

No. 169A



N° 169A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 7 May 2007

Lundi 7 mai 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 May 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 mai 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Yesterday, I had the honour of attending the tribute to the fallen and the ceremony of remembrance, both held here at Queen's Park. I was joined by my caucus members Frank Klees and Norm Miller, along with the leader of the official opposition, Mr. John Tory.

At the tribute to the fallen, tribute plaques were presented to the families of each of the 12 men and women from various police services who gave their lives in the line of duty since 2002. At the Ontario Police Memorial, six new names were added to the wall of honour. Three of the names were of officers who died in the line of duty over 75 years ago: Constable John R. Davey of Cornwall, in 1892; County Constable Albert C. Sprinstead of Wentworth, in 1819; and traffic officer Miles Campbell, Department of Highways, Ottawa, in 1929.

Sadly, we also added the names of three officers who lost their lives in 2006: Constable John C. Atkinson of the Windsor Police Service; Constable Donald J.Y. Doucet of the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service; and Constable David Mounsey of the Huron OPP. The families of these three officers who lost their lives last year were all on hand to pay tribute. Shelley Atkinson, Debbie Doucet and Brenda Carey each laid a beautiful wreath on behalf of their spouses.

Each and every day of the year police officers leave their homes and families and go out into the communities across Ontario to protect the homes and families of people they often do not even know. Yesterday's tribute and ceremony of remembrance reminds us of how fortunate we are to live in a province like Ontario; we always have a sense of security.

On behalf of John Tory and our caucus, I would like to thank the police services of our province for the dedication and fine work they do. And for those officers who have lost their lives, they shall remain, as the inscription on the memorial wall says, "Heroes in life, not death."

REACHING OUR OUTDOOR FRIENDS

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Friday morning, I was pleased to attend an official groundbreaking

ceremony in my riding hosted by Reaching Our Outdoor Friends or, as it's more commonly known, ROOF.

Founded in 1989, ROOF is a well-known organization in Waterloo which works with homeless and vulnerable youth. Through a variety of programs and services, ROOF offers youth the support they need to get off the street and end the cycle of homelessness.

Tragically, on December 28, 2005, the house where ROOF bases its activities was the victim of arson, and the organization literally found itself without a home. ROOF was not to be deterred. Over the last year and a half, its leadership has worked day and night to keep ROOF's operations going and put in place plans for a brand new facility.

At the same time, the community has come together through an outpouring of concern and support to send one simple message: ROOF must continue. I was pleased to add the voice of the provincial government to that message Friday when I confirmed that the government of Ontario was contributing \$250,000 towards the establishment of the new centre.

Although there is much work left to be done, the staff, volunteers and board of this outstanding organization deserve our full support, and I would like to congratulate ROOF's executive director, Sandy Bell, board chair Tim Sothern and fundraising chair, Jennifer Weber, as well as ROOF's board members: Heather Jefferey, Nigel Lee, Ros Hood-Morris, Michael Malleck, Henry de Jong, Bryan "Buzz" Dean, Sherri Burch-Lewis, Doug O'Toole, and Marilyn Bechthold, as well as Al Way and his team at Jamesway Construction, who are building the new facility.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Last week, the PC candidate in Northumberland, Cathy Galt, was attacked in the Legislature and in a Cobourg paper for doing the right thing—standing up for the interests of rural Ontario. Anyone paying attention knows that the McGuinty Liberal government is dominated by Toronto-area members, and that's been reflected in many ways, including threats against farmers' markets and church suppers.

Cathy's sin was to raise concerns based on the public comments of an official with the Durham Health Unit stating that meters on wells in rural Ontario are inevitable. That official's words ring true when talking about a very interventionist Liberal government and the

possibility of controlling access to regional water tables on the basis of real or imagined droughts. The McGuinty Liberals deny and deny, but this is a government with an unprecedented record of broken promises and a frequently revealed disdain for the traditions and way of life in rural, small-town Ontario. The Cobourg paper, in repeated editorial attacks on Mrs. Galt, reaffirmed its role as an extension of the Liberal re-election campaign, a role that's been apparent since her nomination. The newspaper's clear bias is an unfortunate reflection on Osprey newspapers and the chain's honourable owner, Mike Sifton.

Cathy Galt is an outstanding individual, and she is doing something we clearly need more of—fighting for rural Ontario. Keep up the good work, Cathy.

NURSING WEEK

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): This is Nursing Week, and I want to extend my appreciation to all of the women and men who take on this noble profession, which affects each and every one of us throughout our lives. We are well aware of the many contributions nurses make, but we often do not think of a minority group within the nursing profession. Men make up less than 6% of all nurses in Canada.

The proud history of men and nursing dates back to the Alexian Brothers, who, for more than 700 years, have cared for the sick, the aged the poor and the dying. Here in Ontario, we are fortunate to have the Men in Nursing Interest Group of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario.

The group's mission statement reads in part as follows: "To educate, support and strengthen the image for nurses, by speaking out for nursing and speaking out for health. We respect human dignity and are committed to diversity, inclusiveness and democracy.

"The Men in Nursing Interest Group carries out its mission by educating the public about men in nursing, breaking down stereotypes of male nurses, strengthening their image by speaking out about the proud history of male nurses, collaborating with other nursing organizations and groups, and by conducting workshops and conferences."

I ask members to join me in welcoming the founder and president of the RNAO's Men in Nursing Interest Group, Mr. James D'Astolfo. He is joined by the group's membership officer, Mr. Joseph Gajasan, and a special adviser to the group, Dr. Connie D'Astolfo. I welcome all three of them to the House.

KEN CHARLEBOIS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I would like to tell you about a truly heroic constituent of mine. Ken Charlebois began his career as a firefighter in 1976. He rose through the ranks and eventually became a fire

department captain in Ottawa. His successful 35-year career ended when he retired in 2004.

Last year, Ken was preparing to marry his beloved Ingrid Koenig, but just two weeks before their wedding they received some terrible news. Ken was diagnosed with esophageal cancer. He underwent a series of medical treatments and had his esophagus removed. Unfortunately, the cancer spread to other parts of his body and Ken was told that he did not have much longer to live.

He once again set out to save lives, but this time it would be the lives of his fellow firefighters. He met with local fire station houses and taught his colleagues about the occupational risks they face and the importance of safety equipment. He also advocated for legislation that would make it easier for firefighters to receive compensation for work-related illnesses, particularly esophageal cancer.

Last Thursday, I called Ken's family at the hospital to tell them that our government was taking the action he had asked for. I was told that when the news was shared with him, he raised his arms in the air to make the "victory" sign. Two hours later, Ken passed away. He never learned that the legislation passed through this House in a mere six minutes, but he did die knowing his efforts to bring change were successful.

Ken Charlebois will be deeply missed. I offer my sincerest condolences to his family for their loss.

1340

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to draw attention to a column in the Toronto Star about Mr. McGuinty's shameful performance in the last few weeks. Today's column in the Toronto Star by Ian Urquhart points out, "Not once was a question on the so-called slush fund directly answered by a government minister." The McGuinty government stonewalled every time it was asked to account for the more than \$30 million of public money spent recklessly.

In his column, Ian Urquhart pointed out that the Liberals either changed the subject or impugned the motives of members raising that very question. Urquhart went on to say, "It is not just the institution of the Legislature that is being held in contempt by the government; it is virtually all the daily newspapers in the province, which have editorialized in favour of calling in the Auditor General to examine the \$30 million in grants" scheme.

It isn't just the opposition MPPs who are calling for accountability. It's the Ontario media. It's deserving communities that are shut out of the funding. It's citizens across this very province. Opposition MPPs are only doing their job by asking the difficult questions. When will the McGuinty government do its job and provide some of the answers?

This government's slush fund issue is not about whom; instead, it's about how these groups were either denied or qualified for these grants, and what was the process.

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): On behalf of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mike Colle, I would like to say that I recently had the pleasure of announcing in my riding \$300,000 in support for the development of a web portal to help the city promote itself to newcomers through our municipal gateway website. The local site will be linked with ontario-immigration.ca, an international portal that provides up-to-date information on everything from towns and cities to labour markets and skills accreditation.

With this announcement, our goal is to help newcomers succeed by breaking down barriers that prevent them from contributing to Ontario's economy. After years of neglect by the previous government, we're committed to providing the necessary resources to help newcomers better integrate.

Skilled immigrants from all over the world are an underutilized resource with great potential to advance the economic growth in communities like mine in Sault Ste. Marie. With major construction projects on the horizon like our new hospital and our waterfront tourism project, high-demand careers and jobs have been identified locally. Negotiating the first-ever Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, increasing federal spending on language training and settlement services by an additional \$920 million over five years, is another way we're helping newcomers; and establishing the first provincial internship program for the internationally trained and investing over \$50 million province-wide annually on English as a second language and French as a second language for adult newcomers.

Again, I would like to thank the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for working so hard to help newcomers in this province become productive members of society. Together, we're building a better community and certainly a brighter Ontario.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I rise today to talk about the McGuinty government's commitment to protecting our species at risk and our forward-looking vision for Ontario's environment. We are significantly updating the Endangered Species Act for the first time since 1971 to better protect species at risk. We are also providing more protection for our natural environment through the greenbelt, which safeguards 1.8 million acres of green space and provides a safe habitat for 66 species at risk. In contrast, the Tories had no strategy for our endangered species and left a legacy that threatened animals and plants at risk of extinction. They actually gave away more land than they preserved.

Now, the Tories have nominated a candidate who wants to destroy the good work we've done. Hillier's landowners' group in the Ottawa area has said they will

bulldoze five acres of riverfront woodlot to protest our Endangered Species Act. Destruction of environmentally valuable land should never be used as a political bargaining chip.

We Liberals are also committed to protecting our clean water, while the Tories voted against this. And who was one of the major advocates against the legislation? The same candidate who was nominated on Saturday.

The leader of the official opposition is trying to play both sides, but he's coming up on the wrong side of progress. While the McGuinty Liberals—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

RIDING OF BRANT

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Thank you for this opportunity to make a brief but very important announcement about what's happening in the riding of Brant. I'm very pleased that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities appeared just a short time ago to make the very important announcement that Nipissing University would be receiving a \$1-million grant to help it with its downtown development of the university. On top of that, there was another \$1-million grant offered to Wilfred Laurier University to continue its heritage project.

The growth of this university partnership between Mohawk College, Wilfred Laurier University and Nipissing University has seen an original birth in 1998 of 52 students to over 1,500 students who will be attending university and college in the city of Brantford, Ontario.

