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Thursday 24 September 2009

Jeudi 24 septembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 September 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 septembre 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BARRIE-INNISFIL BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA MODIFICATION DES LIMITES TERRITORIALES ENTRE BARRIE ET INNISFIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 23, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 196, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of Barrie and the Town of Innisfil / Projet de loi 196, Loi concernant la modification des limites territoriales entre la cité de Barrie et la ville d'Innisfil.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to be able to rise today and make a few comments on Bill 196, the Barrie-Innisfil growth plan—I guess you could call it the boundary adjustment. However, it also has a huge effect on the strategic vision for growth in the county of Simcoe.

I understand from the legislation that there will be somewhere around 2,300 hectares of land taken from the town of Innisfil and put into the city limits of the city of Barrie, and I understand that it's to take effect as of January 1 of this year. That's my understanding.

It's good to see you in the chair, Mr. Speaker. I thought we had another Speaker there a minute ago. I didn't see you come in.

We have some very, very deep concerns with how this has gone about and particularly how it affects other areas. To begin with, this has been an ongoing dispute, as we know, for many, many years. There's no question that the city of Barrie is one of the fastest-growing communities in the province of Ontario, and it's not by accident. There's a six-lane highway to the city of Barrie. Obviously, we would expect growth to take place in areas where we have a good transportation system. Of course, we've got the GO train there now. Barrie is a very urban community and a very good city within the province of Ontario. However, so is the town of Innisfil. The town of Innisfil has shown leadership over the years. It has been well administered, and it has been a good partner and a good neighbour of the city of Barrie as well.

The concerns that I have are that there is apparently a population—as we follow the intergovernmental action plan and the Simcoe county growth plan and these Places to Grow types of legislation and documentation we bring forward, I have a couple of concerns. By 2031, the total population of Barrie, Orillia and the county of Simcoe is projected to be somewhere around 666,000 or 700,000 people. I know there has been this ongoing dispute about the growth plan.

I was concerned about two things. One is the distribution of the population with other municipalities in the county of Simcoe. In particular, I'm thinking of two municipalities in my riding: the town of Penetanguishene and the town of Midland, which have basically been left out of any growth and are not included as a growth node in the strategic vision that Minister Watson works on, along with Minister Smitherman, on sort of a dual role as they try to develop it.

The second area I'm concerned about is this area of 2,400 hectares, which is a large sum of land, a large piece of property; however, I'm concerned about all the work that has been done on the Lake Simcoe protection plan, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, the money that has been pumped in from the federal government, all the work that has been done by stakeholders. I am really concerned about how this 2,400 hectares of urban sprawl will impact our beautiful Lake Simcoe and what measures will be put in place so that we don't have a negative impact on the lake. Because when you add 100,000 people or 125,000 people in 2,300 or 2,400 hectares—and that's likely where most of the population will go—there will likely be a negative impact, with sewage discharge and with stormwater management in particular.

I would really like, at some point, at committee hearings or even in debate in the House here, if we could get some response back from the ministry or from the minister himself indicating how they plan to protect Lake Simcoe from urban sprawl with the 2,400 hectares that have been basically taken into the city of Barrie.

The other concern I have—I mentioned it earlier—is a high level of concern with the strategic vision for growth in the county of Simcoe from a couple of the municipalities. I'm going to read some comments here, if I may, about some of the concerns they have.

This is a joint presentation between the town of Midland and the town of Penetanguishene, and they "are committed to working with the province and the county of Simcoe in achieving our shared goals and vision of protecting, growing and developing communities that enhance job creation and quality of life, offer our residents

new employment opportunities in robust, healthy and sustainable communities while protecting the area's natural heritage system.

"The towns of Midland and Penetanguishene believe that it is in the best interests of the north Simcoe area, the broader Simcoe county area and the province of Ontario that an urban node recognizing Midland-Penetanguishene be designated in the proposed amendment to the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe."

Basically, when you give most of the population growth to one area, in this case the city of Barrie, the little bit of growth that is allowed for Penetanguishene and Midland is almost negligible. So the requests from the towns of Penetanguishene and Midland are as follows:

"The towns of Midland and Penetanguishene have reviewed at length and in detail the province's proposed vision for the Simcoe area as contained in the discussion paper 'Simcoe Area: A Strategic Vision for Growth' (SASV) dated June 2009. The towns have also reviewed the province's proposed vision in the context of the principles contained in the growth plan, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, and in the proposed county of Simcoe official plan and are of the opinion that changes are required to that vision in order to be consistent with the award-winning growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe and the province's objectives for the Simcoe area.

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"The towns of Midland and Penetanguishene request two fundamental changes to the proposed amendment to the growth plan as set out in the SASV discussion paper. These changes are:

"1. That an urban node be identified for the north Simcoe area, encompassing the towns of Midland and Penetanguishene, to complete the conceptual urban structure for the Simcoe area as described on figure 1 to the discussion paper.

"2. That the province revise the population and employment allocations, as set out on tables 2 and 3 of the discussion paper, to recognize and plan for focused growth in the Midland-Penetanguishene Urban Node."

When I talk about the towns of Midland and Penetanguishene, I want to assure you that we're not talking about people who have mismanaged the environment or anything like that. The towns of Midland and Penetanguishene are both part of the Severn Sound Environmental Association, and I might point out that it was the first hot spot on the Great Lakes that was delisted as a hot spot by the International Joint Commission. So they are very, very careful about the concerns they have for the environment.

On top of that, there is a strong concern about the treatment of sewage, where the effluent is disposed back into our bodies of water. I can assure you that both the town of Midland and the town of Penetanguishene have state-of-the-art sewage systems and tertiary treatment that would allow continued growth and expansion of the systems as well.

In speaking to both mayors—Mayor Downer of the town of Midland and Mayor Dubeau of the town of Penetanguishene—they're asking us to seriously look at this joint urban node for Midland-Penetanguishene, because they feel they have been left out of the picture entirely and Barrie has basically got all the growth for Simcoe county. We can certainly understand Barrie having some growth—there's no question about that—if it's another 50,000 or 75,000 people. But in this case it's way over 100,000 people in this 2,400 hectares of land, and places like Midland and Penetanguishene, where there is a lot of potential growth as well, are basically being left at almost no growth whatsoever. So we really want to zero in on that, and we'll continue to ask the minister questions on that.

I want to add a couple of other things about those communities. The towns of Midland and Penetanguishene provide a broad range of federal, provincial and county services:

"Midland-Penetanguishene is the main hub of federal, provincial and county services in the north Simcoe area and provides a wide range of public services to the broader Simcoe Area.

"The North Simcoe Hospital Alliance (NSHA), a single hospital operating two sites in Midland-Penetanguishene, is the third-largest hospital in the entire North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN area and provides a full range of medical services to the 47,000 permanent and over 40,000 part-time residents of this area. The NSHA, in addition to having 630 employees and being the 18th-largest employer in the Simcoe area, is a regional centre and an emerging centre for excellence in complex continuous care and rehabilitation."

The next thing is very important as well:

"The Mental Health Centre Penetanguishene (MHCP) is a fully accredited 312-bed psychiatric hospital which has operated as a psychiatric hospital since 1904 and was divested from the province of Ontario to a public hospital corporation on December 15, 2008. Providing psychiatric services to the broader Simcoe area, the MHCP released a request for qualifications ... to design, build, finance and maintain a new, state-of-the-art mental health ... facility that will be built on the hospital's existing site."

Those approvals have all been in place, and we will be moving forward on that in the foreseeable future with an expanded new facility on that particular site.

I could go into all the different urban services etc., that are on-site, but in summary, I really want to have the province and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Ministry of Infrastructure Renewal revisit that node—or that potential node—in the growth plan. I think they'll be under some pressure from the municipalities in northwest Simcoe. I think it's only fair that growth be distributed somewhat equally in Simcoe county, as opposed to one area getting 75% or 80% of the growth, which will happen with the passage of the growth plan and the passage of this legislation.

As I said earlier, I understand the city of Barrie needs additional lands. They are built out in all their quadrants

and they need to have additional lands. However, as I said earlier, have the environmental concerns been addressed properly at this stage or are we going to find out in some regulation down the road that they have not? I hope that as we move forward with this debate and we get into committee, we can ask a number of questions and we'll make sure that the protection of Lake Simcoe is paramount. As I said earlier, there's been a lot of effort put in by scientists and by concerned citizens, by politicians of all stripes at all levels of government to put a special emphasis on Lake Simcoe and make it a model plan for all lakes that might want to address some concerns in the future.

As we move forward, and we do have—I think even the minister mentioned in his comments yesterday some of the concerns we have around Lake Simcoe, not only the urban sprawl and the 2,400 hectares that will be included in the city of Barrie and built upon in the future, but he also mentioned the Holland Marsh and the importance it has to Ontario, but at the same time how nutrients from the marsh can increase the phosphorus levels in Lake Simcoe and how we have to continue to address that as well if we want to move forward and improve the growth, improve the quality of water in Lake Simcoe, and improve the whole quality of life in central Ontario.

Those are my comments for now. I look forward to any comments and questions afterwards and to the debate at committee level when we reach committee.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend the member for his research and his concern about the environmental impact that it will have on Lake Simcoe. He has also passed on information which will be useful for groups opposed to this annexation.

I lived through this myself. When Hamilton amalgamated, I sat on Stoney Creek council. There was Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook and Stoney Creek. At that time, the people of that area were not too thrilled about being amalgamated. In spite of that, it went ahead anyway, to the chagrin of a lot of people.

When you are imposing these types of boundary changes on people, it affects people's lives directly—landowners. It also affects the amount of pollution control required to deal with the additional impact on the sewer systems in the area. I hope that the water treatment plant in the area is up to snuff on the ability to handle the growth and the volume of pollution that will come into that system and into the very fragile Lake Simcoe watershed. I'll have a lot more to say about this in the next few minutes.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member from Simcoe North on Bill 196, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of Barrie and the Town of Innisfil. Certainly, we've seen time and time again how the member from Simcoe North is raising concerns that,

one way or another, affect the riding of Simcoe North and the area generally. I know that on many occasions he's brought up the water quality in Lake Simcoe, and he noted that in his speech again today. Of course, he was fighting against the new landfill site. It looks like he's been successful in that fight against site 41.

Just last week in the Legislature he was raising questions to do with a business that's actually located within the town of Innisfil, and that's Georgian Downs. He was raising questions of the government to do with the number of race dates that seem to be continually being cut back over the last number of years and the tremendous negative effect that is having on agriculture and the people who are in the business of raising horses for racing. That is a tremendous business. In fact, this morning I just met with the Ontario Harness Horse Association, with Darryl MacArthur and Brian Tropea, who are here, I note, up in the gallery watching the proceedings this morning.

0920

Certainly the member from Simcoe North is concerned about issues not just in Simcoe North but that affect us right across the province, and I thank him for his concerns. I note that the mayor of Innisfil was on the news last night, concerned about the 2,293 hectares they're going to lose to Barrie. I certainly support development where it makes sense in urban areas. I know the member has raised concerns about what happens with some of the other communities in Simcoe county. I'm sure he will want to see this go to committee so that those questions—

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

Seeing none, the honourable member for Simcoe North, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much to both the member from Hamilton East and Parry Sound—Muskoka for their comments. I'm very pleased to take part. It's interesting to note as well that we have not only the debate here in the House on Bill 196 but we also have the minister coming, beginning next week, for 15 hours of debate at estimates. I know I have a series of questions on the Simcoe county growth plan for the ministry and some on this bill as well that I hope he can clarify.

I appreciate the comments, particularly from my colleague who mentioned the concerns about Lake Simcoe. In my particular case, I have 100 kilometres of shoreline on Lake Simcoe. Whether it's a cottage association or a municipality, the citizens of my riding are very, very concerned about the water quality. When you add another 100,000 people in 2,400 acres, they want to know what that impact will be, not some promise from a minister or some potential study. We want to know what that impact will be, because there is a huge stormwater management and sewage allocation that we'll have to be concerned about as we move forward with that.

I also want to thank him for bringing up the topic of harness horses and the Barrie Raceway and the fact that they are trying to close racing dates in Simcoe county,

which is basically a rural riding—at least that is the way the province has perceived it to be—and many people work in agriculture in our community; many of them are in the harness horse business. To think we would expand the number of slot machines, double or triple the number of slot machines, and let them run seven days a week, 24 hours a day and at the same time eliminate the number of racing dates—that's absurd and it's irresponsible.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: The Barrie annexation is the last act of betrayal in a long list of McGuinty government reversals and secret deals in Simcoe county, all to the benefit of a handful of Liberal-friendly developers. This government is kidding itself if it thinks the public was consulted fairly about this act, the Simcoe growth plan or the Lake Simcoe protection plan. There are tens of millions of dollars of developer-driven lawsuits outstanding against the critics of development in Simcoe county—a situation this government not only seems to favour but allows to grow far beyond anything during the Harris years.

At one level, the bill before us seeks to resolve an ongoing dispute over a transferral of land from Innisfil to Barrie. The bill will transfer lands to Barrie from Innisfil as has been planned. On the surface, that's not a bad thing. The city of Barrie has shown greater commitment to sustainable growth than has Innisfil and has made significant investments in stormwater management, which has improved the health of Lake Simcoe's Kempenfelt Bay. The bill will also allow development of 2,300 hectares involved to go ahead, as it lifts the development moratorium on the lands. Until now, the land has been designated for agricultural and resource extraction. Now it will be open to rezoning for employment and residential uses.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing assures us that, should the bill pass and the transfer of land go ahead, the land will be developed in a sustainable way according to the smart growth principles of the Places to Grow Act. He said in his statement on the bill that it is “a key part of the Ontario government's support for sustainable and managed growth in the Lake Simcoe area.... Resolving the long-standing Barrie-Innisfil boundary dispute would help us address the growth planning and environmental protection issue in this area.” It will certainly promote growth, but where is the evidence that this bill will protect the environment? Will it be developed in a way that sustains the ecological integrity of the already-vulnerable Lake Simcoe watershed, its water quality and water habitats?

We all know that urban sprawl harms health and the environment in many ways. It increases smog, it hinders the development of vibrant communities, it eats up valuable farmland and green space, and it threatens watersheds and wildlife. The Liberal government publicly recognized the need to control urban sprawl when it passed the Greenbelt Act and the Places to Grow Act but somehow forgot to include Simcoe county, despite many

pleas from environmentalists and farmers. Places to Grow was supposed to encourage smart growth, revitalization of downtowns, public transportation options, healthy communities and the curbing of urban sprawl. Can we trust the McGuinty government's assurances that it will ensure that these 2,300 hectares will be developed in a way that protects the already-vulnerable Lake Simcoe watershed?

There are a number of reasons to hesitate before giving this government a blank cheque to go ahead with the transfer and development of the boundary lands. First, reputable environmental groups and the Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority indicate that annexed lands are developed according to current practices. About 60% of Lovers and Hewitts Creeks will be paved over, far above the 10% level recommended by Environment Canada; they're already exceeding the limits. Frankly, in the Hamilton Conservation Authority this wouldn't happen. According to the Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority, this will increase phosphorus levels in Kempenfelt Bay, off Lake Simcoe. Kempenfelt Bay has been identified by the MNR as the most significant nursery zone in the lake, which would allow for a self-sustaining cold-water fishery. Increased phosphorus levels and decreased oxygen levels will threaten the survival of juvenile trout and whitefish and the viability of the whole Lake Simcoe fishery.

Likewise, instead of rushing forward with Bill 196, the Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority recommends that the proposed boundary adjustment contained in Bill 196 only be considered after it can be demonstrated that such growth is environmentally sustainable and does not further negatively affect the health and quality of Lake Simcoe and its watershed. The McGuinty government has failed, to date, to demonstrate that the proposed development on boundary lands will be benign in its impact. They have not demonstrated that.

In fact, the government is pushing through Bill 196 and allowing development to proceed on the annexed lands before key—key—studies on the impacts of the development of this land have been conducted—once again, the cart before the horse. You don't go ahead with negative environmental impacts on communities without the proper studies being done and completed before you annex property.

The conservation authority and Save Lake Simcoe campaign indicate that a range of studies need to be done to assess the impact of future growth: an assimilative capacity study to assess impacts on water quality, not due until the end of this year; a study to assess the impact of stream temperature associated with the boundary change and associated growth, not done; an evaluation of the impacts on water quality and erosion, pending. The conservation authority concludes that it is extremely important that the appropriate studies and strategies be completed prior to the approval of Bill 196 to ensure that the proposed growth contained within the boundary adjustment is environmentally sustainable for Lake Simcoe and its watershed. The assimilation study of phosphorus im-

pacts is not due until the end of the year—once again, the cart before the horse. A subwatershed study is not due until after that—could be a year and a half for that. But we're going ahead anyway; we're going to do it. We're going to put it in there because it's politically polite, politically correct; it's a good thing to do for our voters.

Why is this McGuinty government rushing forward with a bill that allows further development when it doesn't know the full impact of the growth? It's ridiculous. You just don't do things like that when it could have a negative impact on the watershed and the people of the area. It is unwise and rash to push forward a bill that opens up more land for development when we don't know whether the watershed can support this development.

0930

Moreover, if the McGuinty government is so committed to protecting the watershed, why is there nothing in the bill requiring developers to meet the highest possible green building standards, in terms of both building standards and water protection? Will these new houses be energy self-sustaining or energy-dependent? What proposals are in place to maximize the use of solar panels, solar thermal and geothermal heating? I don't see any of that.

Will stormwater and sewage be dumped into the lake, or will the existing technologies be required to dramatically reduce the amount of water taken from and dumped into Lake Simcoe? Will the facilities at Lake Simcoe be able to handle the increased volume that could happen in the next few years? Will these developments be built using green gravel, that is, using aggregate taken from the site, or will these roads and foundations be quarried from the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO biosphere reserve, or the greenbelt?

And if the McGuinty government is so committed to the ecological integrity of Lake Simcoe, why did it negotiate a secret deal committing the government to supporting the unprecedented 1,000-slip mega-marina at Big Bay Point? Why is this developer, Geranium Corp., the only one to be grandfathered under the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, despite pleas from virtually every public interest group and local organization about the negative impacts on the lake?

This is the same developer that is suing opponents of the Big Bay Point mega-marina for tens of millions of dollars—interesting. Premier McGuinty chooses to hide behind the privilege of the Legislature while citizens afraid of losing their homes to strategic lawsuits against public participation, known as SLAPPs, forfeit their right of free speech. They are simply too afraid to speak out about secret land deals in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

SLAPP suits are a phenomenon that developed not under the Harris government, but under the McGuinty government. The NDP introduced SLAPP suit protection legislation to protect the residents of Big Bay Point, Simcoe county and all of Ontario. The McGuinty government has done nothing in response, preferring to allow

the silencing of critics of development over the troublesomeness of free speech and democracy.

If the McGuinty government is so committed to protecting the greenbelt, why did it not require Simcoe county and other municipalities to come up with a plan to grow the greenbelt at the same time it negotiated the plan to pave the watershed? Most of all, if the McGuinty government is so committed to containing urban sprawl and protecting farmland in southern Ontario, why did its political staff intervene in the form of not one, not two, but three extraordinary minister's zoning orders to override its Places to Grow plan—in other words, go over its own legislation because it didn't suit the situation? It caused the Places to Grow plan to allow big developers to pave over 1,800 acres along the Highway 400 corridor in Bradford West Gwillimbury—that's a mouthful.

Where is the staff report justifying this extraordinary backroom deal that disregards Places to Grow? How are Ontarians to trust a government that makes high and mighty statements about protecting land and ecosystems when it cuts secret deals with developers behind closed doors? Wow, that's interesting. How are Ontarians to trust a Premier who campaigned in 2003 against the Conservative government's secret zoning order to pave over Richmond Hill, and then, six years later, does exactly the same thing in Bradford? The 2003 Liberal election platform, Growing Strong Communities, condemned the Eves government for its secretly approving "a plan to build 6,600 new homes on one of the most sensitive spots on the moraine in Richmond Hill." I guess that's calling the kettle black again: "You can't do it, but we can do it."

The Premier promised a higher standard of ethics and accountability, so how does the Premier justify secretly cutting a deal with developers and reversing its opposition to paving prime agricultural land in Bradford West Gwillimbury? Why do we find the Liberal backroom boy Gordon Ashworth giving advice to the Geranium Corp., the developer that has managed to negotiate not one, but two secret deals with the Premier?

Let me quote from the Toronto Star on December 5, 2007:

"The government has already signed off on one of the most controversial Simcoe county developments, a 1,600-unit time-share project on Lake Simcoe's Big Bay Point. Local ratepayers and environmentalists took the project to the Ontario Municipal Board and the decision is pending.

"Geranium Corp., the developer behind the Big Bay Point project"—and I might add the Bradford employment lands deal as well—"has signed up prominent Liberals to help make its case.

"One of them is Gordon Ashworth, a former senior aide to Premier David Peterson back in the 1980s and a key strategist in the current Liberal government's re-election campaign this fall."

Wow, that's quite a connection. Developers, the Premier, Mr. Ashworth: It all seems to work together; that's unusual. Of course Ashworth denies lobbying for Geranium: "I provide them with communications advice" only,

he says. If you're providing communications advice, you're involved. You're not standing off on the side. You know exactly what's going on. He's not kidding anyone.

If these secret deals are such good planning, where are the staff reports justifying them to the people of Ontario? Where are the reports? If it's such great planning and ecologically friendly, give us some reports on these deals that went on. They haven't got any. How is one to trust a Premier who tells environmentalists in the 2007 election campaign that the Bradford 400-404 link is not part of their 25-year plan? Then, after that, he passes a special zoning order this year, which states that lands designated for employment purposes in BWG "will only develop in the event that construction has commenced on the Highway 400-404 link." Good question.

