bring in a tax that most people don't want, and you really feel that there's an educational job to be done, you really feel it's the best thing for Ontario, you really are proud of it, then why don't you go on the road and tell them? Allow them to tell you and give yourself a chance to tell them. Why not? What's the reticence? I don't get it.

I really have to say that I love some of the verbiage about the HST coming from the other side of the floor. What we're hearing now, of course, is that this is going to create 600,000 jobs, which is, quite frankly, laughable. Come on. This is a province that has lost 300,000 jobs. We're not seeing that. I mean, 600,000 jobs—we should do the breakdown, member from Oxford, after the HST is brought into play, of how many jobs per month 600,000 jobs breaks down to. It would be fun to have a running thermometer of how accurate that prediction is. Suffice to say, that dog don't hunt. That dog don't even sniff.

That's not going to fly—and metaphors ongoing. It's not going to create 600,000 jobs. Nobody buys it.

But the other line, that they are actually going to save on taxes, that the vast majority—what is it, 93%, we hear from the other side?—is going to save on taxes: This is just unbelievably strange. If the vast majority is going to save on taxes and everybody's going to get money back from the government, then why impose the tax in the first place? I thought taxes were about raising money. I thought they were about getting more money into government. So something doesn't compute. You don't have to be a CPA or a CGA to know that this doesn't add up. This doesn't add up. Something doesn't wash. A tax is a tax. It charges people money for something they wouldn't otherwise pay. That's what it does, and that's why you want to put it into place. We get that in opposition. We understand that. We just disagree with the kind of tax it is. It's a regressive flat tax that will hurt people in the lower incomes most. That's the reality.

For every dollar you're collecting on HST, \$1.18 is going to a corporation. And guess what? I was speaking to small business representatives the other day. It's not going to go to them. Small businesses are horrified by the HST. All 30,000 of them in the GTA are horrified by the HST. Why? Because they know it's going to cost their consumers and they are going to lose business to the big box stores. They know that, the retailers and small business people in our community. They know that. They're very, very clear about it. They're very clear to us about it. They're absolutely upfront about it. There is no problem with them adding two and two and getting that a tax is a tax, that's it's to raise money for the government; it's not to give money back. They get that. They also get that it's going to hurt them.

You know the line about it saving them red tape? One of my small retailers said, "Well, you know, I spend about 15 minutes filling out these forms every two months." He said, "You know what? I'll take another 15 minutes if it saves me an 8% tax." They said, "Not only will it not help my business, which is already hurting because of the recession, but guess what? I'm also a consumer. I also buy gas and pay utilities. So it's going to hurt me at home. It's going to hurt my customers at home, and they're going to spend less money with me." That's the simple reality for small business, the provider of 90% of the jobs in Ontario. So if 600,000 jobs are going to kind of magically appear, they ain't going to appear from small business, I'll tell you that much.

Quite frankly, the profit that you are taxing less of and that could go to pay for social service programs, the corporate tax gifts that you're giving to corporations, are only good for those corporations that are making a lot of money. It's not going to help corporations or small businesses that are suffering, that are barely getting by. It's not going to help them, because they're not making a profit. So you could give them a 100% drop in their corporate taxes because it wouldn't affect them at all. They're not making any profit. Any smart business person knows that you have to be making a fair whack of

money before those corporate taxes have an effect on you. So who's making the fair whack of money through the recession in this province, I ask you? Very simple answers: Most of them are insurance companies and banks. Insurance companies and banks are making money. Insurance companies are suffering now, so it may be just banks. We'll stick with banks—banks and large global, mainly American, corporations, where that tax gift that you've given to them will not stay here in the province of Ontario, but will end up in the US treasury. It will actually be siphoned out of this country and go to the US.

So in what dreamland does this tax help anybody but the corporations that clearly have lobbied for it and are receiving it? I say no one. Certainly not small business. Certainly not seniors. They've spoken to me and to us in droves. Certainly not most middle-income people. And certainly not most poor people, marginalized people. It's not going to help them either.

In every measurable way, what we have in this province is bad economic news. It's bad economic news for those in the middle class; it's bad economic news for most business; it's bad economic news for those who are impoverished.

Is there anybody who's got some good news to share here? Well, perhaps, and it's only a perhaps, and that's the large corporations, presumably, maybe. I mean, manufacturing's been decimated in this province. We now have, what, a \$25-billion debt? The member from Oxford nods his head knowingly. We're a have-not province. One in six children lives in poverty. We have 130,000 households waiting on the affordable housing list, waiting 10 to 20 years. We're no closer to decent daycare. We're certainly no closer to reasonably funded post-secondary education; we're 10th out of 10 per capita on spending there for students, and tuition fees keep going up.