Minister, I want to say to you, on behalf of the citizens of Brant, thank you for being a partner in the growth of this fantastic opportunity for the youth of our riding of Brant. The riding of Brant now has the capacity to grow, with an estimate of over 2,500 students attending university. That is a great legacy that the minister and the previous minister have started by allowing us to grow with this opportunity, once again showing that the government has its sights set in the right direction: on the future growth of universities in the province of Ontario. I want to recognize in particular the hard work that the Grand Valley Educational Society did in raising money initially and the city of Brantford for supporting these projects. I thank the minister wholeheartedly.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 164, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, the Environmental Protection Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act / Projet de loi 164, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur, la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement et la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I have a motion specifically requested by the member for Timmins–James Bay, and it reads as follows: I move that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, May 7, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 344. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Jeffrey, Linda	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Kular, Kuldip	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	
Hoy, Pat	Oraziotti, David	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Savoline, Joyce
Bisson, Gilles	Martel, Shelley	Tabuns, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
DiNovo, Cheri	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Christine	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Ferreira, Paul	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 31; the nays are 17.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 221, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters and certain related occupations / Projet de loi 221, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail à l'égard des pompiers et de certaines professions connexes.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): As we all know, the McGuinty government is delivering on real, positive change that will make Ontario stronger, healthier and more prosperous. One of the ways we are achieving this goal is by making the province better prepared to respond to emergencies. So today I rise in the House to mark Emergency Preparedness Week, which runs from May 6 to May 12.

Emergency Preparedness Week is a joint initiative involving the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments. During the week, we will showcase the work of Emergency Management Ontario and the province to make our communities safer. We want to be as prepared and resilient as possible in an emergency. The devastation of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana must never happen here in Ontario.

Last year, the Legislature passed the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, giving Ontario one of the most comprehensive emergency management regimes in North America. For example, the act allows the government to restrict travel or order evacuations and establish emergency shelters or hospitals and quickly purchase supplies, water or food.

This government has made significant strides in making Ontario safer and more secure by providing the province with the tools to respond to emergencies. Just this morning, the McGuinty government kicked off Emergency Preparedness Week in Ontario by unveiling the new provincial Mobile Emergency Operations Centre. This mobile command vehicle is equipped with multiple communications and emergency management systems. It will be a new mobile nerve centre of provincial field response in situations where normal communications and emergency response systems are not available. Tomorrow I will make another announcement

in Waterloo on a new web-based emergency management tool.

Our collective safety and security depends on preparedness for the province and for individuals. Getting this message out is the reason behind Emergency Preparedness Week. That's why this year's focus is on family preparedness. When disaster strikes, timing is critical and so is being prepared, especially the first 72 hours following any disaster. Yet, most Ontario households are not prepared. Ontario may not be as vulnerable to earthquakes and landslides as British Columbia, for example, but we are not immune to natural disasters. Severe weather is a year-round occurrence in Ontario. Tornadoes are not uncommon. Forest fires sometimes put northern and remote communities at risk. We also recognize the risks associated with an industrial society and the threat posed by terrorism. Ontarians have a personal stake in being better prepared when disaster strikes. Businesses need to have emergency plans for the safety of employees and the continuity of operations.

1400

Every Ontario household should have an emergency plan and well-organized emergency survival kit to get the family through the first 72 hours of a crisis when emergency response resources may be stretched thin. I make it a habit to personally inspect the survival kit in my own home at least twice a year to make certain the batteries are working and to replace any spoiled food. Emergency planning for your family should include every need of the household, including infants and people with disabilities or special needs.

To this last point, on Friday I will unveil a new resource to help Ontarians with disabilities prepare for emergencies. Tips on how to write out an emergency plan, and how to assemble and maintain a survival kit for both the home and car, are available on my ministry's website.

I encourage schools, businesses, libraries, service groups and members of the Legislature to use Emergency Preparedness Week to take stock on how prepared you and your families are to confront an emergency situation, and I ask that you take the time to promote greater awareness in your ridings of the potential for disaster and the need to be prepared.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements? Comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On behalf of John Tory and the Progressive Conservative caucus, I'm pleased to respond to some of the comments made today by Minister Kwinter.

I would like to begin by thanking all of our emergency service workers in our province for the fine job they do, whether they are with volunteer organizations or some of our professional associations like we saw yesterday—an awful lot of police services here at Queen's Park.

At this time I would like to thank and publicly congratulate the commissioner of public safety, Jay Hope, for the fine job he is doing and for the career that he has

had, first at the Ontario Provincial Police and moving up the ladder to this position he has today.

The minister talks about emergency preparedness. As we speak, we are entering day 432 of the Caledonia crisis. I know it's easy to go out and make fancy announcements. I know there is a new Mobile 1, as it's called, which has been released and purchased. But it takes leadership as well.

One of the things I wanted to put on the record today is the fact that in the Caledonia situation we really haven't seen leadership. The minister has never been there himself. The Premier has never been there. The Minister of Natural Resources has never been there. We've counted on John Tory and Toby Barrett to bring home that information to the folks here at Queen's Park because we certainly haven't seen the leadership. I want to put on the record some comments made by our leader, John Tory, last week in Owen Sound when he spoke to the Ontario Police Services Board. It says this, and I'm basically reading his press release:

"Under a PC government, no one will be beneath the law, above the law or beyond the law.

"A Progressive Conservative government would ensure there is one rule of law for everyone in Ontario, John Tory announced today in a speech to the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards convention.

"The fact is that right now, across several fronts, we do not have one law for all. And I believe that this must change," said the PC leader. "Nobody can be forgotten. Nobody gets to opt out. Nobody gets to live beyond the law's reach and protection. All of this is possible only if the rules of the game are consistent, stable, equitable and fair."

"In his speech, Tory said a PC government would ensure 'one law for all' by focusing on three principles. In the first, Tory said that no one should be beneath the law.

"We must do everything it takes to protect the disenfranchised, the poor and the vulnerable portions of our population. We must ensure they are protected under the same law as applies to everyone else and that they have equitable access to justice," said Tory. He pointed to the PC Time for Action plan to combat youth violence, which included a number of measures to help youth and families and prevent crime.

"The second principle is that no one should be above the law, whether it is regarding a political protest, a labour dispute or any other issue. 'The Premier of Ontario must be prepared to vigorously pursue new tools and new measures to ensure all parties comply with the rule of law. Simply standing by and allowing land occupations and railway blockades or other disruptive demonstrations that defy court injunctions just cannot be an option.'

"Tory said he is prepared to pursue civil remedies against anyone who leads a protest that crosses the line between free speech and disregard for public safety, and the rule of law.

“We will undertake to develop new tools and protocols for government to protect the public interest—whether it is in situations where people are concerned about environmental projects, a land claim, or any other matter,” said Tory. “There needs to be a better way to manage dissent in Ontario. It comes down to leadership.”

“Under the third principle, Tory said no one should be beyond the law, whether it’s organized crime, gangs or white-collar criminals. In the case of white-collar crime, Tory said a PC government would get serious about investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating securities fraud and other white-collar crimes.

“By insisting on one law for all, I believe we could see real progress,” said Tory. “More importantly, in doing so we would create a fairer, safer and more equitable society for all of us.”

On this Emergency Preparedness Week, I hope that you’ve enjoyed listening to the comments made by our leader, John Tory, at the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards convention last week in Owen Sound. Thank you for the opportunity to do this.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I’m pleased to be able to respond to the Minister of Community Safety on behalf of the New Democrats here at Queen’s Park. I appreciate the minister’s genuine interest in the whole broad matter of emergency preparedness.

While the minister approaches this in a most serious way, I suspect that were his counterpart the Minister of the Environment to have dealt with this issue, her message might have been simply to flick off and hope for the best.

I put to this minister and this government that the New Democrats have been here at Queen’s Park with real solutions to serious problems, with ideas whose time certainly has come.

If we’re going to talk about emergency preparedness, then I put to this government that they should be moving promptly to pass Bill 164, the legislation proposed by New Democrat Peter Tabuns from Toronto—Danforth that talks about the right to know in a community—the right to know where toxic materials are supplied, sourced, utilized or stored—so that people, including emergency response personnel, can safeguard themselves when they’re doing their already dangerous jobs.

I say to the minister that if this government is really serious about emergency preparedness, then it will move promptly to pass Bill 30, the bill sponsored by Shelley Martel, my New Democratic Party colleague from Nickel Belt, which, as we all know, is the one designed to protect health workers, health professionals who are out there. They’re the front-line people. They’re the people who do the emergency response. It’s the bill that’s designed to protect health professionals from needle-stick injuries. It, in and of itself, is an oh so modest proposal, yet one that this government, notwithstanding the minister’s apparent passion for emergency preparedness—Linda Haslam-Stroud, president of the Ontario Nurses’ Association, says, “We believe it’s really a no-brainer.”

That’s Bill 30, Ms. Martel’s bill dealing with needle-stick injuries.

If this government were serious about emergency preparedness, it would pass Michael Prue’s Bill 120, and that’s that most modest proposal that would require that fire escapes from second and third floors of buildings be constructed of metal, not of wood. Talk about, once again, a no-brainer. When you’ve got the crisis, the catastrophe, of a huge fire, a block-wide fire in a residential area where people have to escape by leaving their second-, third-, and fourth-floor apartments and you’ve got wood fire escapes that this government persists in allowing here in the province of Ontario, you haven’t demonstrated emergency preparedness, you’ve demonstrated a significant contribution to the crisis.

If this government were really serious about emergency preparedness, it would respond promptly in ensuring that N95 respirators for health workers are available to each and every health professional.

You see, all the plans in the world come to naught if you don’t have fully staffed, adequately trained, fully resourced front-line personnel out there doing the dangerous jobs. Let’s understand who these people are: They’re our firefighters, they’re our police officers, they’re our health professionals, they’re our emergency response people.

Just today I received an e-mail from constituent Craig Reid in Thorold, who, in response to Bill 221, asks: Will they—and he’s referring to himself and his colleague volunteer firefighters—be among the firefighters who are entitled to the presumption contained in the legislation that was proposed and passed by this Legislature last Thursday?

Huge parts of Ontario are serviced solely by volunteer firefighters; another big chunk by compound fire services like they have down where I come from, where professional firefighters are supported by volunteer firefighters. Those volunteer firefighters want to be assured that they’re going to be a part of Bill 221, too. We can make fancy speeches, but the proof is in the pudding out there on the ground.

1410

WEARING OF PINS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On behalf of the community, I would like to thank the members of the House for giving approval, unanimous consent, to the “Go, Wolves, Go” buttons. That community really does appreciate it, and they’ve asked that I pass on that message to you. To bring you up to date, the “Go, Wolves, Go” fire is certainly burning brightly in Sudbury. The series is tied one game each. They come back to Sudbury for games Tuesday and Wednesday. We’ll keep you up to date, and it’s “Go, Wolves, Go.”

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The buses won't be able to afford the gas to get there.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and it concerns the slush fund that he is running out of his office.

For weeks now, Minister, we have been asking about the process by which millions of dollars in year-end slush fund payments were made. Indeed, not only are we asking, but other groups and individuals in the province are wanting to know: "What is the process? How can I access the money? Why did no one make me aware about this slush fund?"

We now learn from the Toronto Star on Saturday that there was yet another organization with Liberal ties that received \$250,000 out of your slush fund. We also read in the Toronto Star that there was an individual who was on the board of directors of that group who is employed as a senior staffer in your office. I ask you, Minister: Will you explain the process by which this organization received their grant?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The investments we've made in helping newcomers are important investments, and we are proud of making those investments. I would like to correct the member opposite and say that the staff person she mentioned was brought into my office as an intern. That was part of a program we had to reach out to foreign-trained professionals. He was trained in China and studied here in Toronto, and we're proud to bring him aboard as an intern to do research and to work in my office, because we are trying to ensure that we are investing in the programs that will give foreign-trained professionals the opportunity to work here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Before the supplementary, I remind members that the questions need to be placed through the Speaker.