How can one trust a government that justifies a secret deal to allow development along the 400 to ostensibly keep a company from moving out of Ontario when the company itself, Toromont Industries, said it was never leaving in the first place? They were going to rezone this land to keep that company there. The company is not leaving; it didn't intend to leave. That's a little misleading. "Our company, Toromont Industries Ltd., has no intention of moving 2,500 jobs from Ontario. We have never threatened to do so or set conditions for the province to meet to avoid this non-existent threat." That was from the Toronto Star on March 18, 2009.

Based on the McGuinty government's record of backroom deals with developers, there's little reason to trust this government when it says the act is benign and that it will only allow the best kind of sustainable growth to go ahead. Again and again, the McGuinty government has failed to abide by and enforce the Places to Grow Act. I think that was just a front to make it look good. They've violated it I don't know how many times, so the Places to Grow Act is kind of a joke, really—as mentioned, by secretly negotiating the minister's zoning orders to allow 1,800 acres of urban sprawl on prime farmland in Bradford West Gwillimbury, land that drains into the Holland Marsh; by allowing Innisfil council to convert almost 1,000 acres of rural and agricultural land into residential development; by allowing this 10-fold expansion of the hamlet of Bond Head from 500 residents to 4,500 residents; and by failing to address the population growth issues in the Lake Simcoe protection plan.

Whether the land in dispute on the border of Barrie and Innisfil becomes part of Barrie or not is obviously a concern to the parties involved, and it needs to be addressed fairly and openly. But the bigger issue, which is of concern to many Ontarians, is how development on this land and other valuable green space and agricultural lands in southern Ontario will proceed now and in the future. Time will tell whether development on these lands will be done in a sustainable way. The provincial government has a responsibility today to its citizens and generations to come to ensure that we protect the land upon which our health and the health of our environment depends.

The time for rampant, Wild West development has long passed. It is not at all clear that this bill will lead to

smarter planning, and given that studies are still outstanding, the environmental impacts of this bill on Lake Simcoe and its watershed are also very unclear. We are glad to see that the government is releasing a discussion paper in tandem with the bill on the vision for growth in Simcoe county, but it bears repeating: Releasing the growth strategy for comment at the same time that the McGuinty government appeared at the OMB to support the Bradford bypass and more sprawl is a shallow and ridiculous move.

0940

Let me quote Campaign Lake Simcoe's response last month to the government's Simcoe area vision for growth: "Campaign Lake Simcoe, which has advocated for the protection of Lake Simcoe watershed since 2005, is shocked"—shocked, Mr. Speaker—"that this government has put forth for consultation such a dismal 'vision' for an area of such great ecological, agricultural, recreational value. This 'consultation' is also one of the worst examples of a 'sprawl first, consult later' exercise we've ever seen" in our history. "Although comments [were] due September 2, 2009, on this growth strategy, in early August the OMB approved a nearly 750-hectare employment area in Simcoe county, just north of the greenbelt, in the Bradford West Gwillimbury ... Highway 400 corridor. The OMB hearing was conducted in June 2009 and only after the McGuinty government reversed its opposition to the development by suddenly and without notice agreeing in April 2009 to issue three extraordinary 'minister's zoning orders' ... to ensure approval." I don't know—maybe for the developers; I'm not sure.

"The development so clearly contradicts the growth strategy that the OMB chair's decision is conditional on the delivery of rare and controversial MZOs. We agree with the Toronto Star's June 12, 2009, editorial: 'The province could have—and should have—held off on signing any deal regarding development on the [BWG] Highway 400 corridor until the full Simcoe plan had been subjected to public consultation.'"

We agree too. What's the rush? Why the special deal for this one developer? Strong government action is needed to shift development practices in southern Ontario in a direction conducive with environmental protection and healthy communities. Better enforcing the principles of the Places to Grow Act could be a good place to start.

Immediately protecting citizens from developer lawsuits—SLAPPs—and putting a stop to backroom land development deals with friends of the McGuinty government are absolutely necessary to truly protect our environment; to control excessive, unnecessary development; and to maintain the way of life our many smaller communities are used to.

I was a Stoney Creek councillor when the amalgamation of our many unique greater Hamilton area independent municipalities took place. It was an imposition at the time. It was not sought after by our communities, which cherished their small-town lifestyles. Even through the community held a referendum against it, it was still imposed on us. That was done by the Harris government,

and the same thing is now being done by the McGuinty government, who criticized them at the time.

Other communities have been ravaged by imposed changes to lifestyles they specifically chose, and never get to be heard or to have their day in court.

When will the McGuinty Liberals finally take real steps to protect ever-more-fragile environments in this province?

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to listen to the comments. I know that you brought a lot of comments out yesterday that your colleague from Beaches–East York had mentioned as well. Those are of great concern to myself.

I had some meetings with individuals on the minister's zoning orders as well. It doesn't seem to be something that was properly consulted on, and suddenly it just appeared out of nowhere in the Bradford West Gwillimbury area. So there are definitely deep concerns with the general population down in that area.

But it goes right back to what I was talking about in my comments a little earlier, and that is the fact that we've got this vision of growth for Simcoe county. How are we going to distribute the population growth of an additional 240,000 or 250,000 people in Simcoe county over the next 20 years? Here we've got, it looks like, some preferential treatment being taken at one corner of the county—fast-tracking projects or fast-tracking development opportunities—whereas we have communities at the north end of the county that are ready to grow. They have the sewage capacity; they have the professional capacity to look after growth in a very environmentally friendly manner, and yet they're almost being limited to no growth. It's almost pathetic what has happened to Midland and Penetanguishene. When you look at the data out of the growth plan, basically they've been left out of the growth plan, and they're part of Simcoe county. Barrie gets it all. It looks like Bradford West Gwillimbury is going to get a large portion of it.

As we move forward, there are a lot of questions. I'm sure you will recall that starting next week, the minister is to be at estimates for 15 hours, and I'm sure he will be able to answer all those questions you brought up today in debate and the questions I'm going to ask in debate in a very orderly manner and we'll have full answers to those questions.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, it was a delight and a pleasure to sit here and listen to the comments by my colleague Paul Miller, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. He has delivered a succinct and effective argument which demonstrates that this bill, this legislation, is indefensible and that it is the utilization of a sledgehammer rather than encouraging collaborative relationships between Innisfil and Barrie.

So I'm pleased with Mr. Miller's contribution. You might notice that he probably does more House duty than

any other member of the NDP caucus. He loves it in here. He begs other people to give him this House duty because he wants to be on his feet addressing these issues. He's an enthusiastic debater, and sometimes we get frustrated with him because we want to be here too, but no, Miller just shoves us aside and says no, that he, Paul Miller, from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, is going to address this issue.

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

Seeing none, the honourable member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't know what to say, Mr. Kormos. I don't know whether he is complimenting me or setting me up, I'm not sure, but he definitely puts the limelight on me. I don't know if that's good or bad sometimes. I appreciate his comments, and I'm sure they're heartfelt.

You know, this is almost like an instant replay for me. I saw this happen back when Dundas, Flamborough, Stoney Creek and Glanbrook were amalgamated by the city of Hamilton. The transition was tough. A lot of people were not happy with it. A lot of our resources from the outlying towns were gobbled up by the city of Hamilton, including our financial. We were in good shape, and we were hoping that the money that they took from our community would come back to our community, but it went elsewhere. So we lost tens of millions of dollars from the city of Stoney Creek that was spent in other areas, not coming back to the taxpayers who actually paid for it. That was very, very disheartening, and I don't think the management of the resources that they exhumed from outlying areas was fairly proportioned. But that's an ongoing—it's still a sore spot with some of the people but, you know, time is a healer and we have to move on. That's the situation.

But you'd think after that lesson that the governments had faced, when people were so adamantly against amalgamation in more than one place in this province—I believe we live in a democracy, and I believe when you have a referendum, that sends a message to the government. I think ours was 78% or 81% against. We were just steamrolled, ignored, and the government of the day went ahead and did whatever they wanted. That's unfortunate.

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

Seeing none, Mr. Watson has moved second reading of Bill 196, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of Barrie and the Town of Innisfil Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Shall the bill be ordered—

Interjections: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the bill being—

Hon. Brad Duguid: Shall the bill be read a third time? Is that what you're saying, Mr. Speaker? I'd ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed that the bill be referred? So ordered.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd ask for a recess until question period.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed. This House stands in recess until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 0950 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. David Zimmer: It's with great pride that I would like to introduce the mother of Willowdale page Hafiz Kanji: Nevin Kanji, who is here. Welcome to the Legislature. I know you're very proud of your son.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an absolute pleasure to welcome some visitors from Spain: Angela Aisa and Natalie Monforte. They are from the Institute of Secular Missionaries in Spain. As well, Shannon Hogan from OECTA and Pam Bond are here. Welcome to Queen's Park, ladies.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of page Samaa Bandi and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, we'd like to welcome Parvez Bandi to the public gallery today.

On behalf of page Jacquelyn McLaurin and the Minister of Culture, we would like to welcome her father, Don McLaurin, and her mother, Joanne McLaurin, to the galleries today.

On behalf of the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, we would like to welcome, in the east members' gallery, Brian O'Heron, Cathy Brothers, Joe Brothers and Andrew Wilding from the Catholic family counselling service.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Acting Premier: Yesterday, the Premier said he couldn't answer even the most basic questions about locking in the HST tax hike for five years. Deputy leader, are you kidding me? Why is the Premier saying that he hasn't even read the HST deal that your government signed?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, the Premier is well familiar with the details in the agreement. When the federal government asked for those provisions, it was because they are providing \$4.3 billion to Ontario. Mr. Flaherty and I signed the agreement, and it's been online since budget day.

It speaks to the importance of harmonizing taxes, and it speaks particularly to the fact that one of the real challenges and advantages of this is that there will be a single tax collection agency instead of two now, and that will be the Canada Revenue Agency. So the rate can be amended by 2012, the tax itself can be disposed of by 2015, or a party could rip up the agreement if they wanted to. Our position is this: It's the right—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: These were the most basic questions that the Premier couldn't answer from the media yesterday. The HST tax grab deal you signed is not a complicated legal document. It's in fact four pages long, written in very plain English. It is, at the most, a five-minute read. It is absolutely absurd for Premier McGuinty to say to Ontario families that he has not read the details of this locked-in \$2.5-billion tax grab. I say to the minister, either Premier McGuinty is completely asleep at the switch or he's trying to bury the details: Which is it?

Hon. David Caplan: That's why it's on a website.

Interjection: It's buried on the website.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's buried deep on the website, buried deep in the Minister of Finance's budget documents. No, it's quite the opposite. We have a Premier who's taking a leadership role in ensuring that this economy comes out of the downturn it's in, and when it does, we're going to grow bigger, we're going to grow faster and we're going to grow stronger.

Speaking of buried information, I had the chance last night to look at Jim Flaherty's second economic update from June 2009, and here's what the federal Conservative finance minister says: "Harmonization of Ontario's sales tax with the goods and services tax under the harmonized sales tax framework will ... reduce taxes on businesses, ensuring that they can thrive and generate jobs for Canadians." I'm with Mr. Flaherty. At least he's consistent. At least he's clear—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Ontario taxpayers just cannot believe that the Premier of the province of Ontario has not read the four-page HST deal that he has signed. It just isn't credible. The Premier was asked basic questions about locking in and he hove them off to the finance minister; he couldn't answer simple questions. I say to the minister, there are restaurant menus that are longer than this agreement. So did the Premier sign this deal to bring in a massive tax grab on Ontario families? Did he read it or did he not?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's interesting how the Leader of the Opposition hasn't asked this question before today. I wonder if he has read the agreement. I applaud any journalist and anyone who looks deep and asks tough and difficult questions. What we can't applaud is somebody who says, "I agree there's little sense in allowing two separate governments to apply two separate taxes and policies and collect two separate groups of sales tax—"

Interjection: Who said that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Tim Hudak, September 23, 2009.

Premier McGuinty is making the tough decisions, working with Ontarians to help grow this economy, to produce jobs, to lower business costs and ensure that our children and grandchildren have a better future. I stand behind that, this government stands behind it, and the people of Ontario will stand behind our Premier.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's sad that Dalton McGuinty could turn ideas introducing red tape into a massive tax grab on the backs of middle-class families and seniors. It's going to hurt families, it's going to kill jobs and move Ontario even further backwards than Dalton McGuinty has already done.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the minister to withdraw the comment. Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier should know that right there on top of page two of his agreement it says that Ontario agrees to remain a party to the Canada-Ontario HST deal for a period of at least five years following imposition.

Clearly, the Premier must have known there was a poison pill in this deal all along. People with car loans can say how long they're making payments. The Premier just doesn't want to answer to the facts about the bad deal he signed. Why should taxpayers believe anything this guy says about this—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to remind the member opposite that in fact this is a tax-cut package. It is a tax-cut package for low-income Ontarians. It will reduce the cost of doing business in Ontario. I just—

Interjection.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: They don't want to hear that, I guess.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They don't want to hear it. And it's hard for anybody to hear what we're saying over the sucking and blowing we're getting from that side of the House on this issue—

Interjection.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: He can't make up his mind.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew, I can accept some occasional heckling across the floor, but with the constant heckling, it gets a little difficult to hear the honourable member.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I agree with the Toronto-Dominion report that was released this week that says the harmonized sales tax "should help spur business invest-

ment, employment and income growth. Businesses may emerge from the recession lean, but the tax policy will ensure they are ready to compete."

That means they'll create jobs. That means they will employ more Ontarians. That means we'll get out of the downturn faster. This government has a plan; that leader and his party have no plan.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think, as you know, in the finance minister's own budget documents it shows that this is a \$2.5-billion tax grab on the backs of Ontario families and seniors. They know what this is: another greedy Dalton McGuinty tax grab.

As the minister knows, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is very concerned also about the tax remittance scheme and the bureaucratic confusion that your HST tax grab to going to cost. Small businesses will no longer receive the remittance for collecting your tax, making tough times even harder. So, to the minister: Why is the Premier saying Ontario's small businesses are behind the HST when in fact, they are not?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There's a list. I'm going to ask my colleague the Minister of Revenue to review with my colleague some of the groups that are supporting this initiative.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to say—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess, just like the Premier couldn't answer basic questions about the deal he signed, the finance minister can't answer basic questions about the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's concerns. We know that this is not a new issue for this Premier, the Premier who said he wouldn't impose taxes and brought in the biggest tax hike in the history of the province of Ontario. This sales tax grab is the exact same story. In 1999, Premier McGuinty said, "All of the information I have received tells me harmonization of the two taxes would lead to a net increase of taxes in the province of Ontario"—Dalton McGuinty's exact quote.

The only reason Ontarians are facing this greedy sales tax grab today is because Dalton McGuinty signed this deal with a five-year poison pill. How is it possible that the Premier can say that he has no details about this deal when it's his fingerprints all over this greedy tax grab?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we can say with certainty and clarity is that 93% of Ontarians will receive a personal tax cut. We will cut our lowest-income tax bracket by 17%, making it the lowest in Canada. Some 90,000 low-income Ontarians will no longer have to pay personal income tax. We're providing a permanent \$260 sales tax credit for every low- and middle-income adult, child and family in Ontario.

We are clear in our position. We affirm our position and are supported by the chamber of commerce and a range of other groups that came out just this week as a part of a new group that's going to advocate the importance of this, joining Mr. Flaherty and joining the federal

Conservatives. The only question that hasn't been answered is, "What is your position?" One day you're going to get rid of it; the next day you're not; then you're going to cut the rate.

Ontarians demand more from their government, from their political parties. This party is taking a stand. We're leading to get this economy rolling again, get it moving and growing faster. That man, that leader and his party—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Day after day, the government justifies the HST by pointing to the contribution it will make to job growth. But according to a report by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the HST is a job killer. In fact, the chamber finds that the HST will mean up to 40,000 fewer Ontario jobs each and every year. The chamber says that the HST will kill jobs, but the government says otherwise. Who is telling the truth in this scenario?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Somebody isn't.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: And it's sitting over there.

I would invite you to speak to the chamber of commerce and their president, who just joined the coalition this week to advocate that this tax is important to create jobs. You can take things—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Hamilton East.

Mr. Paul Miller: No jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The same reminder that I gave to another honourable member, I will also give that reminder to the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind him that, in addition to Mr. Crispino's comments this week and the work of the Ontario chamber in promoting this, TD this week said that this initiative "in turn should help spur business investment, employment and income growth."

I'll remind him what Jayson Myers, president of Edson Packaging and chairman of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters of Ontario, says: "Create jobs for the future." That's what this policy will do. They're telling the truth; I question others.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister can say anything he wants about other groups, but the minister cannot refute the chamber's claim that the HST will kill up to 40,000 new jobs every year. Yet the Premier, his ministers, backbenchers and government websites continue to proclaim, I think disingenuously, that the HST will create jobs, a claim that is completely undermined by the facts. Why won't the minister tell Ontarians the plain and simple truth: that the HST itself is a job killer?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The HST is not a job killer; it creates jobs. The chamber itself had acknowledged that,

both through their president and others. My colleague opposite is simply twisting numbers out of context. That's been verified to us.

That party is still advocating an increase in the provincial sales tax. They haven't renounced that policy yet. I'll remind him that we have a letter signed by the leader of that party at the time asking if we would raise the PST by 1%. I wonder if that is still the policy of that party. I wonder if they could clarify that for us.

We've laid out a plan that will create jobs, improve investment and help get this economy back on its feet.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: The government knows the HST is a job killer but insists on spinning a yarn to Ontarians about their new policy. The chamber report noting that the HST will kill up to 40,000 jobs is quite specific. They say that every year the HST will kill 2,300 manufacturing jobs, each year the HST will kill 2,600 jobs in the accommodation and food service industry, and they say 1,100 fewer construction jobs will be created.

If the minister disagrees with the chamber, will the minister table his own numbers to prove his own position, that this will create jobs, or does he have other numbers that confirm what the chamber is saying?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member conveniently ignores two facts. One, there are very substantial tax cuts that are accruing to businesses in addition to the harmonized sales tax. Again, the leader of that member's party, according to the chamber, of course took the paragraph in it out of context. The report explicitly states that the level of employment does not decline as a result of tax reform. Why wouldn't you give all the details from that report? Why wouldn't you disclose that, I say to the member? I will stand up and openly defend the policies of this government.

Frankly, the NDP are being disingenuous in misquoting and taking out of context the very good work and hard work done by thousands of members of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

MINISTER'S RECORD

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Minister of Health: This minister has his fingerprints all over scandals at eHealth, OLG and the London Health Sciences Centre. Why does everything this minister touches turn to scandal?

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree with the member opposite. If you look, the Ombudsman of this House pointed out and commended me for the quick action taken to deal with insider wins at OLG. In fact, it has been the quick action I have taken to call in the Auditor General and have him get to the bottom of these matters.

I wonder why the member does not have confidence in the Auditor General of the province of Ontario. I know that he will be issuing his report in a few short weeks. It will be subject for review by members of the public accounts committee. I have full confidence in the independent officer of this Legislature to be able to lay the

facts upon the table and make recommendations about ways that we can ensure value for taxpayer dollars.

That's what members on this side of the House have done, will do and will continue to do as we work forward to deliver better—

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: Insider wins at OLG; untendered contracts at eHealth; questionable spending practices again at OLG; an untendered electronic health contract at a London hospital: This minister has experience with games of chance. What are the odds that growing scandals under his watch are merely a coincidence, or are they an example of his gross incompetence?

1050

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree with the editorial comments of my friend opposite. He's entitled to his opinion, but he's not entitled to his own facts, and the facts are quite different from what the member presents. In fact, Ontarians expect that their tax dollars be properly invested in good government policies and services, and that's what this government has done.

The member laughs, but we've hired 10,000 nurses in the province of Ontario. The member opposite from Welland was part of a government that fired 3,600 nurses. The member opposite would have to acknowledge that we have hired 1,700 additional doctors in the province of Ontario. The member opposite was a member of a government that cut medical school spaces, creating a doctor shortage in the province of Ontario.

Of course, I do acknowledge that they have nothing on the official opposition, who closed 2,800 hospitals and fired 9,600 nurses in the province of Ontario. But that's why we have spent so much time investing in our health care—

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: This minister huffs and puffs and beats his chest, but the trail of evidence is clear. As the scandals mount, when is he going to realize that he's just not up to the job?

Hon. David Caplan: My friend opposite can issue childish taunts. I know he was previously supposed to be in charge of bringing public auto insurance into this province. Of course, I know he was fired from cabinet for his failed efforts, and that's regrettable.

I stand behind the record of achievement, that we have seen in this province, of increased investment, expansion of services, and finally an aging-at-home program in this province. Those are real measures which have brought improvement and progress to our health care system. Surely the member opposite has more to offer than this childish nonsense approach that he has brought.

I challenge the member to tell me what his ideas are to improve health care in Ontario. So far, in the six years that I've been on this side of the House, I have not heard anything. I'm not—

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

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business is Canada's largest advocate for small and medium-sized businesses. These aren't CEOs earning seven-figure salaries. They are the mainstream businesses that are the lifeblood of communities throughout Ontario. The CFIB today released a survey telling us that small business believes that the McGuinty government "dropped the ball" in imposing the HST. Why is the Premier saying that businesses are in favour of his HST scheme, when they aren't?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: We want to thank the CFIB for their report today, because what it shows is that small business needs to understand, and we have to do a much better job of explaining to them, our tax reform package. I understand why they have concerns, but when they find out that we are cutting the small business tax rate by some 18% and that we're eliminating the small-business surtax, they'll be saying, "Oh, that's the other side of the story." So it is important on this side of the House not to tell just half a story but the whole story.

That's why we're going to work closely with the CFIB, to make sure that their members get the information they need so that when we implement the largest tax reform package in some 40 years, their members will have the information they need so that they can continue to serve their consumers.

When they learn about our tax reforms in regard to personal income tax, they'll see the support we've received that allows us, working together with the federal government, to support consumer spending next year, in a year of transitions, a year—

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: Again for the Acting Premier. Let me quote from the CFIB survey of small businesses: "At a time when consumers have seen their savings wither away, additional taxes on some goods and most services are another reason to stop them from opening their wallets."