I'm looking for good news here, member from Oxford. I'm desperately looking for good news. But if you believe the spin that comes out of this government, if you actually believe the press releases, if you believe what they tell the press and what the press sometimes tells the public, then hey, we live in utopia; Ontario is utopia, it really is. I can already hear the retort to this: "Oh, we're in a global recession. We're all being affected. It's bad news for everybody."

But strangely enough, it's not as bad news for everybody. Strangely enough, in other provinces the news is not as bad. Why is that? Why is it that Ontario is in particularly dire straits where other provinces seem to be doing—they're all being hit, no doubt, by the recession, but they seem to be doing okay. I know Manitoba isn't running a deficit; they're clawing, they're hanging on by their fingertips, but they're not running a deficit. That's a \$25-billion advantage right there. I know Manitoba has \$17-a-day daycare, too. How do you do that? Because, according to this government, it's one thing or the other, and in fact it's neither for this government. We don't



have daycare and we have a deficit. Certainly the experience of small business in other places is marginally better than it is here. So the question remains, what are they doing right that we're not doing? Or, unfortunately, what are we doing wrong? What is the McGuinty government doing wrong that they're not doing? These are questions that really demand some answers.

They're getting the answers, not from the government across the floor, but they're getting the answers from the people of Ontario. People are speaking very loudly and very clearly. They're speaking to us in e-mails, they're speaking to us in phone calls, they're speaking to us in letters, they're speaking to us at the door, and they're speaking to us in the forums that we're holding in our communities. I had one on the HST and condos. Let me tell you, condo owners are very unhappy about the HST—very unhappy. It's going to add 8%—well, between 6% and 8%, depending on their situation—to their costs every year. They're extremely unhappy in the province of Ontario.

I can tell you that realtors in my neighbourhood are extremely unhappy about the HST. They come to forums that we hold. They speak to us directly. They tell us what they're thinking. I can tell you that seniors in my riding—and this government says, "Oh, well, they just don't understand." I find that so patronizing: "Oh, the seniors just don't understand. If you explain it to them properly"—and our retort to that is: Please do. Please have public inquiries where you explain to seniors and other groups that are going to be hit by the HST exactly what the method is in this supposed madness—according to them—and listen to what they say in return. And I think they'll find that, in fact, seniors are very knowledgeable and that seniors actually do understand the tax system and how it's going to affect them. They have read it. They are educated, and they are responding, "We don't like it," from an educated, informed standpoint, and that's true of the other 76% of Ontarians. That's true of them as well.

So just listen. That's all we ask. That's all one can ask at the end of the day from our elected representatives, that they listen to the people that they are elected to represent and that these people bring their voice forward into this assembly. Whether they agree or not with the voice, at least the voice is heard. That's all we ask from members in Liberal ridings. We also ask that they simply stand up for their own best interests, quite frankly, and that instead of doing what the Premier wants them to do all the time, they actually do what their constituents want them to do, because that's what's going to get them re-elected. He doesn't cast a vote in their riding. The cabinet is not going to vote in their riding; the constituents are going to vote in their riding. We think it's in their best interests that they listen to those constituents and that they bring that voice forward, whether they agree or not.

1700

That's why we call for public inquiries, that's why we call for transparency, and, quite frankly, that's why we

call for democracy in this place, which flies in the face of time allocation motions. Time allocation motions, closure motions, by their very nature, limit the debate, limit the opportunity for us, on this side of the House, to bring forward our constituents' voices, which is what we've been trying to do, and using every tool and trick at our disposal just to bring those voices forward. That's all we're doing: what we're elected to do. It's a very simple thing, really.

In the two minutes I've got left, to get back to the nanny bill: Yes, I'm going to vote for it. Do I think closure on it was a bad move? Yes, I do. I think that it does a disservice to the very people that this bill purports to serve, and that's live-in caregivers. I think they would have liked to have had more of a voice on this bill and more time on this bill.