Mrs. Witmer: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister: The question that I asked was about the process by which the organization received its \$250,000 grant. We have asked now, on many occasions, for the process, for the application form and for this minister to produce them. I ask again: Will you table with us a copy of the application form that was received from the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada for this money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I've said before, my ministry is constantly meeting with stakeholders, going to community events, listening to front-line providers who have ongoing needs to provide funding, whether it be for English as a second language; whether it means funding

to respect our heritage, preservation; whether it is funding to promote volunteerism, on an ongoing basis. We are in contact with organizations that are trying to increase their capacity and trying to meet unfilled needs. This is an ongoing process of consultation, of input we have from organizations across this province that do great work.

Mrs. Witmer: Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Do you know what? There are many people in this province who would like access to this fund, this slush fund which they knew nothing about. Regrettably, there was no process. There wasn't an application process whatsoever. You know, the Today Daily News did have an interview with the CEO of CPAC, and that individual confirmed that there were no clear criteria for the application. He said that they were lucky to submit the application when they did; they were lucky to have it approved as quickly as they did. He declined to answer about whether or not he got any help from anyone. I guess I would say to you, will you produce the application? Why are you treating people in this province unfairly? And who helped this organization access this fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, this organization, through other organizations, is doing incredible work in helping newcomers, or finding foreign-trained professionals, the ability to get registered. We are constantly trying to improve their capacity. We are trying to find ways of investing in these organizations, and these organizations continue to put forward ideas, suggestions. In fact, this organization that came forward asking for support is the result of a very tragic situation that has been occurring in a number of immigrant communities where there are many deeply frustrated, highly educated, talented newcomers who haven't been getting help. This organization was very active, going back to last summer when there was a tragic situation that occurred in Toronto—an unfortunate situation. That's where we are getting—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question in the third person.

Mrs. Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and it concerns his slush fund. There are many worthy organizations in this province. They are all deserving of money. However, they do not have equal access to this funding because there was no process, there were no criteria and they didn't know about it. It appears that only certain groups with Liberal connections have been receiving the money. I would say to the minister, it is time for him to stop his stonewalling. It is time to call in the auditor, as many people across this province are demanding, and it is time for him to do the honourable thing and resign.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the needs of so many organizations, whether it be in the volunteer side and the newcomer side, are great. We can't, and no government has been able to, meet all the needs that are out there. We've tried to do that because for years there was no investment in these areas. They were abandoned. That's why we put in an attempt to meet those needs. The process is one that

we are making even better. By now, we have an online registry so that they can apply directly to this registry for capital projects. That was never there before. We're trying to make it better. There are many worthy organizations, and all organizations need more help. We agree there, and we're trying to do that even more in the days to come.

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Mrs. Witmer: My question is to the minister again. There are many worthy organizations and they all deserved an opportunity to access funding. Unfortunately, there has been no process; there have been no criteria; there has been no accountability to the taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

I say to you again, you have not been able to provide one single application form. There are many, many questions that go unanswered. When are you going to call in the auditor, clean up this mess, and when are you going to resign?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member opposite will again take note that in the Toronto area last summer there was a dramatic situation that occurred with a foreign-trained professional, a double Ph.D. from two universities, Purdue University and the University of Toronto. These are young men and women who come to Toronto with great hope and aspirations. There was a cry out last summer, as there had been the summer before, for investment in helping newcomers to transition into jobs. Fifty per cent of them cannot work in the field they were trained for. We tried, along with CPAC, TCCSA, CICS and other immigrant-serving community groups, to ensure that this call for help didn't go unheard.

There are people who are doing very well as newcomers, but there is the silent majority, a significant number of newcomers, that is crying out for help just to get a job. That's the investment we made here, to try and ensure that they're no longer ignored and that they don't suffer in silence with their families and friends. That's what they're doing now. We're trying to make that better.

Mrs. Witmer: This entire situation has become embarrassing for the government. Ian Urquhart writes in the Toronto Star today that this government's handling of this issue "has been the nadir of their four years in office." He goes on to say, "It is not just the institution of the Legislature that is being held in contempt by the government; it is virtually all the daily newspapers in the province, which have editorialized in favour of calling in the Auditor General."

Everyone knows there is a need for accountability—accountability to taxpayers and fair treatment of all the groups in Ontario who are looking for funds. This minister has had the opportunity to provide an application and to explain the process now more than 200 times. He has refused to produce anything of substance. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, when is this minister finally going to call in the auditor, as people demand, and when is he going to resign?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Over the last number of years we have partnered with exceptional organizations, big and

small. Whether they be organizations serving newcomers or whether they be organizations like Frontier College, all these organizations we've partnered with. They've provided excellent service over the years with very little help from government. We've made those investments in those organizations because their many needs are unmet. We are now making that process even better because it was not an area that was given any attention. We have an online directory now where these capital needs can be tracked and that we can have more investments, because there are a number of other organizations that are worthy, and we hope to continue to partner with them because there's much more to do.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. Hard-working Ontarians need to know that the money Ontario invests to help newcomers is allocated fairly. That is the job of a cabinet minister; in this case, the job of the Minister of Citizenship. My question is this: Could the minister table all documentation and criteria he considered when granting government funds to the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Chinese Professionals Association of Canada has a long track record of helping newcomers, especially those who are professionally—many of them are engineers. They have mentorship programs. They have ongoing bursaries. They team up with everybody from the Toronto-Dominion Bank to the Royal Bank of Canada. They are an excellent organization with excellent volunteers. They are dedicated to increasing services to foreign-trained professionals, especially those who are moving in greater numbers into Scarborough and York regions. That's the partnership we have with the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada.

Mr. Hampton: It is a simple question. I think the average person across Ontario would expect that before the McGuinty government puts a quarter of a million dollars out the door, there be some documentation, some criteria. This issue raises a question because Michael Huang, who is a policy adviser to the Minister of Citizenship until this weekend, was also listed on the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada website as a member of their executive committee.

Now, in December 2006, the McGuinty government gave the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada a cheque for \$25,000 and then in March a further cheque for \$250,000. The connection between this group and the McGuinty government is a cause for serious concern, especially when other credible organizations were not told by the McGuinty government that money was available or were told they weren't going to get money when they made a request. Again, can the minister table the documents and the criteria used when allocating \$275,000 to this group?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said earlier, Michael Huang is a man who has been studying in Canada—underemployed. He's been doing all kinds of volunteer work with student

groups and unemployed professionals. He came into my office as an intern back in September. He resigned from the Chinese Professionals Association in October and he continued to work as an intern. He is an intern that I brought into my office just as an expansion of what we've done with the Ontario public service to show that we were also interested in my staff internally to promote the internship for foreign-trained professionals. So Michael Huang came into my office as an intern and he was employed there as an intern up until last—

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The question was about what documentation, what criteria, the McGuinty government used before you issued cheques totalling \$275,000 of the public's money. In December 2006, the Minister of Citizenship sent a cheque for \$25,000. To quote the press release, the money was to be used "to gather information that will help ease newcomers' transition into life." That was over six months ago. Can the minister table for this Legislature the information that was supposed to be gathered using this \$25,000 grant?

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Hon. Mr. Colle: I think the figure was \$21,000. But the grant that was given at that time was as a result of a crisis that was occurring, where there was a cry in the immigrant community, especially in the Chinese community, because essentially people were saying that government must do something immediately to deal with the fact that there were many foreign-trained professionals in that community who were willing to work and couldn't find work; 70% of them were highly educated. They said to our government and to all governments at that time—and there were many newspaper articles, many press and media reports—that something had to be done, that we could no longer ignore the despair of these foreign-trained professionals. This organization was willing to do something to try and find the solutions to deal with these—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Hampton: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. Again I ask the question, where are the criteria and where is the documentation? Because new Canadians deserve respect and fairness, and they deserve an open and transparent system of funding programs. Instead, the McGuinty government is offering slush money and partisan bullying.

I'm sending across this photo from Ming Pao newspaper, a recent photo. As you know, Ming Pao is a respected newspaper in the Chinese Canadian community. The news story focuses on the grants to the Chinese Professionals Association and the questions around them. I'm asking the minister, can you identify the individuals in the photo that accompanies this news story in Ming Pao?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the member opposite fails to appreciate the fact that in Toronto, in southern Ontario, there is a crisis, and the crisis was made very apparent last summer. The government had to do something, and we tried to do something because there are too many

very, very fragile situations in our newcomer community that can no longer be ignored. The staff person I brought in as an intern had been working as a volunteer to raise money for orphaned children sometimes, sometimes for a mother—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Colle: This staff member who came on as an intern had been working to help people in desperate situations; in fact, the whole community was raising money for people in these desperate situations. That's what he was doing. He was involved in the community in a wide breadth of activities, but he was also very dedicated to helping newcomers solve this problem of trying to get—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The question was about the identity of the individuals in this photo. This photo was taken at an event called Chinese Canadians for Liberals. In the centre is a familiar face, the McGuinty government Minister of Revenue. On the far right of this Chinese Canadians for Liberals photo is Michael Huang, until this weekend a director of the Chinese Professionals Association and a staffer in the minister's office. On the left is Thomas Qu, another director of the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada and here identified as someone in Chinese Canadians for Liberals.

Why is the minister unwilling to provide the documentation for the \$275,000 in grants to this organization when this photo for the Ming Pao newspaper suggests it's about Chinese Canadians for Liberals?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, I mention to him that Michael Huang came to my office as an intern in September. He resigned from the Chinese Professionals Association at the end of October, so he was no longer on the board of the Chinese Professionals Association as of October, and not as stated.

Whether it's participating with Liberal organizations or Liberal events, newcomers are allowed to participate with any political party they choose, and they do so. Whether Michael Huang participated in this event here, that's his right to do so. As a citizen, he's allowed to do that. He also participated with volunteer organizations and he also became an intern in my office. I think he has done very good work as an intern and does very good work in the community at large.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, here is the issue. Hard-working people in hundreds of community organizations, organizations with a long history and great credibility, were not even told by the McGuinty government that government funding was available for them. But groups and organizations with close ties to the Liberal Party or to the minister's office received multiple grants. Until this weekend, a staffer in the minister's office was listed as an executive board member of this organization. Other members of this organization publicly campaigned for the Liberal Party. People inside and outside the Chinese community are raising serious questions and they deserve answers. My question is, when will the minister do the

right thing and ask the Auditor General to conduct an immediate investigation and report on the McGuinty government slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Many of the organizations across Ontario that help immigrants or do volunteer work participate in all three political parties in an active way, and they're allowed to do that. We're also looking at organizations that are focused on making a change and delivering services to, in this case, foreign-trained professionals who have not gotten ahead in this country despite all their great qualifications. So this organization here has been dedicated, essentially through volunteer works and mentorships, since 1993, to doing this. They wanted to partner with us to provide these services in these gaps that existed. The gaps are very apparent. They're trying to do this in a way that will improve those services, especially in York region and Scarborough, and I think they're more than capable of doing that.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again through you to the Minister of Citizenship about his Liberal friends' slush fund.