Why is Premier McGuinty saying that these business people are clamouring for this tax when the exact opposite is true?

Hon. John Wilkinson: That's exactly why we were able to reach a historic agreement with the federal government to provide some \$4.3 billion for that first transitional year. We understand that it is a year of transition, that the tax cuts people will receive and that businesses will receive and the fact that the market over time, as TD has said, will reprice some 85% of those savings to be passed on to consumers within the first year—that in that first transitional year we need to use that money from the federal government for what it's intended: to support consumers. That's why individuals—single tax filers who have an income of less than \$80,000—will receive some \$300 dollars tax-free by way

of three cheques, and families with a combined income of less than \$160,000 will receive some \$1,000 tax-free. A thousand dollars is 8% on \$12,500 worth of purchases. That's on top of the permanent tax cuts that people will receive. Some 93% of Ontarians—

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

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the Acting Premier: Yesterday, when I asked your Minister of Training to explain the capping of the Second Careers program in Hamilton, he said the following: "What the honourable member is saying is wrong. We have not closed the doors on Second Career."

For your information, on September 14, the Ministry's Hamilton office sent an e-mail to all the Second Careers brokers in Hamilton stating the following: "We are at capacity for September and so we will not be able to accept any more client files seeking September starts."

Either Minister Milloy does not know what his ministry is doing or he is turning a blind eye to this cruel and insensitive treatment of unemployed men and women. Which is it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I ask the member, which is it? You voted against the program. You voted against it, and then, when we set it up, you complained and you said it wasn't successful. Let me talk about my colleague—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would ask the honourable member from Renfrew to withdraw his comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague the minister implemented a program that was designed to serve 20,000 people over three years. We're at 17,000, and we've provided 5,000 additional spaces to serve 25,000. We are going to review it now to make sure we're getting it right, to make sure we're serving people, to make sure we're hitting the right people who need the service. This program has been an overwhelming success. I'm glad we did it. I only wish the member opposite would have voted for it and supported the program early on when we were setting it up instead of constantly, constantly saying it wouldn't work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: This Second Career has been a mess for two years—two long years. It's not just that your government capped the number of applications. What he did was worse. Applying for Second Careers is not easy. It's a demanding and time-consuming process. It's emotionally exhausting. These people did everything that was asked of them, and then your ministry shut the door on them. You can't change the rules in the middle of the game. There is a level of incompetence here that is unacceptable. When is someone going to take charge of this ministry and deliver the program that these men and women need?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are delivering the program, and we've been overwhelmed by the response. Because of that, we've increased the funding to provide 25,000 spaces instead of 20,000 spaces. I don't think it's a mess at all. I think our colleges are doing a wonderful job. I was just at my own college in Windsor, and the work they're doing with the CAW has been enormously helpful on this program. Getting their workers in training is one of the most significant things I've seen in terms of helping those people, particularly older workers, get retraining and new careers. This program is not a mess; it's an overwhelming success. We just put another 5,000 spaces. We are looking at it hard to make sure we get it right so we can build on that success and help the unemployed get back to work in a bigger and better and stronger Ontario economy.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As you are aware, the Minister of the Environment is now in the process of reviewing the environmental projects report for the Georgetown South service expansion and the Union-Pearson air-rail link submitted by Metrolinx and will make his decision soon. In the meantime, however, some of my constituents in York South-Weston have expressed their concern regarding the planned GO station facility in Weston. Specifically, they worry that once the Eglinton LRT is established, the Weston GO station will be shut down. Can the minister assure us that the planned GO station facility in Weston will not close down once the Eglinton LRT is established?

Hon. James J. Bradley: To ensure that the public was heard in the Georgetown South service expansion and the air-rail link project, Metrolinx held more than 30 community open houses, met with numerous community groups and held online consultations through the environmental assessment process. More than 3,000 people participated by asking questions of or leaving comments with the project's technical team.

1100

Metrolinx heard a message that was loud and clear from that MPP for York South-Weston and from members of her community: that a stop at Weston is absolutely crucial. I'm pleased to confirm once again that such a stop is a direct result of the concerns heard by people living in the Weston community and the advocacy of the MPP on their behalf. There is no plan in place to close down this stop once the Eglinton LRT—

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: The community will be reassured by that.

I have met with a number of constituents on this matter. My office has been receiving many e-mails, phone calls and correspondence asking about the Georgetown South service expansion and the air-rail link project. One of the concerns that has been mentioned to me is that the

project report submitted by Metrolinx does not go into detail regarding increased service for the constituents of York South–Weston. Some of my constituents worry that they will not benefit from the increased all-day GO service.

Can the minister assure the residents of York South–Weston that they too will benefit from all-day GO service?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to talk about Metrolinx's plan for the Georgetown South corridor and the air-rail link. GO trains in the Georgetown South corridor are currently operating at capacity, and with the cost of congestion to the greater Toronto area estimated at about \$6 billion a year in delays and lost economic opportunities, creating all-day GO service along the Georgetown corridor will get people out of their single-occupant cars and onto public transit. This includes those living in York South–Weston. With a stop at Weston, they too will benefit from increased all-day GO service. In fact, the expansion will take 18 million car trips off our roads in the first year alone, 2015, and when the new line is mature, it will take 52 million car trips a year off our roads, and therefore ensure that we're making a benefit for the environmental situation—

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

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the finance minister. Last week, you said you couldn't answer questions about how much money the McGuinty Liberals blew on the Windsor Energy Centre because of all the lawsuits and police investigations. That ended up not being accurate because, after a week of searching your briefs, you did release some information.

Now that a precedent has been set, will the minister explain why a casino owns a power plant?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I said last week was in response to a question around a specific lawsuit. The member asked legitimate questions about whether or not the information was available, and it was, in public accounts. The member has access to that. I welcome those kinds of questions. I think they're legitimate. They're the same kinds of questions I think all of us need to be asking.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It sounds to me like the finance minister lost yesterday's briefing book and he's back to the one he was using last week. It just isn't credible for this minister to pick and choose the days that a lawsuit prevents him from answering questions of public interest.

If the casino doesn't own the energy centre project, then who or what is the Casino Windsor that issued the request for proposal?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, there is a lawsuit that disputes the ownership. The member is accurate about

that. It's been filed by the contractor that developed it, so it is difficult to comment on that.

But what I will refer the member to again, as I did yesterday, is public accounts 2007-08, pages 2-99 and 2-98. The details are there as to the position of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. at the time. It outlines that it was not in fact a part of the casino expansion project itself. As I say, OLG is defending a lawsuit on the specifics of the ownership question. I don't want to comment on that, but I would refer the member to those pages in public accounts again.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. It has been 10 long months since the government's Arthurs pension commission delivered its final report to the government. One of its key recommendations was to increase the monthly pension benefits guarantee by the pension benefits guarantee fund to \$2,500 a month.

When will this government introduce legislation to implement this key Arthurs recommendation, along with the many other important recommendations contained in his report?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, there are 144 recommendations in the Arthurs report. I've indicated publicly that this will require, I believe, two pieces of legislation. The first piece will be introduced this fall; the second piece will likely be next spring.

The government will act or not act on recommendations. The member's right: Mr. Arthurs does recommend raising the PBGF guarantee. Mr. Arthurs also recommends that premiums increase for both employers and employees. So this is a complicated issue that we have to look at seriously.

We've taken the recommendations. We've gotten responses from both labour and management across Ontario. We will bring forward legislation. That legislation will be subject to further discussion at that time. So the member can expect, I think, one piece of legislation this fall and another piece next spring.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The minister so far has refused to increase the monthly benefits guarantee fund to \$2,500. As we speak, the pensions of tens of thousands of hard-working Ontarians are hanging in the balance. Pensions are in danger at Ford, Nortel and many other smaller companies across this province. The minister knows that if this government rejects the Arthurs recommendation to increase the monthly guarantee to \$2,500, he is rejecting the heart and soul of the Arthurs report.

I will ask the question again: When will this government table legislation to increase the monthly pension guarantee to \$2,500 as recommended by Mr. Arthurs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: One of Mr. Arthurs's other recommendations was to do an actuarial study of the PBGF itself. We are doing that; it is under way. The important question for those thousands of people and their

pensions—and, by the way, there are tens of millions more who don't have a pension—is, how do we fix this?

I'll remind the member that successive governments of all political stripes did not properly fund this. I believe this is the type of issue that we have to approach very seriously and diligently. I would caution against a broad sweep about all kinds of pensions. There have been significant improvements in a number of pension plans and significant negotiations going on on some others. But, indeed, we have to look at these issues, and this Legislature has to honestly confront the difficult questions around the pension benefits guarantee fund.

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

TAXATION

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Minister, my constituents are saying that they're only hearing half the story on the HST. While some people are out scaremongering, focusing on coffee and doughnuts, the facts are being ignored. For instance, TD Bank released a report last week outlining the effect the HST will have on Ontario's economy. It states that harmonization will increase Ontario's competitiveness, saying the HST "should help spur business investment, employment and income growth."

Minister, who's telling the truth here, those who are telling only half the story or the economists at the Toronto Dominion Bank?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question. I can assure you that, on this side of the House, our job is to tell the entire story—not half a story, but the entire story, the whole story.

We welcome the report by TD Economics about this. What they commented is that they believe, as many do, that this is going to be of benefit to our economy. What we need in this province is jobs in the 21st century. We're not going to be able to do that with a 20th-century tax system. That's why, on this side of the House, we are convinced that we need to reform our tax system so that we can have jobs in the 21st century. All members should believe, in my opinion, that that is a noble goal and something that we need to aspire to.

What other studies, including the TD report, have shown is that history is very clear in other jurisdictions, including in the Atlantic provinces, that investments in machinery and equipment went up and that prices actually went down. They went down because, under the package, you are eliminating a whole hidden layer of tax—

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

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: The TD report also estimates that there will be a 0.7% increase in the consumer price index in Ontario. This will not be "as much as some may fear and will not have an enduring effect on the inflation rate." The report states that in Ontario's extremely competitive economy, business would pass through the majority of their savings to consumers. The report notes

that about 80% of the expected total cost savings to businesses will be passed along immediately in the first year the HST comes into effect. And TD estimates that pre-tax prices in Ontario will fall by almost 1%.

Minister, what does all of this mean for people who are looking for work in Ontario and also for consumers in Ontario?

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Hon. John Wilkinson: Consumers and people know that we need the private sector to rebound in this province. Despite the fact that we're faced with the largest economic downturn around the world in some 80 years, what we need is the private sector to engage.

Our tax reform is designed to spur on that confidence. Small business confidence, as a matter of fact, has risen in this province since the introduction of Minister Duncan's budget last spring.

The most important thing that people should know is that for those of us like the member who come from business, if you don't have the right price, you can't sell anything. Because prices are going down, because costs for businesses are going down, those who understand this will price accordingly. As a result, they will gain market share and those companies will thrive. Those who feel that somehow they can hang on to this, I think, are going to be treated poorly by the market.

That's why this package is designed to ensure that small businesses understand the new tax regime that's coming in and how that's going to spur on investment, as it has around the world.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and it relates to a very disturbing report that two employees of Ontario DriveTest centres have been arrested for fraud relating to the creation of fraudulent identification.

The minister will know that in the 2005 auditor's report, the issue of security risks in DriveTest centres was raised. I quote the report: "The driver examination service provider was not complying with ministry security requirements when hiring staff who have access to confidential driver records, and the ministry had not developed adequate policies and procedures to deal with prospective and existing employees with criminal records."

My question to the minister: In light of the revelation that these fraudulent activities are taking place, can the minister advise us what specific steps the ministry took in response to the auditor's—

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, it's a very good question that the member asks. He was Minister of Transportation, so he knows some of the major challenges that are faced there.

First of all, the police have been very assiduous in carrying out their responsibilities. The Ministry of Trans-

portation staff have been working very closely with the police service to ensure that a proper investigation takes place. As you know, there is a screening of those employees. I guess we'd love to think that employees anywhere who provide services to people in this province or this country are all going to be honest. Unfortunately, there appear to be instances where that is not the case. The ministry has worked hard, along with Serco, to ensure that those who are hired by that particular company are screened appropriately.

Unfortunately, there are circumstances where people decide to break the law, and that is why we—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Detective Constable Michael Kelly said, "We have just touched the tip of the iceberg. This case goes a long way back and spreads quite wide." The Auditor General made very specific reference in his 2005 report to say, "We noted instances where staff had criminal records yet no action was taken, and, in 25% of the new-hire files we reviewed, the required criminal check had not been done."

Can the minister confirm for us that there are no staff employed at DriveTest centres with criminal records—that they have, in fact, done that research? And can the minister confirm that they now have the procedures and policies in place that will ensure that people with criminal records are not hired by DriveTest centres?

Hon. James J. Bradley: A thorough canvass is done of those who are part of that company that your government established a number of years ago, that it brought into effect. I think you put some rules in place at that particular time, and those rules have been adhered to as closely as possible.

What I can tell the member—and he was supportive of this and I appreciate that—is that we are implementing photo comparison technology, which is a proven technology that will help combat driver's licence fraud and address the identity issues that are there. That's going to be a major step forward to prevent the fraud that has alleged to have taken place. The member would know, as the Attorney General would caution me, that I cannot speak specifically to this particular case, but I can assure him that ministry officials are working very carefully with police services to ensure that we are working hard to make sure that there is not this kind of fraud taking place on a widespread—

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

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. This Saturday, thousands of supporters in the Ontario Clean Train Coalition will be marching against this government's plan to run over 400 dirty diesel trains through our communities. The Clean Train Coalition is making a simple demand: clean electric transit that will protect the health of residents as well as

the health of the environment. Why won't this government immediately electrify these trains instead of imposing health and environmental costs on all Ontarians?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think, first of all, the member would be well aware that by taking thousands upon thousands of vehicles off the road, vehicles that are causing much pollution in our province, that was a major step forward in clearing up the air. That is the purpose of public transit: to take many of those vehicle trips off the road to clear the air.

The member would know as well that Metrolinx is conducting a study on electrification. They are not ignoring it; they're conducting a study on electrification. They've put together a team of people, including advocates from the area and top medical and technical people, to frame the parameters of that study, because it's not a matter of "if electrification"; they want to be involved in electrification and they want to do it appropriately. I think this committee will come up with some excellent recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Actually, the diesel trains will produce more pollution than the cars they're replacing, and studies have shown that.

This government continues to deny the environmental and health concerns that diesel trains pose. Indeed, in a recent statement, the Metrolinx chair misinterpreted Toronto's medical officer of health. In his revised statement, Dr. McKeown said that he remains "concerned about the air quality impacts and increased health risks predicted for the immediately adjacent communities as a result of the proposed diesel expansion."

The question, Minister, is not about trains; it's about electric versus diesel. Hundreds of residents and thousands of Ontarians will be protesting. That is the feedback that Metrolinx has received. Why do you continue to ignore all of these constituents?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I just explained to the member that Metrolinx is not ignoring them. In fact, they have undertaken a study. They didn't simply pick people from outside the area; they picked people who reside in the area, those who have been advocates. They picked people of medical prominence and people of highly scientific and technical prominence to be on the committee for electrification, looking at the parameters of that electrification study.

I cannot agree with the member when she talks about how what is being proposed is not as damaging as all those vehicles. I have to tell her that there are millions of millions of vehicles—and your critic in the environment knows this to be the case—millions of vehicle rides will be taken off the roads as a result. That will improve the air tremendously. So the member is not being accurate in her assertions.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minis-

ter, as you know, on August 20, a tornado touched down in neighbouring Grey county, leaving property damage and tragedy behind. A state of emergency was declared. Homes and businesses were devastated. Families were displaced from their homes as the damage was so severe, in some cases, that it needed significant rebuilding and repairs. A number of communities were hit by tornadoes that day, and all of the affected communities have undergone massive clean-up efforts in the aftermath. Everyone in the affected community has been working very hard to rebuild what they have lost. Not only local officials but businesses and community people have come together to help their friends and neighbours.

I would ask the minister, how did Emergency Management Ontario provide support to the—

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

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Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think I speak for everyone in the House when we offer our condolences to the family and friends of the young boy who was killed in the tornado. Obviously our thoughts are with those who experienced the force of nature with those very, very violent storms.

Emergency Management Ontario's 24-hour provincial emergency operations centre monitors evolving situations across Ontario. In the case of these storms, EMO field officers were deployed within hours to Vaughan, West Grey and the Town of Blue Mountains. The Ministries of Natural Resources, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the OPP all provided assistance to help them get through this particular devastating occurrence. And I want to—

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: While many communities and individuals do their best to cope with natural disasters, they are a strain, certainly, on the municipal budgets, and often overwhelm the ability of local officials. As well, those who cannot afford insurance are left to cope with severe property damage and loss, with minimal ability to cover these costs themselves.

This summer, a number of Ontario communities were faced with natural disasters that stretched municipal budgets and tested the strength of their communities. Last spring, many of our communities coped with rivers overflowing as the ice and snow of the winter melted away, causing flooding and damages to homes and public spaces.

I understand that the province has a fund called the Ontario disaster relief assistance program. For the benefit of all members of the House, could the minister please update the House on the request that he has received on the recent—

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'd like to refer this to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Jim Watson: The provincial disaster assessment teams were deployed within 24 hours to the affected communities. I want to thank the honourable member and the Premier for touring the site, as well as members Jim

Wilson, John Yakabuski and Bill Murdoch for their on-the-ground support of those particular communities. I also want to commend the mayors, councils and staff of the communities of West Grey, Mayor Kevin Eccles; the Town of the Blue Mountains, Mayor Ellen Anderson; the municipality of Grey Highlands, Mayor Brian Mullin; and Mayor Mary Campbell of McNab/Braeside.

Last week, I signed the appropriate documents to declare a disaster area for those four municipalities, and ministry staff are moving quickly to help those municipalities set up their disaster relief committees. ODRAP provides funding when damages are so extensive that they exceed the financial resources of the affected individuals, the municipality and the community at large. Council resolutions are required, which were—

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

HOSPITAL SPENDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday, I asked the Premier a question regarding the untendered contracts that were let by the London Health Sciences Centre. The Premier pushed responsibility away from his government and from his Minister of Health, and called the issue a matter of local governance.

Well, \$3.3 million in untendered contracts were let, yielding paycheques for some of \$1,500 a day. And now that the situation has been uncovered, the priority for the London Health Sciences Centre seems to be to locate the whistle-blower.

Acting Premier, I would ask: Should this be the focus of the London Health Sciences Centre's efforts?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: Ontarians expect their government, their agencies and their institutions to use public funds prudently, and so do I. In this particular case, the rules were broken. They were caught by an internal audit and the hospital has cancelled the contract. That was the focus of the administration in London. They have done the appropriate thing: They have investigated the matter and have taken quick action to cover it.

Our government is about openness and transparency. That's why we made a number of changes around here. It was this government that expanded the role of the Auditor General. It's interesting to note that members opposite, when they were on this side of the House, refused to do so, and when they were in opposition, opposed these measures.

We've opened up our hospitals, our schools, our—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would say that I can agree with one thing the minister said, and the rest of it not so much. I would agree that this is at some point local, but it also raises very significant, serious questions that should be of concern to this government. The granting of these untendered contracts had been going on for some five years, and it wasn't until a whistle-blower came forward

only a few months ago that these events were brought to light. How could this happen? This is serious.

Furthermore, the fact of this contract being cancelled is something that we all know doesn't come without financial repercussions. You can't just snap your fingers and cancel a contract without something else adverse happening.

I would say to the Acting Premier, through you, Mr. Speaker, that you simply cannot take a hands-off approach and walk away from this mess. Ontarians want to know, what are this government and the Minister of Health going to do about this situation?

Hon. David Caplan: I think we've gone from the ridiculous to the sublime. The member is now suggesting that the contracts should not be cancelled, that the contracts that were entered into improperly should somehow continue. I don't know how the member opposite can make that kind of claim. I think it was because of the action of internal auditing and the process and control that exist within the hospital that these matters were brought to light and in fact were dealt with.

That's the approach this government has taken. In fact, expenses for OPS senior management, cabinet ministers, political staff and senior executives in Ontario's 22 largest agencies will be posted online no later than April 1. There is no more sole sourcing of consulting contracts. We want to ensure that we have the greatest value for dollars that taxpayers would expect.

We are setting a higher standard for everyone: for the Ontario public service—

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

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Acting Premier. One of my constituents is in the gallery today and has sought my help in securing his assessment approval from the Ontario skills development program. He has missed the start date for a training program for which he is eminently suited because the skills development program stated that they, and I quote them, "did not anticipate the number of applicants." His employment insurance runs out in two weeks and he has yet to be assessed. This has taken more than two months.

Can the minister tell us how the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is expected to clear the backlog and get Ontarians, like my constituents who qualify, quickly into training programs they so desperately need?

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): If you wouldn't mind just taking your seat, please. Thank you.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To my colleague opposite and to the gentleman in the gallery: I appreciate your raising this issue. I'm obviously not familiar with the specific circumstances and will undertake, after question period today, to follow up.

I would say that yes, there are challenges. We are trying to serve an enormous number of people in an appropriate fashion across a variety of training programs.

Unfortunately, sometimes things don't go as smoothly as we would like. I will follow up on the specific case. Thank you for raising it with me, and I'll look forward, sir, to seeing you after question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, to the Acting Premier, for making that commitment, because the Acting Premier knows full well that a very large backlog exists. He stated so in this House today. He also knows that when employment insurance runs out, the only alternative that my constituent and thousands of others have is going on social assistance.

My question, and I don't know whether the Acting Premier can answer it because perhaps it does belong to the minister: Why is this minister prepared to allow thousands of Ontarians who want to work and be trained for good jobs to languish on yet another waiting list because he doesn't have the wherewithal to clear this backlog and get on with the job that's supposed to be done, getting people back to work?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Obviously we want to get people who are eligible into these programs as quickly as possible. I undertake, in this instance, to follow up with that gentleman.