What is the rush? Well, I know the rush: The rush is that all of this needs to get out before the House rises; and particularly, the HST bill has to become a memory only, hopefully never to be ever thought of again—until, of course, it's paid in July. But unfortunately, this was badly planned. They should have done it the way BC did. It's still getting a terrible reaction, but at least there they did what Liberal governments are good at doing: sneaking in something that they didn't run on, but right after they were elected. That's what happened in BC. Here, to give them some credit, they're doing in it advance of getting elected, but trying to muffle descent and trying desperately not to hear the voices of their own constituents. It's good for us in opposition, so the polls say, but not particularly good representation. Unfortunately, my friends, it's the truth.

So, finally, is closure bad? Absolutely. The nanny bill? It's okay, but it could have been so much stronger. It could have protected the most vulnerable workers in our province so much better. Women's rights, exploited women—it didn't even touch that one. Women still can't get daycare, still earn 71 cents on the dollar to everything men earn, and still can't get housing etc.

So, again, it's an inch where we needed, in this case, 3,000 miles, but an inch I'll vote for. I just wish I didn't have to vote for it any time soon. I wish we had those nannies voices on the record just a little bit more.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Further debate? Further debate? There being none, we'll deal with the motion. This is the time allocation motion on Bill 210.

On November 19, Mr. Duguid moved government notice of motion number 144. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1703 to 1713.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

**Ayes**

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pendergast, Leeanna
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Best, Margaret	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

**Nays**

DiNovo, Cheri	Klees, Frank	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	
Hardeman, Ernie	Prue, Michael	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 34; the nays are 7.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I declare the motion carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

**TIME ALLOCATION**

**Hon. John Milloy:** I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario and other Canadian provinces and territories, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy; and

That the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to meet on Thursday, December 3, 2009, during its regular meeting times for the purpose of public hearings on the bill and following routine proceedings on Monday, December 7, 2009, for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 noon on Friday, December 4, 2009. At 5 p.m. on Monday, December 7, 2009, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in

succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, December 8, 2009. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That there shall be no deferral of the second reading or third reading votes allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 163. Mr. Milloy.

**Hon. John Milloy:** It's a pleasure to speak this evening to, obviously, a very lengthy motion that we've just put forward which, at its core, is about Bill 175 and moving Bill 175 through the legislative process.

Those here in the House and those watching at home will be aware that we just completed a vote on a similar motion related to another bill. Perhaps they heard comments from my colleague over on the NDP side about the number of bills which are before the Legislature right now which the government is taking measures, through motions like the one I just read, to move forward.

If I can quote the honourable member, she said, "What's the rush? Why do we need to rush it through?" I thought I'd begin my remarks today by trying to explain why it is that we're rushing through a series of bills, including Bill 175.

The simple reason is that they're part of a package. They're part of a package that deals with the economy.

**1720**

I don't think there's anyone in this Legislature or anyone watching at home who would disagree that, right now, the Ontario economy has to be the number one preoccupation of every government. We have to work together—all of us in this Legislature—to ensure that Ontario can not only weather the current economic storm but can emerge stronger than ever.

That means taking measures like those in Bill 175, which deals with the issue of labour mobility, which is so important in terms of the issue of employment, which is such an extremely important issue right now as we deal with the current economic downturn. How do we make sure that those individuals who have the skills, who have the wherewithal, are able to receive employment?

As I said at the outset, this is part of a package of bills. Much was made in the earlier debate about another bill before this Legislature that we are trying to move forward as quickly as possible, and that's the bill that deals with the harmonized sales tax. The reason we are trying to push that bill through is, again, because of the economy, for economic reasons.

We want to see this bill go through so that we can put in place, as part of a package that is coming forward, comprehensive reform of our tax system. Part of that reform, if this bill passes, will be tax cuts that will come into place on January 1—tax cuts for 93% of taxpayers. They will be paying less personal income tax as a result of that bill. Ninety thousand low-income Ontarians will no longer pay any provincial personal income tax if the HST bill goes through. Again, that is why we're in a rush, because we want to see that measure adopted by the Legislature and we want to see Ontarians benefit from it as they deal with the current economic situation.

Our tax reform package, part of this larger package of economic measures, would cut the lowest tax bracket from 6.05% to 5.05% on the first \$37,000 of income, making this the lowest income tax bracket among the provinces and certainly placing Ontario in a very, very competitive position. We're almost doubling current property and sales tax credits as part of this package that we want to put through. This means more money in the pockets of our low- and middle-income Ontarians.

There's also harmonization itself, which has been the topic of so much discussion this afternoon. Harmonization is something that has actually been long called for by members on all sides of this House. They've realized that we have 130 countries around the world that have adopted a value-added tax. We have a series of provinces in this country that have adopted a value-added tax. It's a much more efficient way to collect taxes.