We're talking about the policy adviser in your office, a Mr. Huang, and the contradictions with respect to a whether he's a member of the board or not a member of the board and when he resigned the board. I guess I'd like to cut to the chase. We know that in terms of many, if not most, of the monies that flowed out of your office, there was no application, no approval process, no follow-up audit. In the case of this particular organization that Mr. Huang was a director of, the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada, how did you reach the conclusion that this organization needed a quarter of a million dollars? Did Mr. Huang communicate with you in respect to that?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said earlier, Michael Huang was an intern who came in September. He worked as an intern for six months. At that point in March, I brought him on because of the excellent work that he did over those six months and the excellent expertise he brought to the office. I brought him on in my staff as a policy adviser because of the excellent work that he did after the opportunity. As an intern, we had no discussions about funding of any projects. He was essentially there in a new capacity and he did not participate in any funding decisions on any of these projects.

Mr. Runciman: I don't think that was an answer to my question. You know, we like to pose questions through you, Mr. Speaker, as required. It would be nice to get some answers back through you as well. Can you do something about that, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, through you again: We had this individual apparently resign from this organization following the announcement and the publication of the facts that this slush fund has been underway for some period of time, perhaps now two years.

The minister didn't answer my specific question with respect to whether there was any discussion with Mr.

Huang around the funding needs of this organization as he saw them. He's indicated that he wasn't involved in the approval process. We didn't ask him that. We're not suggesting that. How did he reach this conclusion? As well, Mr. Speaker, would the minister tell us, through you, why he resigned following the publication of this information?

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Hon. Mr. Colle: As I've said to the member, Michael Huang started in September and resigned from the board the next month, at the end of October. This organization has been working for 17 years, whatever it is, in helping newcomers. It has an exceptional track record of trying to get employment and recognition. It's a great advocate for newcomers in an area where, for years, there was no help. They were great advocates in supporting the passage of Bill 124. They were great advocates in getting more funding for occupation-specific English language programs and also linking the business community with foreign-trained professionals. That's what the investment's going to do, because that's the key for many foreign-trained professionals to getting mentorships and linkage with business. That's what the Chinese Professionals Association is very good at and is committed to helping with.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My question, through you, to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: This weekend, the Toronto Star revealed that another association with Liberal Party ties and with direct links to your office received a grant from the ministerial slush fund. There are a number of groups that have been on the ground for years, providing assistance to newcomers from China. A question for the minister is, how did he let other groups who have been serving the Chinese Canadian community for years know about this year-end slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I categorically refuse to categorize these investments in that negative light because organizations, whether they're serving the Chinese community or other communities, have received partnership with us, whether it's CICS, which has been around for many, many years, TCCSA has been around for many years—all of these organizations that received increased funding from us on the capital side and on new program expansion, plus the federal funding.

In certain cases, we have to expand our capacity. Here's an area in York region and in northern Scarborough where there are thousands of foreign-trained individuals who are trying to make a living. Their service needs are not being met. This organization is partnering with us to fill this gap, which everybody identifies. If you talk to all of the service providers in York region and northern Scarborough, there's untold demand up there and we're trying to meet that—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Tabuns: Yet another non-answer from the minister. Nonetheless, will the minister table the documentation showing that other groups that have been

serving the Chinese-Canadian community in Ontario for years on issues like employment were notified about the slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are ongoing investments that we're making in organizations like CICS. We're also currently involved with helping them build a new centre for youth in northern Scarborough. That's one of our partnerships. We have a new language program with the TCCSA. We have many new expansion programs and ongoing funding of settlement programs. In fact, the settlement programs for all organizations, whether they serve the Chinese community or others, are seeing grants being increased through the federal program that we signed—up to 50% increases in funding, more staffing and program expansion that everybody is benefiting from. We are helping organizations in many different ways and we'd like to do more. This is part of our increased investment that we're making in this important community in Toronto.

The Speaker: New question.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This past weekend, Randy Hillier, the former president of the Ontario Landowners Association, was nominated as the provincial Conservative candidate in the riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox–Addington for the upcoming 2007 provincial election. We all know what radical, right-wing, divisive style of leadership this brings to the PC party of Ontario. Hillier has become well known for his stand against supply management, safe meat inspections and clean water in rural Ontario. To quote—

The Speaker: Order. The question needs to relate to the minister's responsibilities. Member for Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a member who represents a rural riding and many supply-managed producers, my constituents deserve to know what threat Hillier's nomination to the Conservative Party of Ontario poses to rural Ontario.

The Speaker: I don't think that question actually related to the minister's responsibilities.

A new question, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and it deals with his slush fund. For weeks now, we've been asking about the process. We've been asking about the way that money was paid out to various groups. We've been asking because some of these groups seem to have gotten money and have close ties to the Liberal Party. And now, one has close ties to a former staffer in the minister's office.

The minister's only response to all this is, "Trust me. Trust me. Everything's above board." But we simply can't do that, not when stories keep changing, not when he tells us that he's the one who chose the group of 31 that would receive grants out of hundreds who came asking him for money, and he can't produce a single criterion to justify those decisions on how he based who would get those grants.

The time has come for the minister to stop stonewalling around this slush fund. The time has come for him to come to stand in his place and turn this over to the Auditor General and then resign. Will the minister do so?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, I think I told the same member that if you go throughout newcomer communities all across Ontario, there's a desperate cry for help. It's not in any way a political cry; it's a desperate cry for help. These are people who, most of them—in the Chinese community, for instance, 70% have graduate degrees or better, 70% are very talented and come here to get a job. They're not getting jobs.

We are trying to listen to that plea for help. It's been ignored. It's greatly needed to invest in these programs and to expand them, because we are suffering from a real tragic loss of talent and stress in families. The average income for a new immigrant from China is \$15,000. That's the—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Yakabuski: The minister is doing himself no favours, and he's not doing immigrants in this country any favours either: \$250,000 to the Bengali Cultural Society—they have a director who's a member of the Liberal Party, and they got the money after a meeting was arranged by Maria Minna, a member of cabinet in the former Chrétien-tainted government; \$200,000 to a group with seven Liberals among its seven directors only three weeks after it was registered as an animal welfare charity—the directors include a riding president, a candidate and a friend of the finance minister who is also the Liberal Party campaign chair; and now, another \$250,000 to a group with a close connection to a senior staffer in the minister's office.

Nothing short of an auditor's investigation and this minister's resignation will do. Will the minister please call in the auditor and tender his resignation?

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Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the member refuses to correct the record. Michael Huang came into my office as an intern for six months. He resigned from the board he volunteered with a month after coming into my office. He has represented a lot of very talented people who need a chance in this country. That's all they ask for: a chance to work.

The member talks about helping immigrants. It's pretty difficult to see where—there are 47% of these immigrants living below the low-income cut-off, and the majority are very highly educated. That's how we're trying to help immigrants with these programs. We shouldn't tolerate the fact that half of them who come here with degrees are living below the low-income cut-off of \$15,000.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, \$91 million was budgeted for the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration in 2006, but \$118 million was spent by year end. The ministry's third quarter fiscal report projected only

\$94 million being spent, but \$25 million more was funnelled through the ministry in the last few days of the fiscal year.

My question to the Minister of Finance is, when will he ask the Auditor General to implement an immediate investigation into the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Let me tell my friend from Beaches–East York that as Minister of Finance of this province, I am extremely proud of the work that we're doing with immigrant communities all over the province. Whether they be of Chinese ethnic origin, Polish ethnic origin, Japanese or Korean, this is the makeup of Ontario. The fact that this government made a decision to create a new ministry and say we want to pay special attention to assist those communities to plant their roots deeper in this soil as quickly as possible is a matter of pride for me and every single member of this caucus.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Minister, I would think it should be a matter of embarrassment for most of you, the way this was handled, and not pride.

The finance ministry's numbers prove that the Ministry of Citizenship has created a slush fund to reward Liberal-friendly groups for the past two fiscal years. Last year, \$118 million was spent by that ministry. This year, the minister has budgeted only \$86 million. It is simply not believable to me or anyone else who's watching this that this government is making a 30% cut to this ministry in this, an election year.

My question to the minister again: This minister needs to come clean and the Auditor General must be requested to investigate the McGuinty government's year-end slush fund. Your colleague refuses to do so. Will the minister do it himself?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Let's remind each other in this House and the people of the province that every single expenditure of the government of Ontario is examined by the Auditor General—every single expenditure.

I just want to tell my friend—I'm sorry I don't have the numbers here for last year; I wasn't the minister last year—that we are very prudent in allocating our expenditures. There is no ministry that doesn't have a need for more resources. The fact that we can set aside resources to assist some cultural communities in this province to further their work somewhat—we can't respond to all of them, you know that; there are hundreds and hundreds—the fact that we can do that work is a matter of pride for me and for my government.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The minister has seen first-hand when he has toured my riding of

Brant that we have a small, urban-rural area contained within the riding.

The official opposition likes to proclaim that they're the only voice for rural Ontario, yet conveniently they ignore the McGuinty government's countless investments in these areas or they like to take credit for them.

My constituents know better. They are celebrating the new MRI machine in the community hospital as well as the family health team in Brant and the community health centre to improve access to primary care. Unlike some members, I'm happy to give credit to the government when good things happen in rural Ontario.

I do ask the minister this, though: How else are you addressing the health concerns of rural Ontarians, who deserve just as high a quality of health care as anyone else closer to home? Could you please explain how that's done?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the question. We believe in the idea that the best health care you can find is the health care you find as close to home as possible. We've closed no hospitals but we have rebuilt many. We've given the largest budgetary increase to our smallest hospitals. We've made big investments, historic-scale investments, in community care and in primary care at the community level, including 44 family health teams deployed in rural Ontario all across this vast province.

As an example of another rural-based family health team, the one in Brockville, through mobile delivery of health care in the form of a motor home, we see that 6,000 previously orphaned patients— orphaned by people like the honourable member from Halton—have received care.

So while one party likes to pretend that it's the voice for rural Ontario, by electing a candidate for Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington they've nominated a candidate who has shot a deer and named it after a cabinet minister, a member who would make Mike Harris blush and, for some strange reason, a member who believes that the people in rural Ontario aren't entitled to the same health care and protections for their health.

Mr. Levac: Listening carefully to the answer, it's obvious that the doctor shortage is of critical concern to my constituents, and we need more creative ideas. I'm absolutely sure these guys will be there to cut the ribbons when we open their family health teams.

An issue that I know is of particular interest for some of my constituents in the riding is the role that public health plays in balancing its role within rural Ontario. I know that in Leeds–Grenville this was of particular interest when the farmers' markets were raised last year, in fairness to them. Rural Ontarians appreciated your swift response to the concerns raised by exempting farmers' markets from certain regulations while still exercising caution with respect to public safety.