Also, the member is right from the broader public policy perspective, and we've had some success. I'd remind him, as I did earlier in question period, about Second Career, for instance. When we started out, my friend opposite was criticizing us because not enough people were in the program. Now we have what I would call an enormous challenge, and we're going to provide services for 5,000 additional people.

The administration of these programs is difficult, sometimes complicated, but I do undertake to work with the member on this specific case, and hopefully we can help this gentleman resolve the situation.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Last week, I read an opinion piece in the Toronto Star, and the piece commented on the rather low priority of staff diversity in the federal civil service. Minister, one of the areas that you're responsible for is the diversity office here in Ontario. What is the provincial government doing to ensure that our provincial civil service indeed reflects the diversity of Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member from Willowdale for asking this question. I think this is a very important question.

Our government absolutely recognizes the importance of diversity in the Ontario public service. We have taken a lot of initiatives to make sure that our public service is inclusive and reflective and that all of our policies are equitable for the diverse population that we have in this province. I'm really pleased to say that for the last two consecutive years, in 2008 and 2009, the Ontario public service has actually won the award for Canada's Best Diversity Employers.

I'm also pleased to inform you that we have set up the diversity office in my ministry, the Ministry of Government Services, and we have—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: My riding of Willowdale is a diverse and vibrant riding, with many, many nationalities and new Canadians: Iranians, Chinese, Koreans—our newcomers to the province. I know that many of the newcomers in this province who are residents in Willowdale are particularly interested to know if there are any programs or special opportunities within the OPS for newcomers.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I fully recognize that when newcomers come to this country, especially when they settle in the province of Ontario, we want to make sure that we can help them in any way we can, especially the professionals who come to this country.

We actually have a couple of very good programs, and I would like to talk to you about one, which is the internship program. This is a program that our government started in 2006. Under that, we provide experience to newcomers for about six months with the Ontario public service so that they can get the experience and the skills to be successful in finding jobs, either inside the public service or outside. This program has been very, very successful: 81% of the participants have indicated that they are very satisfied with this program. This is one example I can talk about that has really helped our new immigrants to get settled. It's important for them, but it's also important for our province to make sure—

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

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday in this House, the member for Oxford and the member for Burlington raised points of order about questions on the order papers that were still outstanding. I just wanted to be clear: There was a problem with the order papers. In fact, the Ministry of Education had responded to the one question that was outstanding. The Minister of Agriculture had responded in an interim fashion to the questions that were outstanding and is working diligently to respond in a timely manner to those questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period having ended, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1133 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise to urge the government to act quickly to resolve an issue that concerns thousands of

public sector workers in Ontario, including a number of paramedics from Simcoe county.

As members will know from my private member's resolution debated on June 4, due to past divestments of provincial services, thousands of Ontarians have a split pension problem that will severely affect their retirement income.

In my riding, paramedic services were divested from the province to the county of Simcoe in the 1990s. At that time, paramedics were led to believe that nothing would change regarding their salaries, employment benefits or years of service. Although their pension plan changed from the hospitals of Ontario pension plan or the OPSEU pension trust to OMERS, there was to be no negative effect on their pension entitlements.

After the divestment, they discovered that they would receive two pension cheques when they retired, one for service with the government of Ontario and one for service with the county. The amounts that each of them will receive from their two pensions will not recognize their years of continuous service and will therefore cause them to receive a significantly reduced pension through no fault of their own.

The government's own expert commission on pensions recommended a prompt resolution to this specific problem, and so far the McGuinty government has been very slow to act. In fact, each time I've raised this through petitions and letters, it's been unclear what the government's position is on this matter.

Today in the House, the Minister of Finance said he would be bringing forward legislation to address the recommendations of the Expert Commission on Pensions, and I want to make sure he includes a solution that corrects the problems for paramedics in Simcoe county.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Mr. Jeff Leal: Since 2005, Peterborough has been fortunate to have five family health teams. They run expertly under the direction of Dr. Don Harterre and Mr. Bill Casey. Their team, working with local physicians, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, dietitians and others, has created one of the most efficient systems for delivering health care in the province of Ontario.

In a report released last spring entitled *Teams in Action: Primary Health Care Teams for Canadians*, the Health Council of Canada recognized publicly the good work being performed by Peterborough's primary health care network. They were quoted as saying, "The Peterborough family health team model is an ideal way to deliver team-based health care services in Ontario."

Since 2006, more than 18,000 previously orphaned residents of my riding now have access to primary health care services because they've been affiliated with a family health team. Peterborough was chosen by Mr. John Abbott, CEO of the Health Council of Canada, from a short list supplied by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care because "their program impacted a large proportion of the population and they have well documented results."

Family health teams work. They utilize progressive services such as pharmacists prescribing drug reviews for newly hospitalized patients and the anticoagulation program for patients on blood-thinning medication.

I'd like to extend my congratulations to everyone in Peterborough working within the family health teams. This truly is a job well done and a remarkable development.

PORTUGUESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I am proud to rise today to speak about my friends in the Cambridge and North Dumfries Portuguese community who are celebrating their arrival in Canada at the Portuguese Club of Cambridge on Saturday evening, September 26, 2009.

Together with my friend José Dias, I will present certificates to 24 immigrants who are celebrating 40 years in Canada and another 75 who are celebrating 50 years in our great community, province and country. These certificates recognize their hard work, determination and contributions to our community.

I am proud to say that the Portuguese community represents almost 15% of the population of Cambridge and North Dumfries. This celebration of their arrival in Canada is organized by Mr. Dias with the assistance of the club president, my friend Marina Cunha. The celebration commences with traditional Portuguese cuisine, followed by the presentation of certificates.

The Portuguese community in Cambridge and North Dumfries contributes to the rich history and culture that makes my riding the best community in Ontario to call home.

NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors, who are having a reception as I speak. I had planned on speaking about something else, but I was so impressed, over the last hour, with the men and women who were there advocating on behalf of their cause that I thought I would change what I was going to say today, and I have.

They are here to seek changes to the Naturopathy Act, which will come into effect in the year 2011, and they are here to talk about the need to change some of the powers under the regulations in order to give full scope and practice to naturopathic medicine. We need to recognize that they are providing primary medicine and that they are primary medicine care providers. They offer alternative medicine for those who are seeking alternatives to traditional medicine. They are completely community-based, and they offer a holistic approach that many people are looking for, so that you know that what you ingest will eventually have an effect on your health.

There is a real opportunity, I think, for Ontario to embrace what they're asking for in these times of doctor shortages, rising costs of medicine and hospital wait

times. It is an opportunity to explore an avenue that many people wish to explore. I invite people to go down and visit them if they have the opportunity in the next half-hour. They are holding a large seminar and get-together in Toronto later this year, on November 13, at the Toronto Congress Centre, and all are invited.

JEAN'S FLOWER SHOP

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On September 9, I had the opportunity to visit Jean's Flower Shop, in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. This family-run shop has been in business for over 45 years. Since the day they opened their doors, they have done more than just sell flowers; they've also shown great generosity to the community.

On the day of my visit, the flower shop was celebrating their annual Good Neighbour Day. Every person who came in received a dozen free roses. They were asked to keep one for themselves and give the remaining 11 flowers to somebody. Jean's Flower Shop ended up giving out 12,000 free roses to the community. On that day, they also collected non-perishable food items for our local food bank, Neighbour to Neighbour. Jean's Flower Shop showed such great generosity to our community while creating an atmosphere of goodwill. It's gestures like this that make Hamilton truly a fantastic place to live.

I'd like to thank Bill and Edith Dalton, Debbie and Derek Thomson, and the entire staff of Jean's Flower Shop. I'm so proud to call them my neighbours.

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to speak about a very important initiative that is helping the youth of York South-Weston gain better access to a number of after-school programs. Starting this month, nine schools in York South-Weston, both Catholic and public, will give not-for-profit groups free access to schools after hours. Offering school space at no cost will help not-for-profit groups provide affordable or free activities, such as sports, art and recreation programs, for children and adolescents. This is part of the community use of schools program.

Just a few weeks ago, I had the privilege of joining the Minister of Education for this important announcement at York Humber High School. We were also joined by students from the local Boys and Girls Club and enjoyed a playful game of dodge ball too. I saw their appreciation for the program.

The program is well received by local trustees, such as Mr. Chris Tonks, who also attended the Minister of Education's announcement.

Schools are at the heart of our communities, and making school space available after hours will help bring communities together and keep young people active and safe. For the community of York South-Weston, this is already a big step forward.

WELLS STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to bring to the attention of the House a very important local issue in the town of Aurora. It relates to a historic building that is also a school, the Wells Street public school. Notwithstanding the government's contention that they're investing multi-billions of dollars in infrastructure, it seems to me that one of the areas of investment that has been lost on this government is the investment in our school buildings, and particularly buildings that are of a historic nature and value.

1310

In the case of the Wells Street public school, it's situated in the heart of the town. Essentially, it is really a community centre. The school board is seriously contemplating shutting the school down. The people in my community, in the town of Aurora, are very concerned about that and have asked me to appeal to the Minister of Education to ensure that this historic building—and that Wells Street public school as an active school within our community—is not shut down; that it's allowed to continue as an active school.

I would ask the Minister of Education to intervene to ensure the appropriate funding is available to sustain that building as an active school in our community.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. Khalil Ramal: We all recognize that climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century. It's not bound by borders nor economic conditions.

The government recognizes that creating a cleaner and greener Ontario is crucial to our sustainability. We are working tirelessly to reduce our dependency on energy from harmful sources and increasing the province's usage of renewable energy. This will clean our air, combat climate change and stimulate the economy.

The government's Green Energy Act understands the urgency in making Ontario a leader in green energy production. It will create 50,000 jobs, build on our investments in green technology and establish Ontario as a leader in renewable energy. The feed-in tariff program established under the Green Energy Act will allow everyone to be a part of Ontario's green energy future. At least 25% of wind projects and 50% of solar projects will be produced right here in Ontario. This will ensure that Ontario is a world leader in green technology.

The Green Energy Act empowers us to work together so we can all do what is necessary to tackle climate change and make Ontario emerge as a green leader. And I want to thank the minister who has taken the lead in this regard.

YOM KIPPUR

Mr. David Zimmer: The Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur begins this Sunday evening at sundown. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is the holiest day of the

year in the Jewish religion. The process of personal reflection and introspection begins on Rosh Hashanah and culminates on Yom Kippur, a 25-hour fast where Jews across the province and around the world gather in prayer at synagogue. Yom Kippur presents an opportunity for the Jewish community to repent any transgressions they may have committed against God and their fellow human beings over the past year. The process of atonement involves reconciling with the person you may have wronged and making those wrongs right.

I know that all members of the House will join me in wishing the Jewish community in Ontario an easy fast and a meaningful Yom Kippur.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and

"Whereas the average annual PM2.5 concentrations measured in the Clarkson airshed were among the highest found when compared to data obtained from the ministry's air quality index monitoring stations; and

"Whereas the interim 24-hour ministry ambient air quality criterion for PM10 was exceeded on several occasions; and

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and

"Whereas concentrations of toluene, xylene, styrene, ethyl benzene, trichloroethene and acrolein were higher than those at the 12 Environment Canada national air pollution surveillance stations in Ontario, including those located in Toronto (4), Brampton, Windsor, Hamilton, Sarnia, Kingston, Ottawa, Kitchener and London; and

"Whereas annual average 24-hour nitrogen dioxide concentrations were found to be among the highest when compared to provincial air quality index stations in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas; and

"Whereas the MOE stated that industrial emissions may contribute as much as 25% of the PM2.5 concentrations in the Clarkson airshed study area; and

"Whereas the MOE stated that it would focus on achieving reductions of the target pollutants from the 57 identified emitters that currently operate in the area; and

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

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

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the East Oakville environment and the Clarkson airshed study area."

I agree with this and will sign it and send it on to the desk.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by, I believe, the greatest number of residents of Oxford county of any petition that I've had the opportunity to present in this Legislature, and it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I affix my signature to this petition, as I agree with it.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a petition signed by hundreds of people from the province of Ontario and other provinces.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there currently exists an inequity in penalties under the Highway Traffic Act whereby a driver causing death or grievous harm to another due to unsafe turn or other act may only see a maximum \$500 fine and such is an inadequate penalty,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to pass into law the Highway Traffic Act amendment, as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, which calls for stiffer penalties for drivers involved in fatal accidents where their error caused fatality."

This is signed, as I said, by hundreds of people from across the province.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition provided to me by Evgeniy Papkov, Keith Church of Prudential

Grand Valley Realty and Conestoga Insurance Brokers Ltd.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to present a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas current changes to ServiceOntario will expand and improve access to licensing, registration, health card renewal and other services, it will also close effective and service-oriented local businesses and cost us local jobs, such as the licence office that the Donald family has owned and operated in Whitby and Durham region for over 50 years; and

1320

"Whereas we recognize the quality of service provided by the Donald family to be rated above the 100% efficiency level, including extended hours;

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

"That the Donald family be maintained as a licence bureau of the highest quality in the region of Durham."

I have affixed my signature to the petition, and I have attached to it a number of other separate presentations from people such as Gus Brown motors, Whitby Honda, Nurse Chevrolet, Chrysler Dodge in Whitby, and even the solicitor of Durham region, Brian Roy. I am pleased to submit that, if I have a page to accept it.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I've received a number of petitions from Severn Bridge, Gravenhurst and Bracebridge to do with the McGuinty sales tax. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

"That the McGuinty government should remove the new sales tax from its 2009-10 budget."

I support this petition and give it to Alyssa.

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition that was given to me just last week by members of the Peel Fountain of Youth Seniors Club, and I definitely want to thank Fay Henry, Joan Henderson and Basil King for having helped to gather the signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas a retail sales transaction in Ontario should not be subject to two separate taxes, at two different rates, under two sets of rules and payable to two different levels of government; and

"Whereas Ontario will implement a comprehensive package of income and business tax cuts in 2010, which will especially benefit working families and retired seniors; and

"Whereas the income taxes of Ontarians will be cut permanently, seniors will receive double their former property tax credit and other permanent savings will flow to Ontarians; and

"Whereas the cost to businesses to produce goods will go down permanently as embedded sales tax is permanently eliminated from the business cycle, enabling those businesses to lower their business costs and pass savings along to their customers; and

"Whereas these measures represent the most comprehensive tax reform in a half century, enabling Ontario to be the most competitive place in North America to create jobs, move, grow and operate a business;

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

"That the government of Ontario and the members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly swiftly enact Ontario's comprehensive tax reform measures, including the move to a single sales tax in Ontario, as proposed in the province's 2009-10 budget."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Carlos to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My petition that I present today is signed again by a great number of people from Oxford county, and is totally opposite to the previous petition read. But it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you very much.

RURAL SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Dave Levac: Always wanting to bring the voice of my community to the House, this petition has been sent to me by over 500 people as customers of Carl's Choice Meats:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adjust the requirements that have been applied to Carl's Choice Meats and other small family businesses as having been mandated by the Minister of Agriculture and Food in rural Ontario;

"We agree that existing small meat businesses that have existing quality products and are presently health-unit-approved should be grandfathered in and not burdened by the same regulatory stream as the larger facilities that have a much larger production capacity and so request that a more relevant category be established" for those small meat businesses.

I affix my signature to this petition and offer it to page Kaitlin to bring to you.

TAXATION

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition signed by more than 1,000 constituents, all opposing the Dalton McGuinty harmonized sales tax. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history; and

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

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, and arena ice and soccer field rentals;

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

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

I agree with my constituents. I will affix my signature as well.

SHARK FISHERY

Mr. Mike Colle: A petition from people all across the province:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 100 million sharks are being brutally killed, mutilated and butchered by the abhorrent practice of shark finning, which involves removal of the fins of live sharks and then throwing the finless, immobile, live shark back into the ocean, where it is destined for a slow and tortuous death, by either suffocation or attack by another predator;

“Whereas sharks are a vital component of the oceans’ intercontinental ecosystem, leading ecologists to warn that rapid increases in shark depopulation will disturb the oceans’ equilibrium and upset the ecosystems of the oceans of the world;

“Whereas the practice of shark finning can have disastrous effects on other fisheries, as the decrease in sharks decreases the supply of scallops, oysters, and other soft-shell and hard-shell organisms;

“Whereas the United Nations General Assembly itself has noted that the decline in the shark population could have ‘an impact on broader ecosystem functions’;

“We, the undersigned, urge the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the prohibition of shark finning and to call upon the federal government to support the prohibition of this cruel act; to prohibit the sale and marketing of shark fins as used in shark fin soup; and to call on Ontarians to consider stopping this horrible and wasteful practice of eating and consuming shark fins, as a way to protect this endangered species from unnecessary and cruel acts, especially the light of the unconscionable, wasteful and inhumane methods used to obtain shark fins for the purpose of making shark fin soup.”

I support an end to shark finning and I support the petition. I affix my name to it.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT (ENABLING MUNICIPALITIES TO REQUIRE INCLUSIONARY HOUSING), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L’AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE (INCLUSION DE LOGEMENTS ABORDABLES PAR LES MUNICIPALITÉS)

Ms. DiNovo moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act to amend the Planning Act with respect to inclusionary housing / Projet de loi 198, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’aménagement du territoire à l’égard de l’inclusion de logements abordables.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, I want to thank all the folks who were involved in writing this bill: certainly the Wellesley Institute, Richard Drdla and Brian Eng, who are here; Kenneth Hale and Mary Todorow from the Advocacy Centre for Tenants; and also councillors Adam Vaughan, Paula Fletcher, Gord Perks, many in the city of Toronto planning, and even Hazel McCallion at lunch-time suggested that, yes, this would be a good thing. She didn’t have the powers to do this right, as the law stands.

1330

It’s a very simple little bill, and I quite frankly would assert that it is non-partisan. This is a piece of the puzzle that will address the nightmare of housing in Ontario, and the piece of the puzzle is this: that right now, if a municipality or a city wanted to bring in inclusionary zoning bylaws, that is to say if they wish to demand of developers that developers set aside 10% of any developed units, for example, as affordable housing, it would allow them the ability to do it. This bill does not mandate that they do it, it does not demand that they do it; it simply gets rid of the roadblocks so they can do it if they so choose. It is a piece of the puzzle, but it’s a critical piece of the puzzle. Over 200 municipalities across North America already have inclusionary zoning and a number of states have brought in legislation very similar to this one so that roadblocks are removed.

I was speaking to the housing minister and he suggested that we already have that ability as municipalities in Ontario. I would point him to legal counsel here who say—and this is from them; there’s a generally accepted view among municipal lawyers—most of whom, I might point out, work for developers—that municipalities in Ontario don’t have the explicit authority to enact mandatory inclusionary practices. As you know, the general constitutional rule is that municipalities can only do those things for which they have explicit legal authority.

There is a growing number of planners. I've heard from them. They've been part of this bill, including senior staff in Toronto and Ottawa who want to have mandatory zoning tools available to them, but they're worried about sticking their necks out too far because developers will inevitably take this to the OMB and win, and they have.

What is inclusionary zoning, just so folks know? And by the way, it's worked extremely effectively. Maryland and Boston were some of the first to enact it back in the 1970s. Since the 1970s, because of inclusionary zoning bylaws, they have over 10,000 units of affordable housing they wouldn't otherwise have. I did a little straw poll, and based on the number of units that were developed and built, in one year alone, from 2007 to 2008, we would have had 4,000 affordable housing units built as part of our housing unit mix if Toronto, for example, or any of our municipalities, had had the ability to bring in this bylaw.

What is the context? The context is 130,000 households waiting for affordable housing in the province of Ontario—waiting an average of 10 to 12 years. We're talking about, in the greater Toronto area alone, 70,000 households. We have in Ontario the worst record of any of the provinces in per capita investment in affordable housing. Saskatchewan, to take an example, invests four times as much as we do—four times as much. So as much as we in the New Democratic Party would like to see new bills, we would like to see more robust investment on behalf of our friends across the aisle. Certainly, this is still a piece of the puzzle and the lovely aspect of inclusionary zoning—this will appeal to my friends to the right here—is that it doesn't cost one tax dollar, yet it provides affordable housing negotiated by the municipality. For those who may have friends in the development industry who say, "This is anti-development"—no, it's not. In fact, developers in many of the municipalities across the States support inclusionary zoning, particularly in a down market. This allows them in fact, in their own jargon, to get rid of some unwanted units because they can't sell them and somebody out there needs them.

I remember very well my personal introduction to those who were seeking housing and couldn't get it. That was as a United Church minister, when a family pulled into our parking lot in an RV and asked if they could park there and live there. We had a family living in our parking lot at the church that I presided over for about year. Their children went to school from the RV in the parking lot and came home every day. They used the church as their address. Why? Because they couldn't find housing.

That's what those statistics mean. Those statistics all bear a face, and the face is the face of a child. There are children and single parents out there living in RVs, living in their cars, living in shelters and surfing from couch to couch in their friends' homes. They don't have housing, and anybody can tell you that housing is a major determinant of health. If you don't have a house, you don't have a job. If you don't have a house, you don't live long. That's the reality.

Who else supports inclusionary zoning implementation? Well, just about everybody in the housing advocacy community; 134 different groups have come out with various recommendations around inclusionary zoning. Certainly the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association has brought out a specific report talking about implementing an inclusionary policy to facilitate affordable housing development in Ontario.

Again, it's a very simple little bill. All it does is change the wording of one small piece of the Planning Act so that municipalities can do what only some might want to do. Not all might want to do it, but at least some can move forward on this file. I certainly have assurances from some of the bigger municipalities that they would do just that if they were given the tools to do so. That's what this bill is about.

I know there's not a member here who isn't touched by the issue of homelessness and the demand for housing in their riding, and I know that the government is doing ongoing consultations as we speak about the issue of housing. So it is certainly in the government's best interests to have this piece of the puzzle put in place; it's in the best interests of lawyers who are trying to work for advocates for housing; it's certainly in the best interests of housing advocates; and ultimately, it's in the best interests of children like the ones I just described, who live in RVs and go to school from there, because it would free up units.