What it means for our business community is, first of all, a saving of about \$500 million when we talk about the fact that they will no longer have to have two sets of books, an inefficiency at best and a real cost measure for others. At the same time, it will have an effect on how they do business. As I think members realize, and certainly will know through the course of debates on various economic issues, when you pay PST on an item, it's not the first time the provincial sales tax is being paid. On many items we find at stores, or on other items we purchase, the sales tax has accumulated along the way; it's almost like compound interest as it comes forward. So what we're talking about is a tax reform package that will cut taxes and bring forward efficiencies. That's part of the economic package.

Do we have to do more? Of course. One of the areas we need to deal with is the issue of efficiency when it comes to occupations, when it comes, as I mentioned earlier, to the whole area of employment. That's where Bill 175 comes through—another important piece of legislation that we're going to have to work as a Legislature to try to make sure we can, yes, push it through the system, have the debate that's necessary and hopefully see it come forward as law.

Now, what is Bill 175 about? At its core, it's about the fact that the country of Canada is not a free market. One of the strangest notions of our Dominion is that we're a confederation of a number of provinces that have come together, and that although Canadians enjoy great mobility rights as they move and travel across the province, those rights are not absolute. You can find that on the trade front and you can certainly find that in terms of the labour mobility front.

Have there been efforts to try to address that? Certainly, there have been. I give credit to the various governments that have tried to tackle this. I think back to 1994, when the Chrétien government in Ottawa sat down with all the provinces and territories and signed the AIT, the Agreement on Internal Trade. That was signed by all the provinces and territories of the day and the federal government in order to strengthen the competitiveness of the Canadian economy, and they wanted to do that by reducing barriers to the movement of persons, goods, services and investments within Canada. If you think about it, the key that we're talking about is "persons," the whole idea of labour mobility. Within the Agreement on Internal Trade, chapter 7 addresses this issue of labour mobility.

Some may be saying, "Well, wait a minute. You can work anywhere you want within Canada." In many cases it's true, depending on the nature of the work you want to do. But one area where it's not true is what's often referred to as the "regulated professions," of which we have about 300 here in the province of Ontario. To just give individuals an idea of what we mean by "regulated professions," obviously these are professions where you not only have to undertake a certain amount of training, but you also usually have to write an exam or undergo some sort of on-the-job certification. This would include a whole variety of occupations that people would be very familiar with here: architects, engineers, veterinarians, audiologists, doctors, lawyers. I think everyone knows that we have these regulated professions, but what they may not be aware of is that here in the country of Canada it is not always automatic that you can move from one province to another and hang out your shingle, so to speak. In other words, an architect from Saskatchewan does not have the protection to move to the province of Ontario and automatically practise. For different professions, there are different standards regarding the ease with which they can move across barriers. Some are better than others. With many, if you move from one province to another, you'll be asked to complete further education; you may have to go through extensive paperwork; you may have to undergo experience within the jurisdiction that you're moving to. These create barriers for individuals. As long ago as 1994—a bit of a history lesson—this was recognized as a hindrance to the economy of Canada. It makes absolutely no sense that someone who's a professional trained in one province can't simply move to another province, that we don't have that freedom of movement.

I referenced chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade, which was signed in 1994. The purpose of chapter

7 was to enable any worker certified for an occupation by a regulatory authority in one province or territory to be recognized as qualified for that occupation in all other provinces and territories.

Similarly, chapter 17 of the Agreement on Internal Trade sets out procedures for the resolution of government-to-government and person-to-government disputes within the scope of the Agreement on Internal Trade, including those related to labour mobility. If you go back to 1994, when this initial agreement was put into place—you have to fast-forward 15 years later, and unfortunately not a lot of progress had been made in terms of implementing this very, very important part of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

Why is it important? Well, other than the simple logic of it, the simple fact that all of us recognize that Canada is one country—we are obviously a partnership amongst different jurisdictions, and I think all of us recognize as we move around the country that we have a pretty good standard here. If I—and I mentioned this in the debate on the bill—move to Saskatchewan and purchase a house in Saskatchewan, I'm not going to have any sleepless nights saying, "Perhaps that architect was educated here in Saskatchewan and for some reason it's going to be a different standard than Ontario." At its core we're talking about Canadian standards, and I think all of us recognize that there's a certain lack of fairness in the fact that we can't spread those standards across the country.