Will the minister tell this House now how the ministry will continue to protect public health while balancing the unique needs of rural Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I was a member of the Ontario Legislature on a May long weekend when we all witnessed horrific circumstances occurring in rural Ontario, in Walkerton. I was in this Legislature when I saw parties of all stripes commit to implementation of all the recommendations of the O'Connor report. One of those that is before the Legislature right now, Bill 171, would see the transfer of the inspection of small drinking water systems from the Ministry of the Environment to public health units, an initiative that's supported by the Rural Ontario Municipal Association in conjunction with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. But now we see, as a voice for rural Ontario—in fact, the person who will be developing the platform for rural Ontario for John Tory, for the Leader of the Opposition's Conservative Party, is against water inspections, is against meat inspections, is against supply management. We're very interested to see how this party intends to rationalize itself against the views of its rural Ontario critic.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It concerns the slush fund that he's running. Minister, today we're hearing about an organization that managed to get \$250,000 from your year-end slush fund. I have here a letter from Mrs. Marie Smith, president of the United Senior Citizens of Ontario, the oldest grassroots organization in Ontario. They represent over 1,000 clubs and 300,000 seniors in our province. They didn't know about your slush fund and they could have used some help. The process was not fair and was not transparent. The minister picked who got the money, on what basis we really don't know. The auditor must be called in and the minister must resign. Will the minister call in the Auditor General and will he resign? I'd like a yes or no on that, please.

1500

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I just want to say again that there are many needs in this province, whether they be in volunteer groups, seniors' groups or newcomer groups. My ministry has tried to do its part, with a lot of other ministries. We've tried to invest in programs and in capacity improvement for their buildings. We've done that across Ontario. There's much more to do. That's why we're making the process even better. My ministry can at least do more of its part with a direct online application.

There are many, many more deserving groups. I agree with the member: We have to do more. We are trying to do more.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm sure President Marie Smith and the United Senior Citizens of Ontario will be pleased to print your answer in their newsletter and distribute it to the 300,000 members.

Minister, this Saturday, May 5, the editorial in the *Orillia Packet and Times* read, "At the very least, this brewing scandal should spell the end of Colle's time as citizenship and immigration minister. His response to the controversy has been unsatisfactory.

"Ontario taxpayers deserve better."

Minister, will you do what is right and resign your position?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again I want to say that I have a role as minister to try to help volunteer groups. As part of that, I invest in seniors' organizations all over the province, along with other ministers. As I said, there are many organizations that need more help. We are trying to do our best.

One of my mandates is to ensure that our newcomers who are also seniors get some help. In these investments we've made, you'll see we've made investments in seniors' organizations that also reach out to many newcomers. As much as we emphasize foreign-trained individuals, there are many newcomers who are now grandparents who need support and need these services too, so we're trying to do that also.

You can't solve everybody's problems, but we're trying to meet the needs. That's why we're making the process even better, to provide even more services for seniors, whether they've been here for many generations or recently arrived.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My riding consists of many new immigrants from all over the world. They speak Somali, Arabic, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Albanian, Spanish—virtually every language that's spoken in the world. Many of these immigrants are in desperate need of ESL programs. However, this government's ESL funding is woefully inadequate. Instead of addressing real needs, this government has chosen to dish out millions of slush-fund dollars through quickie, one-time grants without an application process.

Why did the minister dish out unsolicited money to groups with obvious Liberal Party ties when there is an urgent need for greater funding for ESL programs?

Hon. Mr. Colle: First of all, I want to say that one of the major investments we made was in the Centre for Spanish-Speaking Peoples and St. Clair West Services for Seniors in his riding. There are many needs in his riding.

But let me talk about ESL. Before I became minister, the ESL program for immigrants had no curriculum; \$50 million was being invested with no curriculum, no follow-up, no occupation-specific tracking. We now have a—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke needs to come to order, please. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: For 20 years, ESL was not given the attention it needed. ESL now has a curriculum, it has new

benchmarks and a new emphasis on occupation-specific English because many of the foreign-trained and newcomers need higher levels of English.

We have invested in ESL. We have paid attention to it. I visited the ESL centres. Now they have the resources, the curriculum and the programs they never had before.

Mr. Ferreira: The minister sugar-coats things again. The reality is that if new immigrants can't speak English, they have great difficulty finding employment and securing a better life for themselves and their families. As we have sadly witnessed over the past two weeks in this House, this government is more interested in a smear campaign than it is in answering tough questions on its sorry record when it comes to really helping new immigrants.

An Osprey Media column describes the McGuinty government's deplorable tactics this way: "The most reprehensible and appalling brand of self-serving politics—it is divisive, undermines the confidence of immigrants in Ontario's political system and obscures the real needs of immigrants."

Speaker, through you: When will the minister stop smearing and start investing in real ESL programs?

Hon. Mr. Colle: In the House and outside the House, I said that we're all working together; all parties are trying to do their best to help immigrants. I've said that categorically over and over again. On ESL again, this is an area that for 20 years was basically ignored. Now we're paying attention to ESL. The dollars that are being spent are now being spent with a curriculum, with benchmarks, enhanced program development. It has never been there before. We did that because too many immigrants weren't getting the ESL they required. We now provide stronger, richer ESL programs that were never done before for adult newcomers that my ministry is proud to fund. We fund over \$50 million a year for newcomers who need ESL that is occupation-specific, job-specific, work-specific. We're now doing that. It was never there before. It's a great new investment in ESL that we've never had in this province, and we're proud of it.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): Even though I represent an urban riding, I'm proud to be part of a government that speaks for rural communities, a government that is working to provide the right tools to build vibrant, thriving rural communities while at the same time protecting and promoting healthy urban communities. This government has had many accomplishments that testify to that approach. Enshrining a greenbelt as big as Prince Edward Island and the Clean Water Act are but two examples of where we're doing good things for urban residents and also for rural residents. The Clean Water Act in particular is a major accomplishment. But some people actually don't support the Clean Water Act, even though this legislation meets the requirements of the Walkerton report.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of the Environment, I wonder if we could have an update on the Clean Water Act and maybe could be reminded—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I too am an urban member, but I have had the privilege to travel across this great province, reconnect with my rural roots and have a chance to speak to our farmers and our rural community right across Ontario about the importance of providing clean, safe drinking water.

One of the things I'm proudest about is that the Clean Water Act includes the Ontario drinking water stewardship program, which will provide rural Ontarians with financial support for concrete actions to protect drinking water in their community. We have funded that program to the tune of \$28 million, and that's in addition to the \$120 million that we've put out, available in communities right across the province, for the science of drinking water. This investment in rural Ontario and in the Clean Water Act stands in contrast to John Tory and the Conservative Party and the opposition, who all voted against the Clean Water Act, who all voted against Justice—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Matthews: Minister, I know you've travelled across the province to meet with rural representatives. When you made sure that financial assistance was enshrined in the Clean Water Act, it was clear that you were listening and that you had the best interests of rural Ontarians at heart.

Some people, though, have been spreading some very serious mistruths and misinformation about the Clean Water Act—so many, in fact, I don't even know where to begin—instead of listening to experts like Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence Canada, who stated, "Clean water is precious for the health of all Ontarians. This act is an important step forward in ensuring that the protection of Ontario's source waters is a priority in every watershed."

Some people, though, focus their energy not on representing the concerns of rural Ontarians but by spreading mistruths. So rural Ontarians can be reassured yet again, how does the Clean Water Act make sure that the best interests of rural Ontarians are considered?

1510

Hon. Ms. Broten: I have to say that the record of the Conservative Party is dismal when it comes to protecting water in this province. Justice O'Connor himself recognized this when he said budget reductions are connected directly to the events of May 2000.

Unfortunately, John Tory and the Conservative Party have learned no lessons from the tragic history of our province in Walkerton. They voted against the Clean Water Act and budget measures to put more dollars into protecting water. They voted against all of the initiatives that we have sought to move forward. Now, should it surprise us that they've nominated a candidate by the

name of Randy Hillier, who is opposed to all water protection regulation? Certainly not. It doesn't surprise me.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and relates to his Liberal friends' slush fund. The minister said earlier today that his staffer Mr. Huang was employed as an intern. Will the minister please provide the details of the internship program under which Mr. Huang was employed and what was its name?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'll be happy to answer that. What we established for the first time in this province last year is an Ontario public service internship program, funded out of my ministry, where 72 foreign-trained individuals would be able to get internships paid for six months right across all government ministries, and we're very proud of that. Then what I did in my office to support that initiative was, I also provided for an internship within my office on the same basis of six months so that a foreign-trained professional could get an opportunity that may lead to another job. That's the basis of the internship program that I had in my office, but there's the wider OPS one.

Mr. Runciman: That's his own little internship program, I guess, Mr. Speaker. We'll call it an intern program for the moment because it's convenient.

On October 16, 2006, the Sing Tao paper published a photograph of Mr. Huang following his re-election to the board of directors of CPAC.

On Saturday, May 5 of this year, it was reported in the Toronto Star that Mr. Huang had resigned from the board, but he couldn't remember when. That's what he told the Star, but he told Sing Tao that he quit in November.

On Friday, May 4, the minister's spokesperson told Sing Tao that Mr. Huang resigned on October 26, but he also told another Chinese-language paper, Ming Pao, that Mr. Huang quit last September. Will the minister please resolve the discrepancies in these stories?

Hon. Mr. Colle: As I said, we're very proud of the fact that we have now provided internship opportunities, and we hope to expand that. In this case, as I said earlier, Michael Huang came to my office on September 5. He resigned from the volunteer board he was a member of on October 26 and he served as an intern up until March of this year.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): It's my pleasure to read a petition to the Legislative

Assembly of Ontario, beside my good friend from Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels; and

"Whereas provincial and federal governments have done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

"Whereas provincial tax on gas is 14 cents per litre and federal tax is 10 cents per litre, plus 6% GST; and

"Whereas these taxes have a detrimental impact on the economy and are unfair to commuters who rely on vehicles to travel to work; and

"Whereas the province has the power to set the price of gas and has taken responsibility for energy prices in other areas, such as hydro and natural gas; and

"Whereas we call on the province to remove the 14.7-cents-per-litre gas tax and on the federal government to eliminate the 10-cent gas tax, plus 6% GST, which amounts to 30% or more;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action and to also persuade the federal government to remove its gas taxes."

I support the petition and affix my signature.

COURT SUPPORT STAFF

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas 1,400 members of the Attorney General's court support staff who are working under the flexible, part-time (FPT) model, otherwise referred to as appendix 32 under a collective agreement between Management Board of Cabinet, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union negotiated in the spring of 2005, are working hundreds of hours per week in the service of the Attorney General for which they are not getting paid; and

"Whereas under the FPT agreement many court support staff are working as many as 20 hours or more per week for which payment is being withheld and will not be paid until months later, and when the makeup pay does eventually get paid, up to 50% may be lost to taxes because of the taxation year into which the payment may fall; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff who are being forced to work under these conditions are single mothers with fixed living expenses who incur employment-related expenses such as child care and travel costs for those hours that they are required to work but for which they are not getting paid; and in many cases these expenses are impossible to pay without the offsetting income which is being withheld by the Attorney General under the FPT agreement; and

"Whereas many of the Attorney General's court support staff have been left no other choice but to resign from these impossible working conditions and, in many cases, are being forced onto the welfare rolls by the very

government for which they are providing hundreds of hours of work for which they are not being paid in a timely manner; and

“Whereas the FPT agreement which is causing such hardship for employees of the Attorney General was negotiated by and entered into between the Ministry of the Attorney General, Management Board of Cabinet and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union; and the employees to whom this agreement applies insist that the terms of the agreement and their practical implications were not fully disclosed to them at the time the agreement was proposed for ratification; and

“Whereas the employees affected by this agreement have repeatedly appealed to OPSEU, the Attorney General and the Premier to point out the unfairness of being forced to work hundreds of hours without being paid for that work and the hardship this practice is causing in the lives of many employees, but these repeated appeals to the Attorney General and to the Premier that they step in to ensure fair treatment of Attorney General employees are being ignored;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the Premier, the Attorney General and the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet to take whatever steps are necessary to change the offensive provisions of the FPT agreement as set out in appendix 32 and ensure that the Attorney General’s court support staff receive fair treatment as employees of the government and that among other unfair provisions of the agreement, the practice of withholding pay for hours worked cease immediately.”