The other aspect of this that is wonderful is that it really fights against NIMBYism. Instead of having a housing development over here and nothing but people on social assistance living there, it mixes it up. So you have a high-range condo that has 10% set aside for affordable housing and could be rent-to-own.

I know that in my own riding I have a large group of Tibetans who came as refugees. They're finding their way and making their way, and they want housing. But they want to own their own house, eventually; they don't want to rent. This would be an opportunity for a developer to offer 10% affordable units, for example, to those who don't have a down payment but can make the monthly payments and do want housing. Again, it would answer many of our needs.

The Star editorial two days ago talked about the huge bureaucratic nightmare that goes into trying to get a housing project up and running in this province. It's true. It's a nightmare to try to get a housing build. Ask any church that's trying to get involved in this. Here's a very simple, direct way—again, up to the municipalities.

There are as many ways to do inclusionary zoning as there are municipalities. Different municipalities do it differently: some more aggressively, like London, England, where up to 30%—in fact 50%, depending on how you read affordable housing—has to be set aside, to localities like Florida and others, where 10% to 20% seems to be the general rule. Australia, for example, has this nationwide. Belgium and European countries have it in place. We really are behind the curve on this, and this little bill—all I ask is that it be let go on a voice vote and

go to committee so we can discuss it, so it can begin—just begin—to confront the problem of homelessness.

One of my favourite ads ever about homelessness was done by Covenant House. I don't know if members remember this ad; it was in bus shelters etc. It was a picture of about a two-year-old in a bus shelter, and it said, "How young do they have to be before we give a damn?" That's what it has come down to, particularly in our big cities. Unfortunately, we're used to—we've unfortunately become inured to—stepping over bodies on our streets. What kind of moral society is that? What kind of ethical reality is that, when we're used to people lying, sleeping on grates on the sidewalk, some 5,000 of them in Toronto alone?

1340

We need every tool in the toolbox to confront this. We need new bills; we need rent supplements; we need money, as I know has been forthcoming, at least to some extent, to Toronto Community Housing Corp.; and we need inclusionary zoning. We need all of this. All of this will go towards the mix that will take us from worst to first. Right now, we're at worst in Canada. We are worse than progressive states. It's not every day I get to stand up and say Ontario is worse at this than Florida when we're talking about progressive states, but we are.

Again, I ask that this be treated as a non-partisan issue, something that we can all get behind, a simple little change. Section 37, by the way, which is what's in place now, is hit or miss at best. It's up to the councillors to negotiate with the developers. Sometimes they get a fountain; sometimes they get nothing. We don't need that anymore. We need housing, and we need it desperately. The era of downloads, I hope, is at an end. The era when this government steps up and takes responsibility, I hope, is at its very inception.

Think of that child in the bus shelter. Think of the family that lived in my church parking lot for a year. Think of all of those in your ridings who really need access to affordable housing, and yet there are not the tax dollars there to build all the housing we need. Even think of the developers who, in a down market, sit on empty units that could be filled. Think of all of Ontario when you decide about this bill.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm delighted to take part in this debate on Bill 198, which will allow some inclusionary zoning permission for affordable housing.

I commend the member for bringing this bill forward. I just want to make a couple of points. We, in this House and outside this House, are all Ontarians and Canadians. We have the social fabric to look after our fellow man and the needy, and whenever there's an opportunity to improve that situation, we need to do all we can.

So a couple of points: As a government—through the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—we're in a position to do some consultation across the province as to how we can look at all options to bring the affordable

housing issue to the table and come up with a strategy so that we can move this forward.

We could point fingers here at different governments at different times. I think we all try to do the best we can on a piecemeal basis, and in the last few years we have made some advances. This consultation process to come up with a strategy, as the minister has indicated, will give us some kind of road map.

I believe the ministry is in its final stages—I know that I personally attended a consultation in Brampton to see what the feel of the land was in a more urban setting. There wasn't one in my riding. The closest one was Lindsay. So I had two of my own, one in Colborne, which is the centre of my riding, and one in the city of Quinte West, which is part of my riding. Virtually, we didn't have the numbers that we had in Brampton. We have fewer people because of the population density and the makeup, but I would say that the suggestions and the comments mirrored what I heard in Brampton. Was inclusionary zoning part of the discussion? Absolutely—amongst an array of other baskets.

I would say that it could be part of that mix as we come out with the strategy, but I'd also like to point out that municipalities do have some tools. I'm not saying it's black and white. I just want to point out that in our provincial policy statements there are provisions for municipalities, through intensification numbers, to provide that type of guidance to developers.

For example, if I remember back to my municipal days, when they're approving a plan of subdivision—although there are not as many as there are in large urban centres—municipalities can dictate what that subdivision should look like, whether it's through store management, whether it's through size of lots that they would approve based on a whole number of criteria. That's prior to the provincial policy. So municipalities do have some tools. To say that they don't have any tools—they do.

I'm going to be supporting this, on a personal note—this is private members' hour, I'm not sure what the other members do—because I believe this could be part of that toolbox. I would also like to encourage the rest of the House to think of the strategy we're going to be putting in place, and could this be part of it? I think passing this bill today would help make this part of it. To what format? I wouldn't want to prejudge what the strategy will be that the minister will come out with, hopefully sometime at the beginning of the year.

So as we debate this, I think we need to talk about some of the advancements we've made as a government the last four or five years, and there's a whole list, and the federal government has been a part of it—unfortunately, where we find ourselves in a difficult situation. Being part of a municipal government of the day when public housing was divulged to the lower-tier municipalities, I remember sitting around a county council table, which is the same as regional government, scratching our heads as to how we could absorb all this housing that in many cases needed a huge amount of repair. So we've tried to accommodate some of that. I think we've made

some progress, but do we have a long way to go? Absolutely. So we must not lose sight of the investments that we've made.

I look forward to the rest of the debate on this bill. I would encourage all members to also keep in mind, and I know a lot have taken part in, the public meetings that the minister has had across the province. I believe there were 13. I know some of them have, from all sides of the House. So I very much look forward to that, to have a complete toolbox, not just to deal on a piecemeal basis, because although this will hopefully make some advances, I think we need to look at the broader and really long-range effects. So as I mentioned, I will personally support this, but I would encourage that we need to look at the bigger picture.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this private member's bill today, Bill 198, An Act to amend the Planning Act with respect to inclusionary housing. The bill plans to amend the Planning Act. I'll just read from the explanatory note.

"The Planning Act is amended to include the adequate provision of a full range of housing, including housing that is affordable to low and moderate income households, as a matter of provincial interest.

"Section 34 of the Act is amended to allow the councils of local municipalities to pass zoning by-laws requiring inclusionary housing in the municipality and regulating the required percentage of affordable housing units in new housing developments in the municipality."

I think the important word in all that is "to allow the councils," so I do believe it's important that it become a local decision.

Inclusionary housing is something that certainly has been going on a long time in the United States. For those who are unaware of what it is, inclusionary housing refers to municipal and county planning ordinances that require a given share of new construction to be affordable by people with low to moderate incomes. In practice, these policies involve placing deed restrictions on 10% to 30% of new houses or apartments in order to make the cost of housing affordable to lower-income households. As I say, it's been quite common across the United States for quite a long time. The thing that I like about this approach is that you have mixed-income neighbourhoods, which I think is a positive thing, versus creating ghettos in some cases.

In the United States there are more than 200 communities that have some sort of inclusionary zoning provision. To give a few examples, Maryland is thought to be a pioneer in establishing inclusionary zoning policies. It's the sixth-wealthiest county in the United States, yet it has built more than 10,000 units of affordable housing since 1974. In Massachusetts, they have a state law. In New Jersey, there is a judicially imposed inclusionary zoning. In California, a 2006 study found that 170 jurisdictions in California had some form of inclusionary housing; that's a 59% increase from 2003. So we can see that it's quite common across the United States.

1350

I would say, from my perspective from Parry Sound—Muskoka, that certainly we do have a challenge of needing more affordable housing. In Muskoka, the wait time for an affordable housing unit is at least a couple of years, and it has been that way quite consistently the last number of years. It hasn't been improving. In Ontario, a quarter of tenants are paying more than 50% of their total household income in rent, and that is neither affordable nor sustainable.

I recognize that municipalities sometimes do get push-back from neighbours when it comes to affordable housing units.

I'd like to highlight some of the recent events that happened in Parry Sound particularly:

"Parry Sound councillors approved tax exemptions for three more developers planning to apply for upper-level government subsidies to add low-income housing in Parry Sound—projects that could create more than 85 new apartment units in town." That's a lot of units for the town of Parry Sound.

Under this affordable housing program, "applicants can receive up to \$150,000 per apartment for new rental units, provided they are rented at an amount that is only 80% of the average rents paid in the area."

I would, however, point out that there was a story about that building going ahead, and I did have some local landlords who complained to me that they would be unfairly having to compete against this subsidized rental housing.

"To qualify, developers must have the support of their municipal government...."

In the case of Parry Sound, Parry Sound council members recently agreed to forgive property tax reduction for 63 apartments at the former St. Joseph's hospital site. They also endorsed a proposal for a new 20-unit seniors' complex attached to an existing apartment building on Isabella Street, across from the high school.

There are lots of different approaches. I believe that rent-gear-to-income is one that makes a lot of sense, where people are given financial assistance and they look for accommodations in the marketplace.

I'll use this opportunity to promote the fact that I will be holding my own affordable housing consultation on October 14 at the friendship centre in Parry Sound. That's being assisted by the poverty reduction network in Parry Sound. We're hoping to set up and invite people to participate in that forum. So I look forward to that at the friendship centre on October 14 in Parry Sound.

I would like to point out, in the short time I have left, that some of the actions this government has taken have actually made things worse. Their changes to the tenant protection act, which really change the balance to favour tenants, have the result of making it so landlords get out of the business of renting apartments. I have had many cases where landlords are dealing with what they call "professional tenants" and go through a long, drawn-out process by these people who really know the process, and they end up losing thousands and thousands of dollars

and have damaged apartments and, in the long run, end up deciding not to rent units anymore.

I'm pretty much out of time because I know that the member from Oxford would like to add his comments, as well. But generally, I support this approach, where you support mixed-income types of accommodation versus having separate buildings or separate areas created.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed a privilege and an honour to stand here and talk about Bill 198.

This is a very simple bill. It's not a very complex one. It's contained on a couple of pieces of paper. What it does is it allows a municipality the ability to pass zoning bylaws to lead to inclusionary housing and allows them the option of setting the percentage of affordable housing that might be built.

Some would say that municipalities already have that authority. I go back to my own time when I was the mayor of East York. Did we have that authority? I'm not sure. But we did have a policy that said that 10% of the apartment buildings that were going to be built in any large-scale development that wasn't for individual occupancy use had to be affordable. But I know that the developers, with their lawyers, were often very circumspect about our ability to enforce that. Although I do not remember any actually going before the Ontario Municipal Board, there were many statements that we could not enforce that policy.

I believe, in my heart of hearts, that this needs to be done, if only to end that argument, if only to state categorically for the Ontario Municipal Board and anyone else, any courts that might be involved, that yes, we, the province of Ontario, want to grant that right to municipalities, and that they have it so that when they set policies, as we had in East York, they are set on a firm foundation of law that cannot easily be challenged.

The second thing the bill does is it also allows for the approval of the plan of subdivision. This may not take place in most of the built-up cities—I'm thinking here about downtown Ottawa or Toronto or Hamilton—but certainly is a key factor in the areas that surround them—in the case of the GTA, the rural parts of Ottawa or Hamilton—where there are still opportunities for plans of subdivision, where the subdivision will come in and where it is important to say to the developers who are building homes or apartments or condominiums in those plans of subdivision that a certain percentage must be affordable.

I applaud the writer of the bill. I applaud my colleague sitting next to me for what she has brought forward.

My own experience as a mayor was—and I told you that we had a 10% requirement. I remember the developers or the people who wanted to build condominium units, who wanted to build townhome developments, who wanted to build apartments, being very, very reluctant to allow what we wanted to go forward.

I remember, in fact, one particular case where the developer thought he was much smarter than I. He came

forward with a plan. He wanted to build five apartment buildings. It was an ideal location on Eglinton Avenue for five apartment buildings. The council was favourably impressed with the design and everything else, and we were proceeding merrily on our way till it came to the meeting. He proposed to build the five apartment buildings in several stages. The first stage would involve two smaller towers, and then the next two, which were the larger towers, and then the last one. He said it was a project that was going to take approximately 10 years. We all applauded that—here were some new apartment units coming into East York, some better assessment for the municipality; all the things that one wants to see—until I asked him the very thorny question about our 10% policy: “Where were the 10% of the apartments going to be?” He looked red-faced because, in the end, the apartment building that was going to contain all of the 10% was the last building, the building he was unlikely ever to build, the last one to be done, 10 years down the road, if he made a profit on the first four.

I remember asking that question and turning to the planner, whose name was Mr. Tomasevics in those days, and asking him how he could have agreed to allow it all in the final building. He looked a little red-faced too, not realizing that the building might never be built and that we would end up having absolutely no affordable housing built in this unit.

I know for a fact that the buildings were never built. I don't know what happened to the developer, but we imposed that condition upon him. I think he felt a little red-faced in not wanting to go to the Ontario Municipal Board because he got everything he asked for, save and except that we wanted 10% in each of the buildings as they were being built to ensure that it happened. In the end, he did not build it.

This is just one of the key things that one has to look for and to understand that developers will not build affordable housing, which makes less profit or no profit at all, in the space of those buildings where they can charge higher amounts.

There is also the second issue of the reluctance of neighbours. I know, as a 13-year municipal politician, how reluctant neighbours are to have affordable housing sometimes in their neighbourhoods. I must state, though, that they were always reluctant before it's built and they usually looked ashamed and red-faced after it's built because, really, sometimes what it replaces—it's a whole lot better in the second instance than what it replaced. In any event, they're often reluctant. This will give the municipalities the power to set it by statute. You deal with it once. Anyone can come out to complain, but once it's there, it's as of right, and it will be very difficult for neighbours to complain about as-of-right zoning legislation to allow the poor to live amongst them.

1400

I also have to be a little bit critical of governments. Somebody asked me today how long I've been here in this Legislature, and this marks eight years and three days. I was elected nine days after 9/11, so I remember that very well.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Congratulations.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay. I guess I'm one of the veterans of the House now, after eight years, but I remember the first two years—I was the housing critic—and going down to Quebec City when the first announcements were being made. I think some of the people who are witnessing this today went down to Quebec City to try to get all the provinces on board—and to see, right there in front of my eyes, a place like Nunavut actually sign up. They were only two years old; they were only a territory for two years on their own and they signed on the dotted line at Quebec City. Ontario, for two years, did not sign at all. We had no housing policy.

I watched as the new government came in, six years ago, and although I will state that there has been some action on this file, it has been excruciatingly slow and it need not be excruciatingly slow.

So today we have an opportunity, along with this bill, to empower municipalities—a combination of infrastructure funds, which seem to have started flowing both from the federal and provincial governments. We have an opportunity with the budget that's going to come forward this March, if the government members opposite are intent upon doing more for housing—I know there's a whole lot of discussion going on—if they're actually intent on building affordable housing. We have an opportunity to change the archaic laws around brownfield sites.

I specifically want to talk about one that is no longer in my riding but was, prior to redistribution. It's just west of Coxwell on Eastern Avenue, and it's a financial co-op that's trying to build a housing development on the land. They keep being rebuffed because the land down there, close to the lakeshore, was at one point industrial and it is considered brownfield. After years and years of constantly trying to get something built there, they're still going nowhere. I think that if we remove that barrier, there would be some decent and good housing for 40 or 50 families. That needs to be looked at too.

In conclusion, I'd just like to state that we have about 70,000 families in the Toronto area on the waiting list for affordable housing; 70,000 families that cannot be properly housed, and there's a lot more across the province of Ontario. I dare say it's probably double at least.

We have an increasing wait time for seniors. In my office, we tell people to come and apply for seniors' housing as soon as they turn 59 years of age so that hopefully, by the time that they're 70, they can get the kind of housing that they want. The wait times are enormous. We tell them to apply early and often and to spread out where they're going. We need to understand that as the population greys, we're going to need more and more seniors' housing, and it needs to be built quickly.

We need to look at the lack of supportive housing for those people with addictions and for those people with mental health issues. It needs to be built and it needs to be supportive, along with social workers and job seekers and others who can live in or be in close proximity to them to provide the services they need.

And last but not least—and I cannot leave this out—we need to look after our First Nations communities. Any of you who have travelled into First Nations communities, particularly in north and northwestern Ontario, will know the abysmal state of housing. Some might argue that this is a federal responsibility, but I would argue, as well as a federal responsibility, it is our responsibility. They are citizens of Ontario. We have an Ontario housing policy. They need to be included. There is no reason that people need to live 15 or 20 to a home, live in sub-standard conditions, live in towns with no roads or sewers, live in places with mould on the walls. The time has come for us to include First Nations communities in all of the housing and to give them, perhaps—and I hope this might happen in committee—the same authorities that we would grant to any city in terms of how it's built, where it's built and who is included.

So I would like to conclude with that and just say that I support Bill 198. It's an idea whose time has come, and I commend my colleague the member from Parkdale for bringing it forward.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand and comment on Bill 198, An Act to amend the Planning Act with respect to inclusionary housing, introduced by the member from Parkdale–High Park, which seeks to amend section 34 to allow municipalities to rezone and pass rezoning; to amend section 37.1 to specify the percentage; and also to amend section 51 to put conditions on approvals to specify the percentage of affordable units.

I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing such an important issue to this House to be discussed. No doubt about it: It has been a concern for all the people across the province of Ontario, especially our government since we got elected in 2003. As the member from Parkdale–High Park knows very well, up till 2003, affordable homes were out of the question in the past government, so when we came, we were trying to introduce it step by step.

I want to thank our government for investing heavily in affordable homes. To date, we've invested more than \$1.2 billion to reconstruct and refurbish many homes we have across the province of Ontario. Even though I'm talking about refurbishing almost 76,000 homes and trying to build 4,500 new homes, I still think it's not going to solve the problem across Ontario. I know that in my riding of London–Fanshawe we have almost 4,000 people on the waiting list. So people are looking forward to seeing some improvements on this front.

I want to congratulate my colleague and seatmate, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, for his comments on this file. I know he's working with the minister, Jim Watson, to conduct a study across the province of Ontario to seek the opinion of the people of Ontario on this file, how we can tackle it and how we can deal with it. I know it's huge. As the member from Beaches–East York said, Toronto has almost 72,000 people on the waiting list.

The investment of \$1.2 billion is a great investment. It's an incredible investment in the history of this province. But we still need more investment to continue, and also partners—different community leaders like Habitat for Humanity, churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, whomever—who work in that regard to help us, as a community, as a government, as a province, to deal with this issue.

I think that adjustment to the Planning Act might help when we are trying to convince developers and municipalities and many different communities across the province of Ontario to include affordable homes in their planning, whether it's 10% or 5% or whatever percentage they agree on. I think it's a very important step toward putting all the pieces together.

I want to congratulate the member for Parkdale–High Park. Also, like my colleague and seatmate, I'm going to support the bill. I think it's an important step toward reforming the Planning Act and the Municipal Act to allow municipalities some kind of free movement to deal with this issue. I know that many of our colleagues, members in this place, have served as municipal councillors. Some of them were mayors, like the member from Beaches–East York and my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. All these talented people who serve in this place can offer a solution to this crucial problem we are facing in the province of Ontario.

It's sad when you drive, whether in Toronto or in any big city, and see people sleeping on the street. I think it's our obligation and duty as citizens of this province, as the people elected to serve all people—weak, rich, poor, vulnerable—to apply the kind of support they need. It's our responsibility, as elected officials, to create infrastructure to house those people who sleep on the street with no way to manage their daily lives. So I think it's an important step.

As my colleague the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said, the ministry at the present time is conducting studies across the province of Ontario, and part of those studies is to see whether inclusionary housing is an important step or not. Hopefully, as a result of the study, it is supported by the people of Ontario and we can also proceed with it and go further to addressing this important issue.

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I had the chance to attend a round-table meeting in London in the presence of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and I listened to many different stakeholders who came to talk to the minister and to see how he's going to deal with this issue, and especially about our investment. As you know, we did round one and we have round two and round three, and many, many people came and placed submissions to be able to build affordable homes. I see the content and the people and the stakeholders, but as I mentioned at the beginning, it's a deep problem in the province of Ontario that's going to take us years and years in order to deal with it totally. I think we are taking the right step in the right direction in order to address this issue.

This bill, I think, would be a complementary bill to allow municipalities to participate in the solution in conjunction with the provincial government and the federal government. But still, I believe strongly that it should be a national strategy to deal with affordable homes across the province of Ontario and across the nation because this is a problem not concerned just with municipalities or with provinces; it concerns every citizen who lives in Canada. I think our obligation and duty is to continue pursuing all the avenues and whatever we can to solve that issue.

I want to congratulate the member from Parkdale–High Park, and I'm going to support the bill.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and speak for a little bit on this Bill 198, introduced by the member from Parkdale–High Park, to make it more expedient to create more public housing or housing for people of low incomes who need help to find accommodations.

I guess I support the principle. Her presentation was very good to the extent that this is just a very small piece of the puzzle and it will not have a major impact on the shortage of housing. I think it has an opportunity to help, but it's just a small part. The reason I say that is, I think it's very important to look at what the municipalities can do today. It relates more to the areas that I represent in rural and small-town Ontario as opposed to downtown Toronto because it goes more to the subdivisions. We have very little development of great amounts of housing on anything but greenfield development.