**1730**

But there's also a mobility issue here in terms of some of the economic challenges that are facing our nation right now. We are in a time of high unemployment, and I think all of us recognize that we have to provide as much support as possible to individuals who have skills, that they should be able to pursue those opportunities within the country of Canada. But at the same time, although we have high unemployment—and it's a very serious matter, one that our government is taking a number of measures to address; I'm very proud of much of the activity that we've undertaken—at the same time, we also have skill shortages. People in this Legislature may be surprised to hear that there are areas where, for demographic reasons, for just the lack of trained individuals, we don't have the all the workers we need.

So there's an economic argument that says: Let's open up our borders. Let's allow individuals from other jurisdictions, other provinces and territories, to come to Ontario where skills are wanting. Let's make sure that everyone in Canada who has the training that's needed can move through and find that career or that profession and not have these obstacles.

I'll share this with the House. A survey of Canadian businesses by the Conference Board of Canada, in 2005, identified the lack of labour mobility as one of the top three barriers to competition across the country. At the outset, I spoke about this package of reforms, this package of legislation the government is bringing in, and I said that it's not only to address the immediate-term problems, but it's also to talk about Ontario in the future, and that brings up the whole issue of demographics.

Although we are in time of high unemployment, and although that is of great concern to this government and we're bringing forward training programs—I had a chance in question period today to share some statistics on Second Career, which has been a very great success for this government, and it's only one of a whole menu of services that are available to people looking for jobs. Although we have to continue to focus on issues around unemployment and we have to continue to focus on issues around training, we also have to have a longer-term look.

What the experts tell us about the longer term is that there's a demographic shift, and we're witnessing that demographic shift right now. In 2011, we're going to be seeing the baby boomers start to retire. I think all of us have seen those various statistics floating around, that it was 30 or 40 years ago that you had eight working people for every senior. I forget and I don't know them off the top of my head, but I think now it's almost reversed so that for every seven or eight seniors, you have one working person.

We are seeing a real demographic shift here, where we have an older and older population and we have a younger population which is having to carry more of the burden. And because we're starting to see that younger population shrink because, over time, the experts are telling us there won't be as many new young individuals entering the workforce, we have to make sure that we have issues like labour mobility addressed. We've got to be able to address it head-on, because for Ontario to continue to prosper, for Ontario to continue its role as the engine of the economy here in Canada, we've got to make sure that they have a steady stream of labour supply.

There's important work going on—my colleague the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration—in terms of welcoming new Canadians here, but at the same time we've got to be able to look at home as well. We've got to make sure that if there are individuals from Manitoba, Saskatchewan or British Columbia who want to come to Ontario to practise their trade, they'll be able to. That's why Bill 175 is so important, both for the short term and for the long term moving forward.

I was telling the story about 1994 when the federal government and the provinces and territories came together, and the history of the next 15 years is the history of some efforts to address some of these issues, to try to implement the intent of the agreement on internal trade. I remember that my former colleague Mr. Cordiano, as Minister of Economic Development and Trade, was attending meetings with the federal government on this issue. I spent time, as members may know, as parliamentary assistant in intergovernmental affairs. We were trying to revive this with the fellow provinces.

But the real turning point came very recently, last year, in 2008, during the Council of the Federation, which is the meeting of all the provincial and territorial Premiers, when they met and said, "Enough is enough. It's time to make the Agreement on Internal Trade, and particularly labour mobility, a priority for this country."

What happened then was a series of meetings, a series of discussions. I was involved with them as Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, as I have specific responsibility on labour mobility. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade at the time, Mr. Bryant, was also involved. There were discussions back and forth, and in January of 2009, agreement was reached between the provinces that we were going to move forward.

What we are discussing today, Bill 175, is in fact the fruits of these discussions. It is Ontario living up to this commitment that was signed in January 2009, saying that we want to move forward with labour mobility and we want to make sure that it's a reality across this country.

Right now in other jurisdictions there are similar debates going on, as other provincial governments are bringing forward similar pieces of legislation which are going to be opening up the borders between us, allowing for full labour mobility.

Let me talk just a little bit about the principles of the bill. What it means is that someone who is trained—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Order. I remind the honourable minister that we are debating the time allocation motion on the bill, so it's quite appropriate to discuss the bill, but maybe you'd like to refer to the time allocation motion once in a while too. Thank you.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, I think that's very wise counsel. The issue that's before us was raised by my colleague in a similar debate that we just had. She raised the question: Why are we rushing these things through? I think I've tried to address the reason why we are rushing these things through. There is a package of them, I admit. There are a number of bills before the Legislature right now that on which the government is taking action through motions similar to the one that I brought forward today.