It is signed by Marlene Hollingsworth and others. I have affixed my signature as well.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition that I’m going to present on behalf of my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls. I thank the members of Fair Share Niagara for sending it. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows.

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration,” which is wet, “and there are other forms of macular degeneration,” such as dry, “that are not covered,

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

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most” people “and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition and to support it and to send it down by page Zachary.

SEXUALLY EXPLICIT GOODS AND SERVICES

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): I have a petition, which reads as follows.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario citizens are concerned over the ease with which underaged youth can access sexually explicit goods and services; and

“Whereas Durham MPP John O’Toole has introduced legislation through a private member’s bill to protect the access by youth and children to sexually explicit materials; and

“Whereas Bill 100, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2006, prohibits a person from knowingly selling, offering to sell, distributing, offering to distribute or displaying sexually explicit goods or service to a minor in any premise or place;

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

“To support the expeditious passage of Bill 100 and to support legislation that would protect minors from access to sexually explicit goods and services.”

I’m pleased to sign this on behalf of the many children. I present it to page Marissa, who is from my riding of Durham.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): I present this petition on behalf of the constituents of Kingston and the Islands.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s transformation agenda targets health improvement, illness prevention and improved quality of life for all Ontarians, and current literature and research indicates that sound nutrition directly impacts healthy outcomes;

“Whereas current literature and research indicates that the acuity and nutritional needs of residents of long-term-care homes is rising and there’s an increasing frail resident population in long-term-care homes, with 25% to 60% at moderate to high nutritional risk, and that healthier long-term-care residents would decrease unnecessary hospitalizations, clogging of emergency wards and the use of acute care beds in hospital environments;

“Whereas the raw food cost funding, which was \$4.26 per resident per day in 1993 and is now \$5.46 per day per resident has not kept pace with inflation and has presented a barrier to providing nutritionally balanced meals and providing for the increasing specialized dietary needs, and following an extensive study, an immediate increase in raw food cost funding from \$5.46 per day per resident to \$7 per resident per day has been recommended by the Dietitians of Canada (raw food cost in Ontario long-term-care homes funding review and priority recommendations dated November 2006) to provide for the nutritional needs of this population, and

these recommendations are viewed as a best practice and are recognized by professional stakeholders;

“Whereas, although the McGuinty government has made significant investments in many areas of long-term care, most of these investments are not visible to family members, and there is a growing concern among family members that inadequate raw food cost funding is a barrier to planning quality menus and providing nutritionally balanced meals and beverages, and family members must speak for long-term-care residents who are unable to speak for themselves;

“Whereas the increasing multicultural nature of our aging society requires the introduction of more diverse food choices and ethnic, cultural and religious requirements which lead to the increased food costs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adopt the Dietitians of Canada, Ontario region, report and recommendations (raw food cost in Ontario long-term-care homes funding review and priority recommendations dated November 2006) and immediately increase the raw food costs in long-term care from \$5.46 per day per resident to \$7 per day per resident in order to meet the nutritional needs of this population.”

1520

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

“Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada’s multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

“Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario’s diverse religious and cultural communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member’s bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day.”

I affix my signature to this petition and send it down with Christian, appropriately enough.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I’m pleased to present a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from a group of neighbours in Oakville. I especially want to thank Lawrence Quinn and Stephanie Lupo for having gathered the signatures. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife, and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I’m pleased to support this petition, to affix my signature to it and to ask page Caitlyn to carry it for me.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has directed Lakeridge Health to cut mental health and addiction services and children’s mental health services in order to balance its budget; and

“Whereas the ministry has directed these cuts, bypassing the Central East Local Health Integration Network, whose director has stated ‘there will be no reduction in mental health and addiction services within the Central East LHIN’; and

“Whereas these cuts will likely transfer costs rather than save them, putting additional pressure on Lakeridge’s emergency department, the police department, Whitby Mental Health and social service providers; and

“Whereas the Central East already receives amongst the lowest per capita hospital funding in the province;

“We, the undersigned, request the Ontario Legislative Assembly to revisit this decision and ensure Durham residents receive appropriate support for adults and children who need treatment for mental health and addictions.”

I affix my name in support.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professionals and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas action by Ontario’s trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario’s trades and professions have failed to recognize that such

structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

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

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario’s regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario’s employers, Ontario’s newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families.”

MULTIPLE LEGAL PARENTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the appeal court of Ontario on January 2, 2007, ruled that ‘a child may have more than two legal parents’;

“Whereas that sets up a precedent and leaves many unanswered questions which could result in possible multiple legal parents and unknown devastating ramifications to children and families of Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to appeal the Ontario Court decision, so that various levels of government may thoroughly study the personal ... and legal implications of allowing more than two legal parents.”

I’ve affixed my name to this.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have another petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan ignored stories of millions in rip-offs within Ontario’s lottery system for months, if not years;

“Whereas they acted only after they were caught and their first attempt was to ‘spin the scandal’ rather than fix the problems;

“Whereas Ontarians have every right to expect leadership from their government; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan have failed to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario;

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

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe there has been a ruling on the type of petition that was presented. I understand that the Speaker was concerned about the content of some of it being

demeaning to members, and I believe that this one might fall within that purview. I would ask for a ruling on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): I’m reminded that the Speaker, in his ruling, ruled the aforementioned petition out of order because it attacked the integrity of a member of the House. This petition comes, I think, dangerously close to that. However, I do know that petitions similar to this were read to the House earlier without let or hindrance. I will allow the member to continue with this, but I would ask him not to bring further petitions of this type into the House.

Mr. Murdoch: All right.

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

“That Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system.”

1530

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states: “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days...” On March 19, 2007, the member for Whitby–Ajax placed on the order paper a written question asking the Attorney General to “please provide the number of full-time, part-time and contract employees employed by the ministry, broken down for the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006.”

By our count, this is the 28th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than enough time to answer this question, and I ask that you direct the minister to stop stonewalling and table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): I would remind the Attorney General that he is required under standing 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask him to give the House some indication as to when the response would be forthcoming.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On that point of order, Mr. Speaker: The notification has been received and will be accepted, and I will ensure that the answer from the minister responsible will be coming forthwith. But I do reject “stonewalling” as a characterization of the answer.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): Under the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: Under standing order 97(d), as you know, members of this Legislature have the right to ask ministers questions in writing and expect an answer within 24 sitting days. I speak on behalf of the member for York North, Ms. Munro, who placed a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services to “please provide a list of all ministerial letter appointments made since October

2, 2003, with information about when the term of the appointment began and ended....”

By my count, it's now 28 sitting days since that order question was placed, and no answer has been given, interim or otherwise. So I would ask you to ask the minister to please come forward with the answer to the question placed by the member for York North.

The Acting Speaker: I am advised that the members' statement is well taken, that the answer requested is overdue. I would like to remind the Minister of Community and Social Services that she is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask her to give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Chief government whip.

Mr. Levac: The same undertaking will be made to give these answers as quickly as possible.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97(d), and it states, “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.” On March 19, 2007, the member for York North placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Community and Social Services to “please provide a list, including cost, of every funding announcement the ministry has made since October 2, 2003, broken down by the date of the announcement and the impact on specific ridings.”

By my count, this is the 28th sitting day since this question was placed in the order paper, and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister had more than enough time to answer the question, and I ask that you direct the minister to stop stonewalling and table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker: First of all, before I do, I think the word “stonewalling” is not necessary to make your point. You have made it, and I am advised that the minister is in fact late. I wish to remind the Minister of Community and Social Services that she is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to the written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Chief government whip.

Mr. Levac: I will make the same commitment as I did before, that we will work with the ministry as quickly as possible, and thank you for rejecting “stonewalling.”

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to draw your attention again to standing order 97(d). It states, “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.” On December 21, 2006, the member for Durham placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Transportation to “please provide a list, including cost, of every funding announcement the ministry has made since October 2, 2003, broken down

by the date of the announcement and the impact on specific ridings.”

By our count, this is the 29th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has yet been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than four months to answer this question, and I ask that you direct the minister to immediately table the answer.

The Acting Speaker: Just for clarification, I didn't hear the title of the minister.

Ms. MacLeod: The Minister of Transportation.

The Acting Speaker: I want to remind the Minister of Transportation that he is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask that he give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Chief government whip.

Mr. Levac: The same commitment: that we will endeavour to get those answers as quickly as possible.

Mr. Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states, “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.” On March 19, 2007, the member for Whitby-Ajax placed on the order paper a written question asking the Attorney General to “please provide the list of every office which is rented or leased by the ministry, whom it is rented and/or leased from and the monthly rental and/or lease cost associated with the relevant office(s).”

By our count, this is the 28th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than enough time to answer this question, and I ask that you direct the minister to table this answer today.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I'll recognize you next.

I want to remind the Attorney General that he is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask him to give this House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Chief government whip.

Mr. Levac: The same commitment: We'll endeavour to get those answers as quickly as possible.

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Not to trivialize this point of order, but I'd like to suggest that the Minister of Transportation is a wonderful woman, and while in legal terms very often it's the male gender that's referenced, I'd like the record changed to recognize the female gender in this instance. It's “her” and “she.”

The Acting Speaker: The point is well taken. My apologies.

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is under the same order. I think it would be good if I

actually read 97(d) completely, because the minister does have other options as well as answering.

“(d) The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days, unless he or she indicates that more time is required because the answer will be costly or time-consuming”—so the minister can say that this requires more time and give notice to us, or that it’s very costly to produce it, and then usually there is a negotiation that goes on with the MPP who asked so that it would become less costly—“or that he or she declines to answer, in which case” they have to make a notation and inform the clerks of that notation, and that will be indicated in “the Orders and Notices paper following the question indicating that the minister has made” this particular notation. As well, if there is an interim answer, that’s noted in the order paper. They’re also required to then peg a date when the answer will be available.

1540

In this particular case, I’m drawing attention to the question that was put by the member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, Mr. Tascona. This was again placed on March 19, more than a month and a half ago now, but also 28 sitting days ago.