When a municipality gets an application for a plan of subdivision, there are a number of things that they can ask for in that plan of subdivision, including the number of multiple family units they want on the site. So they can have all single-family residences and then some rental units as part of it. Multi-residential: They can demand that that be in there. They can also demand 20% of the land area for parkland, but what happens is they put that in, and that's their given; they can do that in the plan of subdivision. But then, as they negotiate the plan of subdivision, because it's their rule that allows them to do that, they can barter it away for things that the municipality wants: "We want slightly more contributions toward the infrastructure for this development as opposed to the parkland." Or they can negotiate the value of that parkland. The act says that it must be 20% of the price of the land before development, on the day of approval. So they say, "Okay, so we can't charge you the developable price—just the farmland price. Then just give us the land and then we will sell it, after the subdivision is built, for its true value." I think we need to be careful that we don't get in a situation where it just gives more tools to bargain with as opposed to actually doing what needs to be done.

The other thing that I really would like to touch on is that we talk—and this is in every case—about affordable housing and building affordable housing. Where I come from, the people at the lumberyard never ask what type of housing the lumber is for. The price to build is exactly

the same regardless of what you're going to use the house for. What is different is somebody putting in money to subsidize or to help reduce the cost of the building so the rent that's required to cover the cost of the infrastructure can be lower. That, in most cases, of course, is not based on the person's ability to pay but the amount that it costs to build the infrastructure that they're renting. So I think it becomes very important that the government makes sure—in this case the member said that there was no cost to government because the developer would pay that.

Interjection.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Yes, well, somebody has to pay it. So to me, rather than negotiate how much the developer can make on it, it makes more sense that the municipality look at having the right type of housing built or that governments look at having the right type of housing built and then subsidize the people who have to pay the rent and who can't pay the rent. Rather than owning the bricks and mortar, the answer is to help people pay the bills so that they can live in a quality home and have a roof over their head and a place to raise their families. I just caution that we look at that, that we're not getting into it further than we really want to be and in fact giving municipalities powers that in the end are not going to help the people that we're targeting to help.

In my community, we have a number of public housing units being built, with all the efforts from the provincial government and with the federal government money going in. None of those are in residential areas, but they are all being built based on the money coming in going to help cover the infrastructure cost of the units which are going to be rented for less than the going rate for the rest of the units. That will be inclusionary, because in fact most of the units in the development are going to be rented at the full rent, and the subsidized units are those that the tax dollars help subsidize, which they have to do for the next 25 or 30 years. By then, they will need some remodelling or something, and I suppose we can then put another deal in place.

But I think putting the money in to help people pay the rent is likely going to work better for us than trying to own the buildings, whether it's the municipality or the government. Governments are never good managers of property. Governments are there to help people in need, but don't help the people who necessarily own the property and who have to provide these facilities for us.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the time, and I want to commend the member for bringing this forward. We will be supporting the bill as it comes forward.

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

Ms. DiNovo, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to the members from Northumberland–Quinte West, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Beaches–East York, London–Fanshawe, and, finally, my good friend from Oxford.

I just wanted to mention that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka emphasized a very critical point, and that is that this “allows” municipalities—it does not demand; it does not make municipalities do anything. It simply clears the way so that they can do something. That's all we're trying to do. That's an essential piece that needs to be done so that they are able to move forward.

Certainly dollars, some inclusive zoning—municipalities have done dollars in lieu of units, so that answers, I think, the member from Oxford's concerns. And there are many, many ways of doing inclusionary zoning, as many as there are municipalities, and so tailoring that kind of bylaw production is, of course, really critical. I have utter confidence in our municipalities, particularly our larger ones, that they will do everything to the utmost to try to produce affordable housing, which we desperately need. Unfortunately, we're worst in the number of provinces in investing in it, and this might get us a little way towards first.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Another two minutes?

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Oh, that's magic, fabulous, because I did want to answer the member from London–Fanshawe on a couple of issues. I mean, really what I'm trying to do here, folks, in terms of affordable housing, among other things, is to get the cabinet to give more money to our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I think his budget should be a lot bigger. Unfortunately, in the 2009 budget, the budget for housing was cut; it wasn't increased. Per capita, we put \$64 towards housing, whereas, for example, the provincial average is \$115. What that means is that these costs are still downloaded to the city in a way that really should be reversed. We need to help our cities. The cities are bearing the brunt of this. We need to step up to the plate both in terms of actual dollars flowing from the province and also in terms of the legislation that we pass here today. So I would simply caution the member from London–Fanshawe that there is, in fact, more that we could do in actual, real dollar terms as well as inclusionary zoning.

But inclusionary zoning is the order of the day. I'm delighted that so many people support this bill. I'm hoping that it will go to committee and get full committee hearings, because it's important. Although it's a small piece of the puzzle, in one year alone—let's say it was 10% across Ontario—it would have produced 4,000 units of housing; the government has produced about 16,000 units of affordable housing in six years. So this would produce, in one year, a quarter of what we've had in six years. So although it's small—true enough—it's still a substantial chunk of housing units if it was really brought in in every municipality. It does have a real possibility of changing the affordable housing scheme and outlook in Ontario.

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Thank you for supporting this. I look forward to your input on committee, and I again thank all of those

housing advocates across Ontario who've really been the people on the ground, working hard to make this pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): This concludes the time for this ballot item. For those watching at home and those in the galleries today, we'll vote on this item in about 100 minutes.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Frank Klees: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should introduce legislation to implement an automated insurance verification system that shall be designed with the goal of identifying motor vehicles that are being operated on Ontario roads without the required insurance coverage and shall provide accurate and current access to motor vehicle insurance coverage information for persons and agencies charged with the enforcement of motor vehicle insurance requirements, such that police officers can determine the validity of the insurance of a vehicle and that a licence issuing office can have the ability to confirm in real time that insurance coverage is valid, and that the Highway Traffic Act be amended to provide for the impoundment of the vehicle being driven by an uninsured motorist.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Klees moves private member's notice of motion number 67. Pursuant to standing order 98, Mr. Klees, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Frank Klees: I will be to the point in terms of my reasoning for bringing this resolution forward. I recall, as Minister of Transportation, dealing with the issue of uninsured motorists. It was something that was of great concern to the province at the time. It was of concern to many stakeholders, to the police services right across the province, and it was of great concern to the insurance industry as well. At that time we initiated discussions within the ministry to see how we can best deal with this issue. We were in touch at that time and initiated discussions with the Insurance Bureau of Canada to determine how we could best jointly move forward and determine what the solution would be.

People will know, and members of the Legislature will know, that in the province of Ontario it is against the law to drive a vehicle without valid auto insurance. I wonder what degree of knowledge exists even within this House as to what happens to the application form when someone goes to a licensing bureau and presents the renewal form for the licence or for the licence plate. As we all know, there is a place on the application form that requires us to disclose the name of the insurance company for the auto insurance as well as the policy number. I would ask the parliamentary assistant for the Ministry of Transportation, does the parliamentary assistant know what happens with that information? I think we would all assume that that information is then lifted from the application form and appropriately entered into the Ministry of Transportation records so that there would be some form and some way of validating that insurance.

Here are the facts. Nothing happens with that information. In fact, if you were to write in that application form that the name of the insurance company is Bozo the Clown Insurance and the policy number is 1234, you would have your licence issued and you would have your licence plate issued, because nothing is done with that information. It goes nowhere. In fact, staff at licence issuing offices are instructed to return the application form, the paperwork, to the applicant, so it never gets entered anywhere in the records of the Ministry of Transportation, and there's no way of validating at any point in time whether or not information about insurance was fraudulently submitted, because there's no record whatsoever in any office of the Ministry of Transportation regarding the insurance. So is it any wonder why uninsured motorists continue to represent an increased safety risk and are, in fact, a factor of escalating costs of insurance in this province?

It's been estimated that there are some 400,000 uninsured motorists in the province of Ontario today. Why is this an issue? For every driver who chooses not to pay an insurance premium, the result is that insurance costs increase for everyone else. Every law-abiding driver in this province who complies with the law has to make up for those premiums that are not being paid by those who choose to cheat the system—in fact, break the law.

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation has in place, and has had in place for many years, an honesty system. We're going to trust people to do the right thing. We know that that's not happening. Some 400,000 motorists in this province cannot be trusted. The implication, then, to the rest of us is very clear.

Police officers have no way of knowing whether the insurance certificate that motorists are asked to provide is valid. In fact, it is a practice that people apply for auto insurance and get the little pink slip. They may have paid the first month's premium, they pay no more premium, but they've got a certificate that shows valid insurance for the next 12 months. The police officer has no way of knowing whether that policy has lapsed and so, presented with the certificate, no way of confirming whether or not there is in fact valid insurance in place.

In the province of Ontario, what we have done to backstop that is to create the motor vehicle accident claims fund. This is specifically a fund that has been set up by legislation to make up and protect us from those uninsured motorists, so that if someone is in a collision, and there is no recourse to any auto insurance policy, then it falls to this motor vehicle accident claims fund to adjudicate that claim and to pay out the claim—not only the claim but if there are court judgments that have to be paid as well.

Ontario has more than 8.9 million licensed drivers. As I indicated, the Insurance Bureau of Canada estimated that in 2005 alone some 400,000 of these were driving without appropriate insurance.

Between 2000 and 2006, uninsured motorists were involved in more than 20,000 collisions, killing about

300 and injuring more than 10,000 people here in Ontario alone. The uninsured drivers were at fault nearly 80% of the time in those accidents. More than 2,000 people were impaired by alcohol and drugs, that is, of the uninsured motorists. Nearly one quarter fled the scene of the accident and more than 1,300, in addition to not having valid insurance, were driving with a suspended licence.

Joining us here today is Mrs. Debbie Virgoe, whose husband, David, was killed on Highway 400 when his transport truck was cut off by three street racers. One of those drivers was convicted of driving with a forged insurance document, which the police initially had accepted as a valid document.

In addition to the fact that we don't have a system in place in Ontario to confirm validation of insurance, we also unfortunately have a court system and we have to get a message through to our judges in these courts that they must uphold the law as we have written it in this place, because in Mrs. Virgoe's case, the person who was sentenced was sentenced to two years of house arrest and two years of probation. The fine for driving without valid insurance, as written and prescribed in law, in regulation, is a minimum of \$5,000. The judge reduced that penalty to \$1,000 and a mere \$250 for forging that document.

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There is something fundamentally wrong in the province of Ontario when, first of all, the Ministry of Transportation does not have in place an appropriate system that will allow in real time a verification of validity of auto insurance to ensure that the declaration that's being made by motorists is in fact the truth. And there's something wrong in the province of Ontario when our court system, our justice system, does not respect the will of the Legislature when we have prescribed not only recommended fines, but minimum fines. The intent is that we send a signal, through the consequences of breaking the law, that we take this issue very seriously.

This resolution is asking the government to make the issue of implementing an automated system—which is available; it has been implemented in many states in the United States of America. This is not creating new technology. It's simply taking technology that is already being implemented in other jurisdictions and saying to the 400,000 uninsured motorists in this province, "We are serious about ensuring that you will respect the law of this province, and we will no longer stand for fraud"—because that's what it is—"and we will no longer stand for uninsured motorists passing on the cost of their negligence to law-abiding citizens in this province."

So I call on the Minister of Transportation to prioritize this issue and to work with the Insurance Bureau of Canada, to work with our stakeholders and to ensure that this matter is dealt with.

I have, and I'm going to read into the record somewhat later, a letter from Commissioner Julian Fantino, who is very supportive of this resolution on behalf of the men and women who are on the front lines of police services in this province. I also have supportive comments and recommendations from stakeholders of the

insurance industry asking this Legislature not only to support this resolution, but, through supporting the resolution, that the Minister of Transportation would in fact make this issue a priority for his ministry and for the government of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. I too would like to welcome to Queen's Park Debbie Virgoe and extend the sympathy of this House to you for your tragic loss.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to start by indicating to the Legislature that I will be supporting this motion because, really, something has to happen. Something has to happen to get people who are driving automobiles, motorcycles, other vehicles on our highways to have insurance.

We have all run into instances in our lives or know of people who have run into instances where there has been a traffic accident, sometimes with horrific results, where the driver has no insurance. I only think of my colleague, who works with me in my office, when her son was involved in a motor vehicle accident of no fault of his own. The car was T-boned and destroyed by a young driver with absolutely no insurance. Where does a family go in a situation like that? Absolutely no insurance, they're not at fault, the car is gone, and there's a young driver to blame, who was driving probably recklessly on the street and causing accidents. That's just but one incident, and it was not a severe one. There was no loss of life, just the loss of property.

But we know that there are hundreds if not thousands of cases like this each and every year. We know that there are people out there on the streets who are driving—and the sobering statistics, given by my friend who introduced this bill, are absolutely right: They were involved in more than their fair share of accidents, they're involved in accidents and driving while suspended and reasons that they don't have insurance. We need to make sure that our roads are safe, but we doubly need to make sure that the people who have ownership of that space of the road on which they are driving are safe as well.

One of the ways to do this is to make sure that they are insured, to make sure that what is required of them, we require of every single driver. There are literally far too many drivers on the road who are illegal, and I had not really turned my head around to thinking about somebody who gets insurance and pays over 12 months. Yes, it's true. When I get my insurance card, I generally pay for all of it. On occasion, in my younger days, I would pay six months at a time. But it's true, once I had that piece of paper, no one has ever questioned me. No one has ever questioned, "Are your payments up to date?" No one has ever had any proof that it's up to date. Nobody has ever done anything.

Now there was a time—and it wasn't all that long ago—when computerization was not possible, but when I see the police vehicles today there is an on-board computer where they can check out all kinds of information.

They can check out outstanding warrants, drivers, non-paid fines, a great many things. I do not think it would be onerous upon the police or anyone else in a law enforcement situation to have there whether or not the insurance payments were up to date, whether or not the person was duly insured, whether or not there was some other infraction of the law.

So I commend the member for bringing this forward. It is not an idea, to be quite blunt, that I would have thought of, because you think that most people are insured until you go back and look at the statistics, when you go back to see how many uninsured drivers there actually are.

So I ask everyone to think about the reason why there are so many uninsured drivers. Quite frankly, the reason that there are so many: There are those who can't get insurance because they are such horrendously bad drivers, because they have conviction for driving under the influence, they have convictions for speeding, for doing all kinds of things against the Highway Traffic Act, and some of them against the Criminal Code, that they can't get a licence and therefore they can't get insurance and they're out there driving anyway. They are a percentage, and I grant you, a good percentage of the ones that are out there. But we also know that those drivers who are young drivers often drive without insurance because it is just way too expensive. So when we turn our minds to this, we should also turn our minds to the expense that it has caused, and it causes people not to be able to afford the insurance.

This is troubling to me today, too, and I know it's not directly related to the bill but it is a cause, it is a side factor that I think needs to be talked about. Ontario motorists are facing the biggest increases in insurance premiums since the province temporarily froze premiums in late 2003. The latest round of increases approved by regulators has brought the average increase over the 12 months to 7.8%, with some insurers raising rates by twice as much, and I just want to name some of those. Policyholders with CAA, Scottish and York, COSECO and TD general insurance companies will see their rates rise by 10% or more when policy renewal statements start arriving over the next several months. Don Forgeron, president of the Insurance Bureau of Canada says double-digit increases, including some at companies with lower average increases, may signal worse to come. I think that we need to turn our minds to that. We know that there are—I think the figure used by my friend here was 400,000 uninsured people on the roads today. As insurance rates start to rise, so will the number of uninsured people on the streets.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It doesn't happen in British Columbia.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay. My colleague wants to get into this; I'm going to leave him time to do it. I want to give him time on this. We need, as a Legislature, to make sure—and I know I can't convince my friends opposite for government insurance; I'll let Mr. Kormos talk about that. But I do want to say that if they don't want to go

down that route, they have to make sure that insurance rates stay reasonable so that people are not driven into driving without insurance and all of us suffer as a result. I would like to leave time for my colleagues, and so I will sit down at this moment.

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

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I first would like to salute my colleague for bringing this resolution to the floor. Mr. Klees was once the Minister of Transportation in this province and I found him most fair. He helped me with a constituency difficulty; we had a very unsafe road situation. I thanked Mr. Klees then and I thank him now for solving a problem on Highway 17 near Desbarats and Central Algoma Secondary School.

I just want to say up front that I am supportive of his resolution. I'm supportive because the government understands that this is a real and important situation to deal with. To that end, we have been speaking, as late as over the summer, in consultation with the Insurance Bureau of Canada and other stakeholders in a way to make exactly what he's asking for in this resolution take place. So he is showing leadership in this issue. The government is already there, and we will be working with him to iron out some of the technical difficulties there are with communicating between the insurance companies, the government, and obviously the police and the licence issuing offices.

So I want to tell him that that is going on. It may not be at a pace that either he or I are happy about, but we are, at this very moment, working to that end. There are some difficulties, and I think he would appreciate right now where individual insurance brokers do have some. Occasionally, there are lag times between them informing the Insurance Bureau of Canada of insurance—anyway, there are technical difficulties. But we fully understand that 400,000 drivers out there who are driving cars that are not insured is not a good thing for the safety of Ontarians or the safety of anybody on our roads.

I would, as an aside, point out that this is the very member across the floor, though, who believed that American truckers should not have to obey the rules of Ontario's roads when—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I know, but it's just too rich. He thought we should have an amendment to one of our bills so that they could play by their own rules in Ontario.

It is important, however, to understand that the government policy of improving safety on our roads is an ongoing thing. I just want to tell you that there are already tough penalties in place by statute. If you're driving without insurance, there's a fine of up to \$25,000 on your first offence and up to \$50,000 on the second offence, with the possibility of a driver's licence suspension for up to one year. Currently, anyone registering or renewing their licences must declare that they have valid insurance when they renew their vehicle permit. Anyone who fraudulently claims to have valid insurance is

subject to a fine of up to \$500. So that's just at the vehicle licence issuing office. We agree though, as I said, that a better verification system is sorely needed.

We have, as a government, done a number of things, though, to increase Ontario's road safety. We are the safest road jurisdiction in all of Canada; actually, all of North America, and we need to keep it that way.

We've increased the warn range sanctions effective May 1, 2009. Drivers caught with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05 to 0.08 are subject to a three-day suspension in the first instance; seven days for a second instance, and it requires the drivers to take an alcohol remediation program; 30 days from the third instance, and it requires drivers to take a remedial alcohol treatment program and have an ignition interlock condition on their driver's licence. That's for between 0.05 and 0.08. That is an important addition.

All drivers under 21 must have a blood alcohol level of zero. Police are authorized to impound for seven days the vehicles of anyone who receives an administrative driver's licence suspension for blowing over 0.08 or refusing to provide a breath, blood or bodily fluid sample.

I note that important changes to our graduated licensing system will help our novice drivers become better drivers, and shortly Bill 118 will be proclaimed: our Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act, which is the famous ban on cell-phones and other electronic instruments in cars.

So there are a number of safety initiatives under way. We believe the government is working very diligently on the file that the member suggests. We are supportive of his efforts, and we hope he continues to be supportive of ours.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to support my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora and his resolution. The resolution is that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should introduce legislation to implement an automated insurance verification system that shall be designed with the goal of identifying motor vehicles that are being operated on Ontario roads without the required insurance coverage and shall provide accurate and current access to motor vehicle insurance coverage information for persons and agencies charged with the enforcement of motor vehicle insurance requirements, such that police officers can determine the validity of the insurance of a vehicle and that a licence-issuing office can have the ability to confirm in real time that insurance coverage is valid, and that the Highway Traffic Act be amended to provide for the impoundment of the vehicle being driven by an uninsured motorist.

I support that resolution. Frankly, I think it's a no-brainer. To be perfectly honest, I was quite surprised that the information that you fill out when you are getting your new licence plate to do with insurance coverage, which anybody who owns an automobile, I'm sure, has done if they've gotten a new licence—I'm quite surprised

that in fact nothing happens with that information. It seems unbelievable.

I think there's definitely a problem out there with a lot of people who don't have insurance on their vehicle. For one thing, it's against the law, as was just pointed out by the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, but I also believe it has the effect of making everyone else's insurance more expensive. As the member from Beaches–East York stated, he feels that as insurance costs rise, the number of uninsured will also rise. The effect of those people driving without insurance, I believe, costs us all more money.

The fact is that in Ontario we have the most expensive automobile insurance in North America. Many people may not be aware of that. You might have thought that you were paying a little bit more, but we have the most expensive insurance in North America, 25% higher than most other provinces, and yet, as the member from Algoma–Manitoulin stated, we have the safest roads in North America. Did you say the safest roads?

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: We have the safest roads in North America and the most expensive insurance, so something doesn't make sense here.

I note that FSCO has done a five-year review of insurance, and they've made a number of recommendations. I think those recommendations will need to be acted on. But this is something that just makes sense that is being suggested by the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

In talking about the affordability question, I would just like to talk a bit about rural and northern Ontario and the fact that we have an insurance affordability problem right now. The government's going to make it worse when they bring in the harmonized sales tax, which will mean an 8% increase to the cost of gasoline for all vehicles. That particularly hits rural and northern Ontario.

I think of some specific instances where the cost of insurance has come to light for me based on some of my constituents. For example, I had a young gentleman, Daniel Bradbury, operating his own business in Muskoka, Daniel's Computer Services and Web Design. He first approached me in 2005 about the high cost of automobile insurance because he was a young male. I don't know his exact age at that time, but between 15 and 25. He wrote to me, "As you may appreciate, business people and young entrepreneurs generally work very hard to grow their businesses and usually have a higher level of public accountability and responsibility as they are aware that their continued success is substantially dependent on their personal actions ... even with 'clean' driving records, rates are high ... in essence the present insurance arrangement punishes all drivers with extremely high rates. My company is positioned in the technology sector and people require reliable, prompt on-site services." In other words, he has to drive his car to do his job of computer service.

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Despite obtaining professional driver training, Daniel notes, "The rates I have been seeing are nearly \$7,000 or

more for a 12-month policy and a \$1,000 deductible.” In 2005, in the GTA, one company quoted Daniel \$11,000 for a 12-month policy.

He also pointed out that some companies would not even consider insuring him despite his clean driving record and driver training. So obviously, a young entrepreneur who was setting up his own business in a rural area had to have a car. That’s a huge impediment if you’re not just going to university or you’re choosing another path. Perhaps you’re out of high school and getting some experience as a tradesperson or starting your own business, as Daniel did. That’s just a huge, huge impediment to being able to get affordable insurance.