The reason we feel there is an urgency is because there is an economic situation that is facing our province right now. We have an economic downturn and we need to make sure that the legislation that's before us moves forward in order to provide the short-term economic relief or the short-term economic tools which are going to help this province.

I talked about the tax cuts that we want to see go in place January 1—very urgent. We're talking about the whole issue of jobs and training. Bill 175, with labour mobility, is all part of that package. It's about giving individuals the wherewithal—that first of all we can attract to this province the skilled trades we need, and also that we're moving away from and eliminating the obstacles that exist out there for people from other provinces.

Just to explain how this bill—which we're debating right now whether we should move forward—would work, what the principle is behind the bill: It's sort of a default system. What that means is that if you are recognized in one province as holding a certain regulated occupation, let's say as an architect, then you can automatically be recognized in another province. You don't

have to fill out any paperwork; you don't have to be subjected to residency requirements; you don't have to go through a reassessment process. It means that an architect is an architect, a veterinarian is a veterinarian, an engineer is an engineer and an audiologist is an audiologist.

After—how many years?—14 years of debate, going back to the AIT, when we look at the current economic situation, when we are constantly told that we need to make sure we have a competitive workforce, that we have the best-skilled people, I think every member of this Legislature can understand that there is urgency to moving this through, and that's why we're bringing forward this motion.

**1740**

As I say, it's part of a package. I freely admit to this Legislature that we are trying to rush through a number of measures. We are trying to rush through the HST. We just finished debating a bill that had to do with protection for workers, something very, very important in any economic climate, but particularly in this day and age when people are struggling to hold on to jobs. We want to make sure they have the protection that's needed.

So, as I said, it's a negative-option situation, I guess—  
*Interjection.*

**Hon. John Milloy:** —and I'll get to that in a second—in the sense that everyone is recognized. If you're recognized in one jurisdiction, you're recognized in the other.

I threw out the term “negative option,” from, I guess, this old term “negative option billing,” because there are provisions that would allow a province or territory to come forward and say, “Look, we support the idea of full mobility,” which Bill 175 does, “but we want to identify a number of regulated occupations where we believe that there's a real difference between what's going on in another jurisdiction and what's going on in ours.” So unless they come forward with these exceptions—and I want to spend a minute or two on them a little bit later in my remarks today—then it's accepted that that architect from Saskatchewan is free to practise here in the province of Ontario. Unless a province or jurisdiction comes forward with the exceptions, it will be free labour mobility across this province. It's about time. It's actually, in some ways, almost embarrassing that we live in a nation which prides itself in terms of its national unity, which prides itself on its place in world, and yet within it we have these barriers which are far outmoded, especially in the 21st century. That's why we have put forward this motion to move it forward.

One of the interesting angles to what I've just described in terms of that free mobility for so many of these regulated occupations is the issue of new Canadians. I know that when this bill came up for debate, I believe it was a week or two ago, a lot of reference was made by members on all sides of the House about new Canadians. I'm going to acknowledge that every member of this House, every party that's here in this Legislature, has a concern about how we, as a society, welcome new Canadians here to our province and, very specifically, how we welcome them into the matching professions that

they were trained for at home. I know every party has made this a priority moving forward, and I certainly want to commend every member, because this is a top-of-mind issue. We live in a province where, notwithstanding some of the unemployment issues that we've talked about a bit today, we do have shortages of skilled professionals. All of us have read accounts in the media of various medical doctors, engineers and other professionals who are working in menial jobs because they are new Canadians and they are finding obstacles to being recognized.

We've come a long way. A lot of work was done in the last term in office. We have Madame Jean Augustine, who leads an initiative which works with the various regulatory bodies to make sure they are removing obstacles for foreign-trained professionals and that they are able to come to this country and, through the support, often, of bridge training, of further acclimatization to maybe some of the cultural issues around their profession—if it's one that deals with members of the public, perhaps there's language training—we work to prepare them as quickly as possible to enter their profession.