The standing order is clear that the minister is required to respond, either in an interim way or in a full way, within 24 sitting days. This has not been done in this case, and I would ask you to respond to the question put to the Minister of Government Services to provide a list of the measures being considered by the Ontario government to stop the fraudulent use of powers of attorney in land and mortgage transactions in the manner that specifically impacted Paul Revicksy and Elisabeth Shepherd. Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to ask the Minister of Government Services to respond to that in the near future.

The Acting Speaker: I would remind the Minister of Government Services that he is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask that he give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I appreciate the member from Lanark–Carleton’s review of the actual order we’re quoting. We’ll commit to the same thing I’ve done up to this point, and that is to say that the minister will be responding as quickly as possible.

Ms. MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I’d like to draw your attention yet again to standing order 97(d). It states: “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.”

On December 21, 2006, the member for Durham placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Transportation to please provide the number of full-time, part-time and contract employees employed by the ministry, broken down for the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006.

By our count, this is the 29th sitting day since the question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The

minister has had more than four months to answer this question, and I ask that you direct the Minister of Transportation to table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker: I want to remind the Minister of Transportation that she is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I give my undertaking that the answer will be forthcoming as quickly as possible.

Mr. Murdoch: I’d like to draw your attention to the same standing order—97—which states: “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.”

On March 19, 2007, the member for York North placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Community and Social Services to please provide the list and cost of every consultant hired or contracted by the ministry since October 2, 2003. I understand that this is to be done within 24 sitting days, and I think we’re at 28 right now. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you could see that the minister answer the question today for us.

The Acting Speaker: I want to remind the Minister of Community and Social Services that she is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I make the same commitment to the member opposite that we will do as best we can to get the answer as quickly as possible.

Mr. Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states: “The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days.”

On March 19, 2007, the member for Whitby–Ajax placed on the order paper a written question asking the Attorney General to please provide the list and cost of every review, study, commission, audit and consultation, including the date which it was announced, the date when it was completed and the date the government officially responded that the ministry has commenced since October 2, 2003.

By our count, this is the 28th sitting day since the question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than enough time to answer this question, and I would ask that you direct the minister to table the answers today.

The Acting Speaker: I want to remind the Attorney General that he is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask that he give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I will give my undertaking that the Attorney General will be reminded and asked to give this answer as quickly as possible.

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On March 19 this year, the member for Oxford, Mr. Hardeman, placed on the order paper a written question, which he's entitled to do, asking the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to please provide the list and cost of every review, study, commission, audit and consultation, including the date on which it was announced, the date when it was completed and the date the government officially responded, that the ministry has commenced since October 2, 2003.

Again, this is another example where a minister has failed to meet the requirements of standing order 97(d). The minister is required to respond within 24 sitting days. By my count, this is not only a month and a half in real time, but it's the 28th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper, and I would ask you to request of the minister that he respond immediately.

The Acting Speaker: I wish to remind the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing that he is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask that he give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: A commitment will be made to find that answer out as quickly as possible for the member who asked it.

Ms. MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states, "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days."

On December 21, 2006, the member for Durham placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Transportation to please provide the list of every office which is rented or leased by the ministry, whom it is rented and/or leased from, and the monthly rental and/or lease cost associated with the relevant offices.

Today is the 29th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than four months to respond to this question, and I ask that you direct the minister to stop stalling and to table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker: Minister of Transportation, I want to remind you that you are required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Your response is now overdue, and I would ask that you give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: Of course, we reject any stalling or stonewalling, and we will comply as quickly as possible according to the standing orders.

On a point of order, Speaker: This is a question regarding the use of 97(d). In 1999, I submitted some questions I still haven't got answers for. Is it right for us to ask the opposition to give the answers to the questions I asked back in 1999?

The Acting Speaker: The point of order is not well taken. Inasmuch as the questions you asked in 1999 were

not answered, those ministers no longer hold ministerial office and therefore, no, you cannot.

Mr. Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Just to relate to that, I'm sure that member will be able to ask those questions within a few months, and I'm sure people will enjoy answering them for him.

Interjection.

Mr. Murdoch: They will be.

Interjection.

Mr. Murdoch: Mr. Speaker, they enjoy my arrogance, but you know I've never found so much arrogance in 17 years as I've seen on the other side.

1550

Now my point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97. It states that the minister shall answer such written questions within 24 days. On March 19, 2007, the member from York North, Julia Munro, placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Community and Social Services to "please provide the number of full-time, part-time, and contract employees employed by the ministry, broken down for the years 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006." And by the count, as you've heard, that this is more than 24 days—it's actually 28 days since this question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like you to ask the minister if they could answer those questions today for us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Community and Social Services, I would remind her that she is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Chief government whip?

Mr. Levac: Mr. Speaker, I'll make the undertaking that the minister will be giving that answer as quickly as possible.

I would also like to point out that unfortunately some of the responses that have been asked for may have been acted upon, but they need to get to the table first to show that they can respond to you and the other members. So there are probably going to be some cases that have been asked that there will be some responses, but that will be notified at a later date.

The Acting Speaker: On his point of order, the explanation is fine, but the requirement is fairly strong. It's fairly steadfast in the rules of order for 24 days. By my count, this is about 11 or 12 in a row that have not been met, so I would hope that the chief government whip will take the message back to the various ministers that the 24-day time is kind of steadfast. There is, under the standing rules, an option, if it cannot be met, for them to so advise.

Mr. Levac: A point of order on that, Mr. Speaker: On your comment, I will continue to reiterate that I'm making that undertaking that I will ask those ministers to respond.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Halton.

Mr. Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states, "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days." On December 21, 2006—we're getting back towards 1999—last year, the member for Simcoe Grey placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Transportation to "please provide the list and cost of every review, study, commission, audit, consultation, including the date which it was announced, the date when it was completed and the date the government officially responded, that the ministry has commenced since October 2, 2003."

By our count, Mr. Speaker, this is the 29th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper, and no answer has been given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than four months to answer this question. I ask you to direct the minister to table the answer today.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Transportation, I want to remind her that she is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I give the undertaking that the minister will be notified and will get the answer as quickly as possible. In terms of responding to the members opposite, if they want to do it as a lump, we'll do it all together, if they'd like.

Mr. Sterling: Mr. Speaker, I think part of this exercise is to show that there are many ministers in contravention of 97(d) and many questions. So I bring another question here under standing order 97(d), a question put forward on March 19 by the member for Whitby-Ajax, Mrs. Elliott, to the Attorney General. The question was, "Please provide a list, including cost, of every funding announcement the ministry has made since October 2, 2003, broken down by the date of the announcement and the impact on specific ridings."

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out under section 97 that there is also another provision in addition to the ones that I've already mentioned. I point to 97(f): "If a minister is of the opinion that any written question under the standing order requires by way of reply any statement of facts, or records, or statistics of a lengthy or a voluminous nature, the minister may require it to be made a motion for a return." In other words, the minister can actually come to this House and make the question a point of debate in the House, where he can then say, "This is too difficult a task to undertake." He can also have a debate over what that particular request brings to the fore in terms of opinion by members of the House.

The one that I am mentioning here by the Attorney General has been on the order paper for 28 sitting days. The Attorney General, the chief law officer of the crown, who, of all, should be responding to our rules and regulations, has had this for more than 24 sitting days, as clearly set out in the standing orders. I would ask, of all

of the ministers, that the Attorney General respond in accordance with our standing orders.

The Acting Speaker: To the Attorney General: I want to remind him that he is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue, and I would ask him to give this House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I will give my undertaking that the minister will be made aware and will respond as quickly as possible.

Mr. Murdoch: On another point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's on the same standing order, 97(d). As you know, it states, "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days." We have another one here that unfortunately hasn't been answered. On March 19, 2007, again, the member from York North, Julia Munro, placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Community and Social Services to please provide the list and cost of every review, study, commission, audit and consultation, including the date it was announced, the date when it was completed and the date the government officially responded, that the ministry has commenced since October 2, 2003.

Again, I count the days and it's 28 days, so we are overdue. It's another one, so with your guidance, Mr. Speaker, if you could see that we could get an answer today it would be appreciated.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Community and Social Services: I want to remind her that she is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I give my undertaking that the minister will be notified and the answer will be provided as quickly as possible.

Mr. Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 97(d). It states, "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days." On December 21, 2006, the member for Simcoe-Grey placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Transportation to please provide a list of all ministerial letter appointments made since October 2, 2003, with information about when the term of appointment began and ended or ends.

By our count, this is the 29th sitting day since this question was placed on the order paper and no answer has been forthcoming or given, neither interim nor otherwise. The minister has had more than four months to answer this question, and I ask you to direct the minister to table the answer forthwith.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Transportation: I want to remind her that she is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue, and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: I give my undertaking that the answer will be forthcoming as quickly as possible.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm ready to call the orders of the day. I'm prepared to call government order G174.

The Acting Speaker: I don't believe that is a point of order, but thank you. We know how anxious you are.

1600

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Under section 97(d)—this relates to order paper questions, questions put in writing by members of the Legislature to ministers. This is a most important right that we, as MPPs, have in this House because it's our only chance to get data and information in an organized fashion, as we wish it, from the ministers. Under the freedom-of-information act, we do not have the right to ask for data to be organized in a fashion in which we would like it to be organized. Under the freedom-of-information act, our only right is to ask for a particular document of a ministry. There are supposed to be time constraints on receiving that, but often ministries are lacking in meeting those time constraints.

On March 19, the member for Oxford, Mr. Hardeman, placed an order paper question asking the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to please provide a list of all ministerial letter appointments made since October 2, 2003, with information about the term of appointment—when it began and when it ended. This particular order paper question was given 28 sitting days ago. Section 97(d) is clear that an answer is required in 24 sitting days. I would ask you to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to please pay regard to our standing orders, our rules of the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: I want to remind him that he is required, under standing order 97(d), to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. His response is now overdue and I would ask that he give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: My undertaking will be to make the minister aware and to also make sure that the minister answers as quickly as possible.

Mr. Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It seems too bad that ministers can't answer questions when they're orally asked, and now it seems that they can't answer questions when we've asked them on paper. It does really seem that something has broken down on the side of the government.

But I have another point of order: Standing order 97(d) says, "The minister shall answer" written questions within 24 days. On March 19, 2007, the member for York North, Julia Munro, placed on the order paper a written question asking the Minister of Community and Social Services to please provide the list of every office which is rented or leased by the ministry, from whom it is rented and/or leased, and the monthly rental and/or

lease cost associated with the relevant offices. It is now 28 days since this was asked and we have no answer, as we get no answers in the House when we ask questions. Mr. Speaker, I hope that you could see that something is done about this.

The Acting Speaker: To the Minister of Community and Social Services: I want to remind the minister that she is required under standing order 97(d) to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Her response is now overdue and I would ask that she give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Mr. Levac: As I continue to do, I will do an undertaking to make sure that the minister knows that there's been a request for this information. It'll be coming as quickly as possible. I would also like to know if, during these points of order, editorials are within the preview of the point of order.

The Acting Speaker: Is that within the preview or the purview?

Mr. Levac: Purview.