Just returning for a moment to FSCO’s review of insurance—that’s the Financial Services Commission of Ontario—they have a number of recommendations that have come out of their study. From that, I note that there are essentially three categories of accident victims. There’s the catastrophic, which is the most serious injury and includes the loss of limbs, brain injuries and wheelchair confinement. The cap for all assessment, treatment and rehabilitation costs for these victims is \$1 million, and FSCO’s recommendation is that that cap remain the same. I should note that the industry suggests that there be no change to the defining regulations or the verbal threshold, or that the gains made from the changes will be neutralized over time. There’s the non-catastrophic, and the recommendation is that that be reduced from \$100,000 to \$25,000. FSCO also recommends allowing consumers to buy additional insurance to cover up to \$100,000. And then there’s the minor strain and sprain injuries.

But I think it’s worth noting that the average no-fault injury claim in Ontario is \$38,000; in New Brunswick, it’s \$11,700; and in Alberta, it’s \$3,000. In a lot of that, the costs go to assessments. So we definitely need some fixing to happen to make our insurance costs more affordable.

I think this resolution today is just dealing with an aspect of insurance that, frankly, I thought was already covered. I’m amazed that with all this filling out of forms to get our licence plate, noting the insurance company—I’m quite surprised that nothing happens. What the member is looking for, I assume, is that, for example, when a police car pulls you over and they punch in your licence plate, part of the information that would come up through a real-time verification system would be whether you have current and valid insurance. That just seems to make sense in this case. I note he’s encouraging the Minister of Transportation to act on this, to fix this loop-hole and, frankly, to better enforce the law that is in place in this country.

I do support the member from Newmarket–Aurora in his resolution and I hope the government acts on that resolution.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. My gratitude to my NDP colleagues, who made sure that I

had some time and forfeited some of their own time to speak to this resolution. New Democrats, of course, have made it clear we support this resolution.

I’ve always enjoyed Mr. Klees’s private member’s business, because, for instance, with his advocacy for organ donation, it’s given me yet another chance to stand up and talk about the need for radical reform, the need to introduce a presumed consent, dragging organ donation into the 21st century. I’m delighted with this resolution, because it permits me to listen to Mr. Miller from Parry Sound–Muskoka, a proud Conservative, proclaim that Ontario has the most expensive auto insurance in every jurisdiction in all of North America. So here we have the Conservatives joining with the New Democrats in agreeing that the private for-profit system in Ontario is more expensive than those other provinces in Canada that have publicly owned, non-profit auto insurance. I’m proud to have Mr. Miller and the Conservatives join us New Democrats in that clear understanding. I’m proud to hear Mr. Klees talk about the huge number of uninsured motorists, something we’ve been talking about for years.

Now, Mr. Prue has already made mention that one of the factors is affordability. I’ve seen the stats, the averages, and I tell you that people have been getting whacked lately, as Mr. Marchese would say: \$500, \$600, \$700 increases—arbitrary ones. A change of one letter or number in your postal code can jack up your insurance rates to unaffordability, and the insurance companies in this province—the private, for-profit insurance companies—haven’t been very serious. Short arms and deep pockets: They’re real good at collecting premiums but not so good at paying out benefits, and now they’re advocating for even reduced levels of benefits—higher premiums, lower benefits.

It ain’t rocket science to figure out how private insurance companies make money. They make money by raking in the dough and then making sure that when a person needs insurance coverage, they are frustrated and confronted with hurdles to the point that they often give up.

I remain an advocate and a fan of public auto insurance, and so do my NDP colleagues, for some of the same reasons Mr. Miller states: Ontario private, for-profit—the highest rates of any jurisdictions in North America.

You see, in the ICBC system, the model I admire most, it’s almost impossible to have an uninsured motor vehicle on the road, because the purchase of insurance is tied in to the issuing of tags, and the systems are integrated. They don’t have 400,000 uninsured vehicles in British Columbia. They don’t have 1,000 uninsured vehicles, and similarly in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Now you’ve got to understand that public auto insurance has existed in Saskatchewan since the days of Tommy Douglas, the CBC’s greatest Canadian, and in British Columbia since the days of Dave Barrett, and no successive government, Conservative or Liberal, has dared tinker with those systems.

Some people have heard this speech before; some of the newer members may not have. But I’m proud to give

it again. If we really want to address the issue of affordability—look, the larger the risk pool, the less expensive it is. That's what insurance is all about: the risk pool. When you've got 120 different companies, you've got 120 different risk pools that vary in size from significant to tiny. That's not affordable. When you have one single risk pool, you can track drivers, track vehicles, track highways better.

British Columbia has a bonus-malus system. For every year of good driving, you get rewarded; for every year of bad driving, you pay. My observation is that good drivers in British Columbia pay a lot less than good drivers in Ontario. Bad drivers pay more, and I say that's the way it should be.

We're voting for this resolution. I think the acknowledgment of this problem—it's like a 12-step recovery program for my Liberal colleagues—is one step toward recovery, one step toward finally getting a public, not-for-profit auto insurance system here in the province of Ontario. We would be the envy of every other driving jurisdiction in the world. They would be emulating us. For the life of me, other than for the fact of Bob Rae, I don't understand why we haven't done it yet.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Welland, especially when I'm speaking to a resolution from my colleague and, if I may say, my friend from Newmarket–Aurora. I'd like to begin today by acknowledging the member's campaign for the leadership of his party. He made a very strong showing—it was his second try at it—and spoke very eloquently and passionately for a very definable segment of Ontario. I just want to put on the record the fact that I admire his courage and his convictions, to have put his record on the line and to have stood up for what he truly believes in. Congratulations.

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The member speaks to something that I think is near and dear to all of our hearts, which is the cost of our auto insurance, and in particular here the fact that the resolution that he proposes asks Ontario to do something sensible, which is to ensure that we get rid of the free riders in our system. If we think that insurance costs are high enough, think of what we could do should this resolution be turned into legislation and then into part of the motor vehicle act, in which the costs borne by those of us who pay our premiums are reduced by those people who don't pay premiums and who are disproportionately likely to cause harm, to get into an accident and to draw upon the pool that we who drive safely pay into.

I think this is a good resolution. I think this is one that rewards you if you drive safely, with a good record. I think it's especially important if you live here, in the greater Toronto area, and especially if you're a young driver. I look at the premiums that I'm paying and I am truly shocked when some of my friends and the children of my friends are pointing out that they're paying between five and 10 times what I'm paying as a more

mature, experienced driver. This is one motion that, if enacted and turned into legislation, would contribute to bringing down those costs that young drivers have to pay, which I think are unconscionable on the part of the insurance companies.

I do have one reservation, and I want to hasten to say that this is not a showstopper. If I were to use the language of something I did before I was elected, which was software development, this is merely a bug, and it's a very fixable bug. The member proposes measures that include the impoundment of a vehicle at the roadside. The insurance industry has a valid point in pointing out that indeed there are certain situations in which there's a lag time between an individual either obtaining insurance for the first time or renewing the insurance, the insurance broker or the insurance company reporting it, the data entry onto the system and the time in which it's live and in real time. This is not a problem that should derail this initiative, which I think is an excellent initiative. It's worth putting on the record, though, that this is something the government will definitely need to address. I'm sure the member will volunteer the members of his riding association as beta tests in this regard.

There are a couple of things that I'd just like to say in my last few minutes here. The member for Algoma–Manitoulin did point out that there are already tough penalties for driving without insurance. I think it's time that we put those penalties into force and really gave them some teeth: a fine of up to \$25,000 for a first offence; a fine of up to \$50,000 for a second offence and the possibility of suspending your driver's licence for up to one year. I think that really should read “the probability of having your driver's licence suspended” if you're caught driving without an insurance policy.

People who fraudulently claim to have valid insurance policies may be fined up to \$500? I think that should be a little bit higher.

But we need to know if a policy is still in force, and that's what the member's resolution talks about. We need to have some method of doing authentication and verification at the time that a roadside check is conducted that says, “This person either does or doesn't have a valid insurance policy.” That's where addressing that bug, that delayed time in between when a policy is taken out or renewed—or if indeed an individual has been making payments and has ceased making payments, but has what appears on the surface to be a valid document which is in fact not valid. We do need to address the point at which we lower the probability of, again, what's called in software development a false positive, in which on a system it says you don't have insurance when you do, or you do when you don't. Should we get that particular glitch worked out, I think these proposed measures are not only reasonable but sensible and are ones that Ontario should definitely enact.

We have something in the neighbourhood of 11 million registered vehicles in Ontario, with nine million drivers. There are a lot of people driving without insurance who are slipping through the cracks and who are

costing those of us who drive sensibly, who drive responsibly and who take road safety very seriously—those are the people who are driving up the cost of insurance that my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka spoke to very eloquently. I think the member for Newmarket–Aurora has proposed a resolution that, if it is in fact turned into legislation and brought into force, is going to contribute greatly to bringing down the cost of insurance, and it would do us credit here in the Legislature to support it.

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

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'd merely like to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague the member for Newmarket–Aurora for really what is an elegant solution to an ever-rising problem. We have the highest insurance rates in Canada, and a good part of those rates are a direct reflection of uninsured drivers. I believe that this resolution, if adopted and transformed into legislation—we already have the computer power that keeps track of even our violations of the Highway Traffic Act, and surely it would not be a great expense to add to that data the insurance provisions, cancellations of policies and that kind of thing. I believe that, if adopted, this resolution, transformed into legislation, will result in safer roads and cheaper insurance rates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Would you like to take the time here, plus your two minutes?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Klees.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank my colleagues for their participation in this debate and for their support, their encouragement: the members for Beaches–East York, Welland, Algoma–Manitoulin, Mississauga South, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Cambridge.

What I didn't want to do was give my colleague from Welland a platform to advocate for government insurance; however, that is the freedom of this place and it was, I suppose, to be expected. What is important is that I heard fairly unanimous support for this resolution, and I trust that the minister, then, will in fact take the direction of this Legislature and ensure that this issue is prioritized.

I do want to take the opportunity to welcome, as well, to the Legislature Mrs. Eleanor McMahon, who joins her friend Debbie Virgoe. Ms. McMahon's husband, Sergeant Greg Stobbart, was killed in a vehicle accident; he was cycling at the time. Since that time, Ms. McMahon has been advocating very effectively for road safety issues on a number of levels. I want to thank her and, again, Debbie Virgoe for their input and encouragement to bring not only this issue but issues similar to the floor of the Legislature.

I want to read into the record, as I mentioned earlier, a comment from Julian Fantino, the commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police. He says, "I am pleased to provide you with an endorsement of your resolution suggesting legislation be introduced to implement an automated insurance verification system designed with

the goal of identifying motor vehicles that are being operated on Ontario roads without the required insurance coverage...." He goes on to say, of course, that the Ontario Provincial Police welcomes any initiative by this Legislature to improve the safety of all motorists in the province of Ontario.

I also want to reference an e-mail and conversation that I've had with some members of the insurance industry. I have an e-mail here from Tony Irwin, who is the external affairs manager of the Allstate Canada Group of Companies. He also makes the point that the "Allstate Canada Group which includes Allstate Insurance Company of Canada, Pembroke Insurance Company and Pafco Insurance Company is supportive of any initiative that keeps uninsured vehicles off the road."

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I believe that, without question, this is an issue on which there is very broad consensus that something must be done. I think the general public will find it disconcerting and disturbing that there is not such a system already in place in the province, and that, in fact, information they provide to licence-issuing offices is simply ignored and not dealt with. If we have done nothing today but raise awareness with the public to the downfall of this system and the fact that it needs to be addressed—as the member from Algoma–Manitoulin assured us earlier in his comments, the Ministry of Transportation is going to prioritize this. I did have a conversation with the Minister of Transportation earlier in the week, in which he assured me that this is going to be a priority for his ministry. He welcomed this resolution, because he felt it may well assist him in convincing his cabinet colleagues that the appropriate resources should be allocated to this system.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this debate with my colleagues and look forward to action on this important issue on the part of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for Mr. Klees's ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Klees's resolution in about 50 minutes.

TOBACCO TAX REDUCTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DE LA TAXE SUR LE TABAC

Mr. Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 199, An Act to amend the Tobacco Tax Act to reduce taxation / Projet de loi 199, Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur le tabac afin de réduire les taux de taxation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Barrett moves second reading of Bill 199, An Act to amend the Tobacco Tax Act to reduce taxation.

Pursuant to standing order 98, Mr. Barrett, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I rise to talk about illegal cigarettes and how government is allowing them to destroy the

fabric of our communities not only across Ontario but across this country. For that reason, I'm here today to debate my private member's Bill 199, the Tobacco Tax Reduction Act, 2009.

I spent most of the summer writing about tobacco and the ugly turn that industry has taken over the past several years. It's an ugly turn that is created by negligent and ineffective government policy and, more specifically, tax hikes. At 50%, Ontario has the highest percentage of illegal tobacco of almost anywhere in the world. Today, Ontario's world-recognized tobacco control policies are no longer working. Essentially, this province has gone from first to worst.

Much of the supply of contraband smokes generally comes into Ontario through the Akwesasne reserve on the Ontario-New York border and is then distributed throughout the province. Losing control of the tobacco trade has had devastating effects not only on health but also economically and socially. Government inaction justifies participation in the illegal trade, and it does suggest to some that tax evasion is tolerated. One need go no further than Caledonia to realize the proliferation of contraband tobacco, which feeds the cynicism some feel with respect to politicians and the effectiveness of government.

When it comes to tax policy, tax hikes are no longer forcing people to quit smoking. They force them to find a cheaper alternative, whether it's from the trunk of a car or at a smoke shack at Six Nations, Caledonia or elsewhere across the province. The law of diminishing returns was reached a long time ago. In my view, tax cuts, coupled with enforcement, border control and education, are ways that this government—any government—will win this war on organized crime.

According to an independent research firm, GfK Research Dynamics, almost half the cigarettes consumed in Ontario last year were contraband. If the rates of contraband tobacco continue to rise at this pace, the level of contraband use in Canada could rise to 80% by the end of next year. With respect to Ontario, I suggest that Mr. McGuinty's war on tobacco has been lost.

A high-tax policy does not affect smokers who pay no taxes at all. Their consumption continues to go up. There are those who argue that high taxes are necessary to prevent smoking. The problem is that well over half the smokers in Ontario don't pay any taxes at all. If tax policy plus enforcement, education and border control is successful in breaking the back of the illegal trade, we can predictably expect governments to again ratchet up tobacco taxes. Again, this will limit legal consumption.

Before I became an MPP, I spent 20 years with the Ontario Addiction Research Foundation. It was the same then as it is today: When you tax too high, you eventually hit that point of diminishing returns and eventually consumers hit the black market.

This is from the Canadian Convenience Stores Association, a status report on contraband: "The RCMP has clearly shown that the most recent rise in contraband tobacco coincided with a substantial tax increase on

tobacco products beginning in 2001. Over this time ... both levels of government more than doubled taxes on tobacco. This has created a significant price differential between legal and illegal tobacco products. This differential provides the 'room' for significant criminal margins to exist, while maintaining an attractive (albeit illicit), consumer price point." That RCMP report also found that in 2008, 26% of youth smoking in Ontario is linked to contraband tobacco.

This tax cut resolution is not new. In 1994, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Premier Bob Rae and four other provinces realized illegal tobacco was out of control. They dropped taxes and shut down literally hundreds of illegal smoke shacks overnight. During the 1980s and 1990s, high tobacco taxes and high retail prices fostered smuggling. By 1991 it was believed that one in every nine cigarettes in Canada was contraband, yielding \$709 million to smugglers. In 1994, only 11% of tobacco was illegal, considerably less than today's 50%. Why was 11% at that time considered out of control but 50% in 2009 is not?

My question is, is this government condoning illegal tobacco consumption? Has there been a change in values in our Ontario government with respect to illegal activity? I wonder, does someone have their hand open behind their pocket? Where is the motive for the acceptance of this kind of illegal trade? Is illegal tobacco, it has been suggested by some, this government's way of helping reserves out of poverty? If so, this is backwards thinking. This is criminal thinking, in my view.

A few months back, Cancer Care Ontario and Hamilton's public health department were quoted in the Hamilton Spectator. I will read a quote: "We are very concerned about the impact of inexpensive contraband cigarettes on smoking rates," said Rob Cunningham of the cancer society. "We do know it's very bad in southwestern Ontario and has gotten worse in the last couple of years."

Jan Johnston, a public health nurse: "It's the contraband that has the negative effect on all the progressive tobacco control measures because of the availability and affordability."

This McGuinty government has spent \$13 million on smoke-free Ontario, \$7 million on cessation ads in recent years, and yet the number of smokers does not seem to be going down. Again, why would it? If consumers can purchase baggies of contraband smokes for as little as \$8 to \$10 for 200 cigarettes—smokes purchased either out of the trunk of a car or at a smoke shop?

1520

A recent study of high school smokers—this was published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal—indicated anti-smoking strategies aimed at young people are not working due to the accessibility of cheap, illegal smokes. "The widespread use of First Nations/Native brand cigarettes, especially in Ontario and Quebec, presents a serious challenge to tobacco-control strategies...." warned Dr. Russell Callaghan of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, my former employer.

The National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco has been travelling the country fighting the spread. This is a group that was I think recently founded by the Canadian Convenience Stores Association. The coalition includes the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Customs and Immigration Union. Their mission: again, to raise public and government awareness about contraband cigarettes and to pressure provincial and federal governments to take action.

This week, the Toronto Sun ran a story on the coalition. They spoke with their spokesperson, a retired Toronto police staff superintendent, Gary Grant, who said teens are increasingly buying cigarettes from street dealers.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, some here may well know the street dealers that are selling tobacco.

Mr. Grant says what I have been telling this government for years: Teens are buying from a vehicle parked around the corner from their school, and sometimes they are buying more than just illegal smokes" I'll continue to quote the police officer:

"They're starting to smoke at an earlier age and they're learning it's okay to break the law. They're also finding that they have access to a lot more than just contraband cigarettes—for instance, maybe a little ecstasy for the weekend, some grass or some other types of drugs, maybe some booze, maybe even a weapon.

"And this is happening to people's teenage sons and daughters as young as 12 and 13 years old."

The story goes on to say, "An RCMP investigation into illegal cigarettes—manufactured without controls in China, India, Canada and US—found they can contain insect eggs, dead bugs, mould and even human feces."

A recent report from an organization called the Center for Public Integrity, an investigative journalism organization out of Washington, detailed how terrorists and insurgencies around the world are now financing their organizations and missions after the crackdowns on fundraising post 9/11. Terrorist groups worldwide have been turning to various criminal rackets like contraband tobacco.

Smuggling cigarettes has proven to be lucrative and a low risk to fund these kinds of operations. The report goes on to list groups like al Qaeda, Hezbollah, Taliban, Hamas, Kurdistan Workers' Party and FARC, a group in Colombia.

In June 2005, I brought this type of information to the floor of this House. I told the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services that government policy had created close to 300 smoke shacks locally in my area—New Credit and Six Nations. Six Nations police and the local newspaper are reporting that the benefactors of this were the Hells Angels and the Vagabonds—organized crime.

I quoted the newspaper at the time: "There is specific evidence of the presence of major motorcycle gang operations, the Italian mafia, Russian mafia, Sri Lankan and Asian mafias, as well as Jamaican drug gang operatives working in the relative safety of native communities."

Today, the RCMP estimate 100 criminal organizations are involved in the tobacco trade.

People want something done about this, and surveys indicate they want to fight tax-free tobacco with tax cuts on the legal trade.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise, and with the greatest of respect to my colleague Mr. Barrett, I cannot support this bill.

I have been in public office now for nearly 21 years and the first 13 of those years I spent at the municipal level. Almost all of those 13 years, save and except that period when I was the mayor of East York, I served on the boards of health of, first of all, the borough of East York and latterly of the megacity of Toronto. I had the opportunity, over all that time, to work with absolutely wonderful people who were concerned about tobacco.

I think most often about the late Dr. Sheela Basrur. She was our associate medical officer of health in East York and became our medical officer of health, went on to become the medical officer of health for the city of Toronto and finished her career as the medical officer of health for Ontario. She was passionate about the whole issue of tobacco, and we would have many discussions, over all those years, about stopping young people from smoking.

The biggest thing to stop young people from smoking was the price point: to raise the cost of cigarettes, through taxes and other things, to make it prohibitive for people to actually start in the first place. For us to take the taxes off, to reduce the taxes and the cost of cigarettes to where they were in the mid 1990s, in my view—and I'm sure in her view if she was here today—would be a retrograde step. It is trite to say that young people get involved in smoking largely because they think it's an image builder—it's what their friends are doing; there's a lot of peer pressure involved—but they stay involved in smoking because they are able to afford it.

Now, there is some talk here about illegal cigarettes, and I would be the first to admit that there are contraband cigarettes flooding into this province in ways that have never happened before. You can go through some of our First Nations communities, particularly those along the border with the United States—down to Akwesasne, in the Picton and Cornwall area; the First Nations and Six Nations reserves in and around Hamilton and Fort Erie—and you will find cigarette shacks. You will find stores there that are selling cigarettes, ostensibly to First Nations but literally to anyone else who will buy them. You can also find—I am not naive; I've dealt with the police in 54 and 55 divisions in Beaches—East York about it—people who set up their own cigarette shacks, sometime in their own apartment buildings, selling cigarettes at all hours of the night for a fraction of the cost that would take place in local convenience stores.

All that being said, we still have to maintain the taxes. The problem here is not because the taxes are too high; the problem is that we are not enforcing the laws of

Ontario and the laws of Canada. With the greatest respect, I think that's where the bill should have gone.

It is possible for us to do a number of things. I received a copy of a letter from Mr. Perley, who is the director of OCAT, the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, and he sets out a number of recommendations or talks about a number of things that can be done to lessen the amount of illegal cigarettes that are coming into the province.