Ontario is not alone. I'm a member of the forum of labour market ministers, and if you talk to fellow ministers in other provinces, they will talk about their efforts to welcome new Canadians into the country. The problem? They're welcomed into an individual province, although many of the obstacles are being moved. They work hard; they work on retraining, perhaps, or upgrading or bridge training. They work on language skills. They finally are accepted as a regulated professional in the province of Ontario, and then they want to move elsewhere in country. What happens? They run flat into reassessment, into retraining, into all sorts of barriers and obstacles that exist.

I think it's very important—and again, there is urgency in moving this through not just for Ontario residents right now but for future Ontario residents who come from outside this country. When those new Canadians come to any province, or in this case, obviously Ontario, and undertake that hard work—I salute their courage. I've met with many who are trying to align their skills with what's needed here in the province of Ontario. I also commend the work that's done by the various regulatory agencies to try to welcome these individuals as quickly as possible.

But what we have to make sure happens as quickly as possible is that the certification they receive in Ontario—and I'm going to use the term—is not somehow inadvertently deemed second-class. Yes, the newcomer to the province of Ontario was trained outside the country. "We're willing to recognize your particular skill here in Ontario, but for heaven's sake don't leave the province, because if you leave the province, it's not going to be accepted."

It's the same way the other way around, that somehow we're not going to accept new Canadians from other jurisdictions because they were trained outside the country. I think it's time that we as a country recognize how important it is that we welcome new Canadians here and that we allow them to practise the profession they

were trained for, and that if they are recognized in one jurisdiction, they move forward.

I pointed out earlier in my remarks the basic principles behind Bill 175, and I think I've outlined a number of reasons why the government is very anxious to see it through. But I did point out that—and I use the old advertising term, negative-option billing—the way it would work would be that it's automatic. Labour mobility is automatic unless a jurisdiction, a province or territory, puts forward an exception.

I wanted to spend a minute on exceptions because obviously we're asking members here to rush through a bill, and some of them may say, "Wait a minute. I understand the principle. I understand that that architect in Saskatchewan should have the right to come here to the province of Ontario and practise, but there are 300 professions." They may say to themselves, "You know what? We're a big country and there are differences that exist." I think we all recognize that across the country. Are there safeguards there so that if we look across at another jurisdiction, another province or territory, and see a specific occupation, a regulated authority or regulated profession that we feel is not appropriate to just automatically welcome to Ontario—and of course vice versa; if another jurisdiction looks to Ontario's training standard, its experiences—do we need to have that mechanism in there where a province can—and I'm using the term that's used in the Agreement on Internal Trade—put forward an exception?

I think it's very important that members know, before they vote to push this bill forward, that that provision does exist in Bill 175. It gives the government of Ontario—and the other bills that are being debated, as I said, many of them before Legislatures across this country—and it gives other Legislatures the right to cite an exception.

What is the basis of these exceptions? Just to be clear, it says that we will not automatically allow someone with particular training, with a particular occupation or regulated skill in a particular jurisdiction, to move to Ontario and automatically practise their trade.

What would be the reasons for these exceptions? I'd like to outline them here. I'll give you the actual wording from the act. "The labour mobility chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade allows each province or territory to approve exceptions and maintain additional certification requirements"—so that doesn't mean that we're saying they're not welcome here in the province; it means they will have to receive additional training or perhaps undergo an additional assessment—for workers in specific occupations based on public security and safety; public order; protection of human, animal or plant life or health; protection of the environment; consumer protection, protection of the health, safety and well-being of workers; provision of adequate social and health services to all its geographic regions; and programs for disadvantaged groups.

#### 1750

This is the bundle of rationales that can be put forward by a province to suggest that someone from another

jurisdiction cannot automatically come and practise here in the province of Ontario.

The exceptions and the process for dealing with them have been the topic of much discussion between the various provinces and territories. I'll talk a little bit about the way it has worked in Ontario, because the question before the Legislature right now is: Should we be proceeding with this bill at a rapid pace? Should we be moving it forward to committee and debate? I think members need to know that there has been a safeguard, that the government has done its homework before deciding whether to move it forward. So I'll talk about the process that we undertook here in the province of Ontario.

What we did is we talked to all the bodies that are responsible for the different regulated authorities. The Ontario College of Teachers comes to mind; the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario; the College of Nurses of Ontario. I think members get the point. There are all these bodies which are responsible for regulating different authorities. We talked to them about standards and practices in other provinces and jurisdictions, and we talked about the standards here in the province of Ontario. While we were doing that, every other province and territory was doing that with their various organizations.