The Acting Speaker: I think that we should try to keep the editorial comment to a minimum. I thank you for that. Any further points of order? Then, orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING BUSINESS THROUGH A SIMPLER TAX SYSTEM ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 VISANT À RENFORCER LES ENTREPRISES GRÂCE À UN RÉGIME FISCAL PLUS SIMPLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 2, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2006 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 174, Loi édictant la Loi de 2006 sur les impôts et apportant des modifications complémentaires et autres à diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): It's my understanding that on the last occasion the member from Halton had the floor. I invite him to continue the debate.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The exercise that we've just gone through I think points out the arrogance, as the member from Bruce-Grey pointed out, of the ministers of the crown who give poor or no answers whatsoever when asked an oral question in the House. They also don't answer questions when, under the standing orders, their responses are required within 24 sitting days. Many times that has gone back into 2006. They have had ample time to answer these questions and have failed to do so.

We saw the Minister of Small Business admonished by the conflict-of-interest commissioner and yet remain

in his chair, another act of arrogance. The minister in charge of infrastructure renewal was caught in the Lottogate scandal, tried to spin his way out of it and was unable to do so. Again, while that investigation was going on, the minister maintained his seat, another act of unbelievable arrogance.

Today we're involved with the Minister of Citizenship and the slush fund, where he was flushing this money out the door as quickly as possible to organizations which have an unbelievable relationship with many, many Liberals, the entire board of directors being Liberal donors, the candidates for future elections being involved in it, sitting members of this House providing assistance to these organizations. We don't know where that money went. We have tried to get the Auditor General involved in this situation so we can find out what happened to the taxpayers' hard-earned money that came to this government in good faith. We want to make sure that money is being spent appropriately—and no answer, not one answer that the minister has provided or the Premier has provided or the Minister of Finance has provided has given us any suggestion that that money has been properly spent. It has been flushed out the door as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, unless we are going to discuss the ability of this government to come clean on this issue, then I don't think we should be talking about any other issue. There is nothing more sacred in this place than taxpayers' dollars. For that reason, I will move adjournment of debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1607 to 1637.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk. Please be seated.

All of those opposed will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 34.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Mr. Chudleigh, you have the floor.

Mr. Chudleigh: As we continue, the hour of 4:30 has come and gone and I know that most of our television audience has now gone to watch the Young and the Restless, but the parties on this side of the House, the official opposition and the third party, are indeed restless and we are still young enough to make a protest.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): We're not young.

Mr. Chudleigh: We're young. We're not as young as we were yesterday, because today happens to be my birthday. In celebration of my birthday, I can inform the government that we will not be debating anything if we're not debating the slush fund shame that this gov-

ernment is inflicting on Ontario, and I would like to move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There being more than five members standing, call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1640 to 1710.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the House. All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk. Please be seated.

All those opposed will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 11; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member from Halton has the floor.

Mr. Chudleigh: Again the business of this House has been shut down because of the lack of government commitment to bringing the truth to the floor, to letting the Auditor General go in and find out what the truth of this issue is and to letting the population of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, know how their tax dollars are being spent in this province—a most important issue; in fact, the most important issue that we could debate in this House.

I think I've said enough on this issue. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): It's my pleasure to follow the comments of the member because the simple reality is that we haven't been getting answers. Ian Urquhart, the Toronto Star, wrote a very useful article today, very simply stating that question after question after question is simply responded to with filler. Even my mother, who watches this Legislature, says that she can now say what the minister is going to say before he opens his mouth. She has figured out the lines. She knows them well. I'm very appreciative of her pointing that out but, frankly, we in this House are not well served and the government is not well served by simply ignoring the questions that have been put to the minister.

The minister has been asked for a paper trail. The minister has been asked to set out precisely how he informed all of the groups that are out there that require support, because there is no argument here that new Canadians do need support. They have to have that support for integration into this society. But the reality is that no application forms were out there. Groups were not informed that this whole process was available, that the money was available. So we have to ask the basis upon which the decision was made, and apparently, at least in a number of cases, the basis was simply political.

We have asked that the Auditor General be brought in to assess all that has gone before us, to assess the funds that were allocated, the basis for their allocation, the

nature of the notification that was given to groups, so that people had a fair opportunity to present their case, showing how they would deal with the need that exists in this society. We've heard nothing, nothing except a message track that emphasizes the virtue of the government and, from time to time, attacks the opposition. It is a useless approach.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to respond to the member. I find it curious, and I'm not entirely sure—I'm holding Bill 174, and I can't find a lot about what he has been saying in Bill 174, which, I admit freely, is really not gripping reading because a lot of it deals with amendments to the Taxation Act, with amendments and complementary amendments to the Corporations Information Act. Other clauses deal with the Corporations Tax Act, the Electricity Act, and more with the Income Tax Act, and indeed, some amendments to the Taxpayer Protection Act. The bill is quite extensive. It's some 239 pages, and most of them deal with definitions and means by which different tax credits or other formulas are computed. It's perhaps a bill that only a computer programmer could love. This is what the bill is really all about. This is a bill whose purpose is to simplify the tax act to cut a lot of paperwork. Perhaps members could focus their debate on this particular subject, because that is indeed what we're here to debate this afternoon.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's interesting that the Premier placed so much political importance on this Bill 174 that he created a whole new ministry: the Ministry of Revenue. The minister described himself as the 37-billion-dollar man, with a staff of 28. Now he has a minister's office and a limousine to drive him around in, and this was to bring in one single piece of legislation. What that speaks to is exactly what we've been talking about for the last few weeks, and that is accountability to the taxpayers of Ontario. That's what this is all about. This whole sponsorship, a.k.a. slush fund, a.k.a. sponsorship scandal, is why we've been raising these issues: accountability to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

We have the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration who has been doling it out by the barrel to Liberal-friendly organizations. How are we going to get to the bottom of this? How do we get to the bottom of this? We can't compel the minister to answer questions. Over 200 questions have been asked on this very subject. We cannot compel the minister to answer questions. However, if the Auditor General were authorized to look into this, we would get some answers and the people of the province of Ontario would have some answers before they go to the polls on October 10. What does the government say they'll do? "The auditor has the opportunity to look at this." The auditor has no problem getting to the bottom of it. Oh, yes, but that report, in the due course of things, would not be released until after the election of October 10. What have they got to hide? If you have nothing to hide, come clean. Let the auditor look into this mess so that the people of the province of

Ontario can base their vote on the facts, not some Liberal spin. It's a disgrace.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I want to start by thanking the member for Halton North for his initiative this afternoon. We have witnessed in this House, over the past two weeks, non-answers, distortions and a smear campaign against members on this side of the House who have risen to ask tough but fair questions of this minister and of this government.

This past weekend, as I traversed my riding, attending a number of events, I can tell you this: The topic on people's mind—and this may surprise members on the government side—was not Bill 174; it was the slush fund, or the Collegate slush fund, as we've called it in this House. People in my riding and people across this province are demanding accountability and transparency from this government. We're talking about \$32 million of public money that has been handed out, willy-nilly style, by this government over the past year, if not longer.

When we rise in this House and when we ask for this government to agree to bring in the Auditor General for a comprehensive accounting of this money, if this government were to agree—and I challenge them to agree—then we could resume debating bills in this House. But for as long they do not, the crescendo of the bells is going to increase and go on until we start getting answers from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, from the Premier and from this government. For as long as they refuse, my colleagues with the third party and, I know, the members on the official opposition side will continue in our quest to deliver answers to our constituents and to all of the people of the province. If this government were serious about governing, they would provide the answers which we ask for.

1720

The Acting Speaker: The member from Halton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Chudleigh: I'd like to thank the member for Toronto–Danforth, who eloquently pointed out the article in the Toronto Star this morning by Ian Urquhart, who talked about—you know, there are a lot of members of the press, but there are a few you listen to who have the ability to cut to the chase and to point out exactly what is happening and get a feel for this place. Ian has that feel for this place. I don't always agree with what he writes. Sometimes it's critical of us, but it's always interesting to read, and he always makes a good point. He has made a very good point again this time. This debate that the government has involved itself in with a slush fund is extremely damaging to the government. If there is no smell to this process, why not call in the auditor? Have it done. The auditor could report at some time in the future. But the government is refusing to do this. The very fact that the government is refusing to call in the auditor and clear its good name—I use "good" in quotations; that's a sarcastic comment, I say to the member from western Ontario—and when they refuse to do that simple task of clearing their name—

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Something smells.

Mr. Chudleigh:—something smells. The smell ratchets up every time you refuse to do it. Day after day, week after week, on down the road right up to election day, this smells really bad, and that smell isn't going to get any better with the tactics this government is using.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With respect to the members who have just spoken, I was reluctant to do that, so I didn't, so I'm doing it in between the times. If I'm not mistaken—I'd like clarity—we are speaking about Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2006 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts. Is that not correct, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: That is the bill before the House, Bill 174, I would remind the members. Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent in the House to stand down our lead since our critic happens to be sitting in the chair this afternoon as we debate Bill 174.

The Acting Speaker: It's not a point of order, but the unanimous consent has been sought. Is it agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira: I want to thank the government whip for his most agreeable gesture in giving us this opportunity. I am pleased to rise this afternoon to talk about Bill 174, An Act to enact the Taxation Act, 2006 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts. I'm pleased to be our party's first speaker on this act.

I would like to talk about my travels this past weekend throughout the riding of York South-Weston and relay to this House some of the conversations I had with my constituents about this legislation and other issues presently consuming most of the time in this House. On Saturday morning I started my day at the opening day festivities for York minor baseball, an amateur sports organization that has been serving my community now for the better part of four decades, that has hundreds of participants from three and four years old up to 16 and 17 years old, that draws on the experience and expertise of hundreds of volunteers who give of their hours to coach, to umpire, to provide the pre- and post-game snacks for their young charges. I was there for the opening festivities, and as I spoke to some of those parents and volunteers and coaches, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, it

was not Bill 174 that they wanted to talk with me about. What they wanted to talk with me about was the government's slush fund, the money this government has been handing out to a host of Liberal-friendly organizations.

Now, we've heard the Minister of Finance declare that the amounts in question are "a pittance." Well, try calling a quarter of a million dollars, three and four and five times over, a pittance when you're talking to a single mom who has to struggle just to be able to afford the \$50 registration fee for her child to play a season with York minor baseball. Try to explain that to her. I ask the government to try to do just that. It is more than just a pittance. The people in my riding are offended by the actions and words of this government in trying to cover up their slush fund. That's what I was getting Saturday morning—

Mr. Levac: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As much as I respect the member's constituents as he's bringing their voice here, and as much as I respect his desire to speak about Bill 174, I haven't heard anything yet other than a denial that Bill 174 is what we're talking about. I would respectfully suggest that he needs to be brought back to talk about the Taxation Act, 2006.

The Acting Speaker: I think the point of order is well taken. I would remind the member that the bill is Bill 174.

Mr. Ferreira: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all due respect, since this government is unwilling to address the issue that has been repeatedly raised in this House over the past two and a half weeks, I would like to make a motion of adjournment on this debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member has moved adjournment of the debate. Is there—I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1727 to 1757.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk. Please be seated.

All those opposed will please stand to be recorded.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 8; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands recessed until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
167A	8566	2	55	person with about \$1,550 each. It is hard to believe that

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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