What was very heartening, I think, is that a dialogue began, a dialogue between the government and the organizations and a dialogue between provinces. We started to talk about what it means to be a nurse in Canada, what it means to be an architect in Canada. We started to take a look.

There are differences. I'm not going to stand here today and say that training for architecture, which is the one I used a second ago, is the same everywhere. But are those differences sufficient to say that a Saskatchewan architect should not be able to practise in the province of Ontario? The answer was no. It was no for the vast majority of trades and professions that we're talking about, not only in Ontario—and I think this is a very important part—but across this country.

As this dialogue continued, we started to take a look at all these regulated occupations and all these trades, and we started to, in a sense, check the list off. Could we all agree on architects? Yes, we could. Could we agree on engineers, veterinarians and audiologists? What happened is that every province winnowed it down, whittled the list down to a very small number.

I've got to say I'm very proud, in a sense, to be a Canadian. We have all these differences between us, and it is to the credit not just of the regulatory authorities here in Ontario but regulatory authorities across the country that they were able to bring that list down to a small list—in Ontario's case, six exceptions, six regulated trades, from specific provinces that we feel, for the reasons listed above, the reasons that I've just listed, cannot automatically come and practise here.

When I look at what other provinces brought forward, they brought forward similar numbers—some perhaps a little bit less, some perhaps a little bit more.

Ontario has taken the step now of formally publishing these exceptions on the website. I think it's very important for members to know—because they're going to be asked whether we need to move forward on this bill, and I'm arguing that the safeguards are there that might concern them—that these exceptions that we've published are not scheduled to be there forever. The fact is that they are a starting point. We want to work with other jurisdictions over the coming months and years and we want to eliminate that list—that is our goal—as do other provinces and territories.

I can give you a few examples of our six exceptions.

Dental hygienists: We feel that dental hygienists from Yukon and Nunavut who have not graduated from a nationally accredited program must, if they come to Ontario, complete the national or equivalent exam. That's an opportunity—I'm just choosing one example here—for the Ontario government, for those agencies that are responsible for dental hygienists both in Yukon and Nunavut as well as Ontario, to sit down and talk about the way the course is taught, the program that has come forward. What we are hopeful of is that we're going to get the type of agreement so that we can remove this exception and make sure that Ontario is open. That is the goal: full labour mobility.

The only exception to all this—I will put one on the record—is the issue of lawyers. I suspect, if this bill passes, that if we come back years from now, we will find that the difference in legal systems that exists between Quebec and the rest of the country will mean that we will also have a caveat that we will require lawyers from Quebec—and I imagine every other jurisdiction has put this down—to take additional training or examinations. I suspect the government of Quebec is going to do the same thing, because we do have a different legal system. But that's a very rare example.

I think the outcome of this process—and, my gosh, we've gone a long way in just a short period of time. What are we at now—about a year and a half? The outcome of this process is going to be, for all intents and purposes, with very few exceptions, full labour mobility across the nation.

I want to conclude. I know members would love if I went on forever, but I only have a little less than two minutes. I want to conclude where I started, and I want to answer the question that was put forward by the member: "What's the rush?" The rush is that we are in an economic downturn that needs to be addressed. I am very proud that we are a government that has, certainly in the past year, brought forward a variety of measures to deal with the immediate situation. We can talk about stimulus spending, we can talk about infrastructure and how Ontario can move through this current economic storm. But at the same time, we are a government that has an eye to the future, and we are saying that we have to make sure Ontario is positioned for the future.

Bill 175 is urgent because it's going to represent Ontario's part in making sure that we have labour mobility in this country, which is going to help competitiveness and it's going to help workers that are looking to move

across this nation. It's also going to help employers who are looking to bring in skilled workers.

I admit that this is a part of a package that we brought forward today, that we've brought forward these weeks in the Legislature. It includes things like the HST, which my honourable friend spent most of her speech—even though it was a labour bill—talking about, and she kept asking the question, “Why the rush?” I'm going to tell you: The immediate rush is because on January 1, we want to bring in a comprehensive set of tax cuts which are going to help the people of Ontario.

It's all about the economy these days. Bill 175, the budget bill that deals with the HST, the labour bill that was debated earlier today: These are all part—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you. The member's time has expired.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** It being just about 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1759.*



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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<b>Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)</b>	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
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<b>Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)</b>	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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<b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)</b>	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
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Gélinas, France (NDP) <b>Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)</b>	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
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Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Linda (LIB) Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
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Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri  
Elizabeth Witmer  
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Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas  
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones  
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals  
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