He talks about "banning the supply of raw materials." Now, we know that the raw materials come not only from Ontario farms, in some cases, but much of it comes from offshore—from the United States, from China and from India. We have no idea what is contained in that tobacco: the number of pesticides, animal feces and other things. One of the things we have to start doing is being tough on the importation of this tobacco that goes into illegal or questionable cigarette manufacturers.

We need to look at "increased funding for the enforcement and the active involvement of all levels of policing in Ontario..." I think this is part of the problem. When the police set up and monitor sales of illegal tobacco, they can really be quite effective, because what takes place is often very brazen. You need only go by a cigarette shack and you'll see the signs and the prices of all the cigarettes. Really, those who are not entitled to buy at that rate—those who are not members of the First Nations community—ought not to buy it and can be stopped, and when the police do stop them, the sales plummet.

1530

What we need to do as well, that has been set out, is progress toward shutting down unlicensed manufacturers in Canada and abroad that are selling the cigarettes. We know, or the police know, where those cigarettes are being manufactured. We should shut them down. I don't know what law will be required, but I'm sure that if a law came forward in this House that would allow the province of Ontario or a request to the federal government to shut down illegal manufacturers of cigarettes, I for one would support such a bill.

There is also the suggestion that a comprehensive public education campaign about the damage caused by contraband tobacco should take place. Now, I am not a smoker. I know people who have smoked contraband cigarettes because they are cheap, but I am also advised by all of them that the taste of those cigarettes is even more foul than the taste of the cigarettes that are sold in the corner store, because they are very strong. They are manufactured without safeguards, the filters are not of the same quality, the tobacco is not of the same quality, and quite frankly, I think we need to do that kind of education as well.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: My colleague is making another suggestion. I'll leave it for him to make the suggestion in the House.

So I stand here in opposition to the bill because I think that there are other things that can be done. I know the

member thinks passionately about this. I know that the member represents the few remaining tobacco farms left in Ontario and the farmers who work there. I know that he cares passionately about the cigarette shacks set up all across Ontario, because I have heard him here so many times. He has come with a solution; I just quite frankly can't agree with that solution.

When the federal and provincial governments did this back some 15 years ago to stop the contraband, they did so not because they were taking action against small-time retailers on First Nations reserves and those selling cigarettes out of their apartments; they took the action because the chief perpetrators at that time of the crime of the smuggling and selling of contraband cigarettes were our own giant tobacco companies. They were Benson and Hedges and Imperial Tobacco. And it was a concerted action not just by the province of Ontario but by the Canadian government and four of the largest provinces that went ahead and did this.

To my mind, we need to do something else. We cannot emulate and go back to those days. We're not acting in concert—this is not seeking to act in concert—with other provincial governments and with the federal government. The problem is very different, and I would suggest that we find a better solution.

I believe with all my heart, and in honour of the late Dr. Basrur, that we need to eradicate smoking from this province, particularly for young people, and I wait for the day that we do that. I don't think this bill, though, is the answer.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I too rise in strong opposition to Bill 199, An Act to amend the Tobacco Tax Act to reduce taxation. Lowering the price of legal tobacco products will simply increase consumption, increase the incidence of respiratory and cardiovascular disease and even death, surely something we all want to avoid.

Our goal is for a smoke-free Ontario. This bill is a retrograde step, one that will undermine all our efforts in preventing tobacco use, especially in kids, and all our investments in cessation programs. Fighting the use of contraband tobacco products should be done through enforcement of the Tobacco Tax Act by federal and provincial police authorities, not through meddling with taxation strategies.

As the former medical officer of health for York region, I well remember the disastrous effect of a similar move by the federal and provincial governments in 1994. Tobacco taxes were reduced by approximately 50% to address smuggling of illegal products from the US into Canada. Health Canada's assessment some years later showed an increase in smoking rates and youth initiation of tobacco use, a decrease in tobacco revenues and many excess deaths. Study after study has shown that tobacco use is extremely price-sensitive. In 1994, in the *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, Alexander Ding, from the department of economics at the University of California, found that youth are even more sensitive to price

changes in cigarettes than adults. For youth, a 10% increase in price resulted in a decrease in smoking prevalence of 14%. For adults, for the same increase in price, the smoking prevalence decreased by 2%. In addition, not only was prevalence decreased, but also the quantity of cigarettes consumed, and he concluded, as an economist, "Because cigarette smoking has been linked to an ever-growing list of health problems, the cessation thereof via financial incentives could provide for an effective non-traditional method of preventive medicine."

In 1999, a World Bank review showed that, all else being equal, price rises of about 10% would, on average, reduce tobacco consumption by about 4% in developed countries and 8% in developing countries. In their more recent meta-analysis reviewing 86 studies published to the year 2001 which examined price elasticity of demand for tobacco products, Gallet and List found a mean price elasticity of minus 0.48, meaning that, on average, a 10% increase in price will be followed by a decrease in consumption of 4.8%.

In 2001, Dr. Albert Schumacher, then-president of the Ontario Medical Association, stated, "Price point pressure remains an essential component of tobacco control efforts. Price affects consumption at all levels and in particular has an effect on youth smoking rates and consumption levels. High prices help prevent kids from starting, and if they do start, from smoking as much and therefore from achieving the same level of addiction."

So how should we counteract the low price of contraband tobacco? Well, of course, by enforcing the enhanced measures under the Tobacco Tax Act that have been enacted by our government over the past five years. And we certainly have had successes on this front. My colleague from Peterborough, I know, is anxious to detail these particular successes.

Of course there is more to do, but this piece of legislation is not the way to do it. As Ontario Lung Association president George Habib has said, "Even if tobacco taxes in this province were reduced by 100%, a carton of cigarettes would still sell for more than four times the cost of a bag of contraband. And we would be left with even lower tax revenue for the public health system, more youth starting to smoke, and an increase in preventable and unnecessary disease and death."

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

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm pleased to rise to support my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk in regard to Bill 199—a bill, I believe, that would solve the problem of our young people starting to smoke in greater numbers in the province of Ontario.

I personally started smoking at the age of 14 in my first year of high school. It was a different time then. Cigarettes were glamorous and supposedly safe. Everybody smoked, including our movie heroes like Humphrey Bogart, and cigarettes were easy to obtain at regular smoke shops because they were not considered dangerous.

Once you are hooked, you stay hooked. I smoked on and off until about three years ago. Nicotine is a very

strong drug addiction, and I can personally attest to that. It is a physical and mental addiction, some say equal to a cocaine or heroin addiction.

But we have become wiser now. We know that tobacco is not safe. It is a proven killer, and that message has been published and advertised widely. We have banned advertising of tobacco. We have taken our responsibility seriously to protect children and vigorously enforced our laws about selling tobacco to minors. We have ordered our tobacco retailers, at some expense, to screen packages of tobacco from the eyes of children. We have forced tobacco manufacturers to carry anti-smoking messages on tobacco packages. Progress was definitely being made.

Now this McGuinty government has undone all of those weapons and all advancements and put up to 50% of our industry in the hands of organized criminals. These criminals are not bound by any of the progress we have made in the past, and care about only one thing: criminal profits to be made by selling illegal cigarettes. They will sell illegal cigarettes to our children, along with even more powerful and harmful drugs. They're not bound by any laws, decency or morality.

1540

And what does our mean old Dalton do-little have to say? Increase taxes by 8% on the GST to make up for the millions that he has already lost as a result of illegal cigarettes. Rather than a campaign to stop the illegal sale of cigarettes to our children, mean old Dalton do-little once again abandons our children, as he has in the past.

As health promotion critic for the official opposition, I'm committed to exploring ways of reducing the incidence of smoking among our young people. While it is comforting to know that a majority of our young people count themselves as non-smokers, we must act now to prevent more teens from smoking and restrict the access they currently have to contraband cigarettes.

It was very disturbing to read the recent study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal that reported that 13% of Canadian high school students who are daily smokers regularly smoke illegal cigarettes. The study also found that nearly 22% of youth smokers in Ontario and more than 22% of Quebec's young smokers regularly smoked illegal cigarettes. These figures are troubling and I believe this bill will help combat that problem.

A driving factor for young people who choose to smoke is cost. Illegal cigarettes are dirt cheap when compared to the cost of a package of cigarettes purchased in a convenience store—even if this bill was adopted and the taxes were lowered. That's an important thing to remember. Teens can buy 200 illegal cigarettes for a measly \$6 compared to as much as \$80 for the same number of legal cigarettes. This government is protecting young people from second-hand smoke by banning smoking in cars, yet they refuse to act once again when teens take up smoking simply because it is no longer an expensive habit.

Sadly, many of the family-run corner stores where legal cigarettes have been sold have been forced to close because they simply cannot compete against cheap,

illegal tobacco products. These corner stores that remain open report that they are losing almost \$11,500 a year in sales due to contraband tobacco.

I commend the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco for the work they are doing to stop the sale of illegal cigarettes in Canada. The group is currently touring Ontario and will bring their message to my region on October 6 at 7 p.m. at the Kitchener Holiday Inn. The coalition's mission is to raise public and government awareness about contraband cigarettes and to pressure provincial and federal governments to take action.

Together, last year the federal and provincial governments lost a whopping \$2.4 billion in taxes. The losses will only become greater as more and more young people take up smoking and as this government continues to sit on its hands and ignore this problem. There are no taxes being collected on these tobacco products that are illegal, and the government is simply permitting it to happen.

A study two years ago on contraband cigarettes in Ontario by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 30% of tobacco sales in the province were illegal, and that has now increased to just under 50%.

This government must act. If they do not, on the solution that's proposed by my colleague the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, the problem will only increase, and once hooked, these children will stay hooked for a long period of time. We're losing the battle now.

Now, not five years from now, is the time to take a stand, and I am supporting this bill.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Unfortunately for my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk, I also am going to vote against this bill. But I want to say that I understand the motivation for bringing it forward. He's acting on behalf of his constituents. I think that something else needs to be done to remedy the plight of tobacco farmers in this province. I understand and have compassion for all the reasons behind the bill, but I don't think this is going to work.

First of all, Ontario and Quebec already have the lowest tobacco taxes in Canada, and yet we have the highest amount of contraband cigarettes. So, that fact alone speaks against this bill. If lowering taxes helped solve the problem of contraband cigarettes, presumably the fact that we have the lowest taxes on cigarettes in the country would have already affected that result, and it hasn't. So the problem there is number one.

I was trying to think of an analogy. I was thinking that we have a problem with contraband guns too, but certainly nobody is proposing that we lower the taxes on legal firearms to contravene the flow into Ontario of illegal firearms. Let me say: Cigarettes are like guns; they kill people. They absolutely kill. In fact, they are more effective and efficient at killing people than guns are in this province. There are about 13,000 deaths in Ontario every year directly related to cigarette smoke. Unfortunately, in a kind of weird, moral way it's not just the smokers who die; it's their children, their spouses and

the people who have to work with them. So, second-hand smoke also kills people.

This isn't going to work. It has been proven that it won't work. It's been proven certainly as something we know, that as you raise taxes, you lower the rates of smoking.

The only other thing I'd like to say is, there's kind of a weird subterranean messaging here which I also find a little bit offensive, I must say, and that is kind of anti-native, as if this is a native problem. It really is not a problem of our First Nations. Obviously—and I think this point has been made—the large tobacco companies were behind most of the smuggling in the early 1990s. Interestingly enough, if you want to enforce laws and make laws work, which is what this is about, certainly there is an aspect of law enforcement that didn't work so well. Not one of those CEOs has been brought to account for what they did and what they continue to do in terms of killing people in this province.

If we want to look at enforcement of the law, which we should, let's look at enforcing that law against those who are actually manufacturing these products that are killing people and not those who are doing a secondary business in them. We don't want to take them on because of course they have high-priced lawyers. I get that.

Unfortunately, I can't support it, but I do understand the motivation behind it. I would certainly recommend to the member that another bill needs to be forthcoming, something that's going to help those farmers transition to producing crops that don't kill people. That's what's needed here, not lowering taxes on cigarettes.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a delight for me this afternoon to get a few words on the record in response to my colleague the member from Haldimand-Norfolk and Bill 199.

This is an issue that certainly needs to be discussed. It's an issue that gets a lot of play in the media. It's something that the Ontario government, indeed, is trying to address. I want to get on the record that Ontario has tough tobacco tax laws at work.

Carl Fontaine of Fort Alexander, Manitoba, was sentenced to six months in jail and fined \$338,155 after being found guilty of possession of unmarked cigarettes for the purpose of sale in the Ontario Court of Justice in Marathon. This decision was rendered on September 15, 2009.

Over the last number of years, approximately 67 million contraband cigarettes have been seized in Ontario by ministry investigators and inspectors. So, indeed our enforcement officers and inspectors are out there working, but we recognize that this is a far more complex issue.

On behalf of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the former member from St. Paul's, and the current minister, in my role as parliamentary assistant I travelled to Albany, New York, to meet with legislators at the New York State House to look at the issues they're facing in terms of contraband with the Seneca First Nation and, indeed, the triangle at Akwesasne which involves the

province of Ontario, the province of Quebec and New York state.

Out of that experience and reporting back to the minister, we see that this is a complex issue. It needs enforcement, but there are other issues at play here: certainly economic development in our First Nations communities, the need to implement the recommendations from Justice Linden's observations after his judicial inquiry into the issues surrounding Ipperwash and some of the elements of the Kelowna accord that weren't honoured by the Harper government. So there are a lot of issues at work here. We as a government see the need to bring a comprehensive approach to this issue.

1550

Certainly with that in mind, we have brought together the Minister and Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the Minister and Ministry of Revenue in the province of Ontario, the minister and staff from the Ministry of Health Promotion, and certainly the minister and staff from the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, because we see that to address this problem, we need to take several steps. Just one step to reduce the taxes on tobacco won't work. We know that the people of Ontario are looking at this government to take leadership on this file, and we will be doing that with a comprehensive approach, bringing the ministers and ministries together to tackle this problem head-on.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I will take a few minutes of time just to say that I understand why the member from Haldimand-Norfolk is putting this bill forward. Unfortunately, I can't support it, but I do understand why he is doing it. He's been a great supporter of tobacco country and tobacco farmers, and he has asked many questions about illegal cigarettes. I think one of the most astounding facts is that 50% of cigarettes sold in Ontario are contraband or illegal cigarettes, and this government has been turning a blind eye to it.

The policies are not working. They are not working. We are seeing an increase. Despite the high taxes and high prices for cigarettes, we're seeing, in 2005, 2006 and 2007, an increase in the number of smokers in the province, especially amongst young people. Look at the Toronto Sun yesterday saying that they're starting to smoke at an earlier age, and they are learning it's okay to break the law. That's what this government is teaching young people in this province.

Not only that, but we're losing over \$1 billion in revenue to be used for all sorts of good purposes in this province because the government is ignoring the problem of 50% of the cigarettes sold in the province being illegal. It's the worst in the country. As the member from Haldimand-Norfolk pointed out, a high-tax policy does not affect those who don't pay the taxes. So if you have half the people buying cigarettes paying no taxes at all, it doesn't matter what policy you have.

I have heard from the Korean Businessmen's Association. They are barely hanging on. Their businesses are struggling because a big part of their revenue used to

come from legal cigarettes, and now they are all being sold out of the backs of cars.

There is a problem. I know that the member is trying to address it. I don't necessarily agree with the way he's trying to address it, but he's trying to address the problem while the government turns a blind eye to this issue.

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

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today, it is certainly my pleasure to rise in the House to address what is a very complex issue for this province. The issue of contraband or illegal cigarettes involves a number of government agencies, as you have heard from my colleague before, and a number of provincial ministries. We as a government have taken a number of different steps in addressing the issue of smoking in general.

While this particular issue is one that resides with the Ministry of Revenue, I want to address this House today with respect to what the McGuinty government has done and continues to do to protect non-smokers from exposure to second-hand smoke, to help smokers to quit, and to prevent Ontarians, particularly our youth, from starting to smoke in the first place.

The smoke-free Ontario strategy continues to be one of North America's most comprehensive tobacco-control initiatives. Smoking in enclosed workplaces and public places is now prohibited in Ontario. Our government has also made restaurants and bars smoke-free. Under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, the McGuinty government has taken significant action on tobacco use, and we continue to address that issue. On January 21, 2009, we implemented legislation banning smoking in motor vehicles with children under 16 years of age.

Our government is committed to helping Ontarians to break the cycle of tobacco addiction and to prevent our youth from starting to smoke in the first place. We have provided counselling and free nicotine replacement therapy to over 58,000 smokers in partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. We continue to work with our partners and we certainly agree with the statement made by our colleague regarding one of our partners, Mr. Michael Perley, who says a tax cut is not the solution to the problem that we face. We continue to provide funding to the Canadian Cancer Society to address the issue of people who are addicted to smoking.

In May 2008, the McGuinty government banned the retail display of tobacco, and to this point, 98% of retailers are in compliance. Research suggests that displaying tobacco at the point of sale can boost cigarette sales. Preventing youth from starting to smoke in the first place is an important objective of our smoke-free Ontario strategy, and we have a number of initiatives that we have invested in. We have invested \$37 million in programs to prevent children and youth from smoking. As of 2007, 72% of students in grades 7 to 12 have reported never having smoked a cigarette in their lifetime.

We understand that the contraband issue is a significant issue and we continue to work to address that issue in collaboration with our colleagues and stakeholders.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I've been monitoring the debate and I have to make some quick points here—very quickly because of the time allotted: So the member would tell me why moving the price from approximately \$80 to \$60 will stop those people filling their trunks and bringing them in front of schools. They're still getting them for about 25 bucks. Quite frankly, that's just not a logical explanation. And you drop the tax altogether; that would be good. Then we don't have any tax revenue for health care that we're trying to spend money on.

He also inferred very suspiciously that we condone illegal trade by the government. An absolutely silly accusation, and absolutely silly that he continually says there is nothing going on. I know that my honourable colleagues had made some comments about exactly the amount of work that's going on. It's a complex, very multi-layered jurisdictional approach and it'll happen and it is happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: As far as this debate, I appreciate the contribution from the various members. There has not been a debate on illegal tobacco in the last five years, that I'm aware of. There have been a number of pointed questions, understandably, during question period.

Thanks to the members for Beaches-East York, Oak Ridges-Markham, Cambridge, Parkdale-High Park, Peterborough, Parry Sound-Muskoka, the Minister of Health Promotion and, most recently, the member from Brant.

We not only need more debate in this Legislature, we need action from this government and from society in general. I used a private member's bill and I'm limited by the constraints of a private member's bill to highlight one of a number of measures that are required to break the back of the illegal trade.

Within the confines of this legislation, it's essentially doing what Bob Rae and Jean Chrétien did in 1994. This initiative requires the co-operation of the federal government to cut taxes specifically at the federal level and, as in 1994, to swing around again and reduce taxes on the legal product in the five provinces, as I recall, that did this. I do know this: Literally 200 smoke shacks disappeared overnight in my area. I was working for the Addiction Research Foundation. I'm referring to the smoke shacks at Six Nations and presently in the riding of Brant.

We need action because there is an indication from independent research last year that 50% of the tobacco smoked in Ontario is illegal; it's contraband, it's illicit, whatever you wish to call it. We're sitting at 50% right now. The same research firm indicates that by the end of next year, given present trends—and this is what is referred to as speculative research, based on trends—we will be sitting at 80% of the tobacco—cigars, cigarettes—consumed in Ontario being in the hands of the illegal trade, the 100 organized crime groups that have

been identified by the RCMP. This is an untenable situation, it's unconscionable and it's very hard to put that back in the box.

1600

I will remind those present that when Bob Rae and Jean Chrétien broke the back of the illegal trade and eliminated those smoke shacks in 1994, tobacco at that time was deemed to be out of control at an illegal rate of 11%. This year, it's 50%. Next year, the projection is 80%.

I wrapped up my presentation indicating that people do want action from both the provincial and federal level. A Pollara survey reported that 64% of Ontarians believe that action is required at both levels of government. Secondly, 42% felt the taxes should be cut, as in 1994—the kind of cut proposed in this bill.

One of my goals—beyond health, obviously, and a return to the rule of law—is to create a level playing field, to take away that incentive, that motive, for people. We all agree—I was part of the research going on probably 30 years ago now—that price is an incentive. High taxes inhibit consumption. The result: diminishing returns, and people go to the black market.

These people pay no taxes at all. It's one point that some people have not made here. If they pay no taxes at all, that defeats the purpose. Their consumption is increasing. We've got the figures: 50% this year, perhaps 80% by the end of next year. Take away the tax-free advantage, the incentives, the motive, and you will take away much of the illegal trade, something that both the provincial NDP and federal Liberals knew back in 1994.

Will more people smoke if this bill passes and taxes are cut? The answer is no. Again, half the smokers in Ontario don't pay any taxes at all. It has no impact. There is no economic lever on these people at all. They have their cigarette taxes cut to zero as it is. Their consumption is going up, not down.

It's high time for this government to admit that the fight on untaxed, unregulated and unenforced tobacco operations is ineffectual and action is required. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for private members' public business has now expired. We'll go to the votes.

PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT
(ENABLING MUNICIPALITIES
TO REQUIRE INCLUSIONARY
HOUSING),
2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE
(INCLUSION DE LOGEMENTS
ABORDABLES PAR LES MUNICIPALITÉS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll first deal with ballot item number 28.

Ms. DiNovo has moved second reading of Bill 198, An Act to amend the Planning Act with respect to

inclusionary housing. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. DiNovo?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, I'd like to refer it to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government? So ordered.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 29.

Mr. Klees has moved private member's notice of motion number 67. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

TOBACCO TAX REDUCTION ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DE LA TAXE SUR LE TABAC

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 30.

Mr. Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 199, An Act to amend the Tobacco Tax Act to reduce taxation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear some noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SECTOR EXPENSES REVIEW ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR L'EXAMEN DES DÉPENSES DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 23, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 201, An Act to provide for review of expenses in the public sector / Suite du débat ajourné le 23 septembre 2009 sur la motion portant deuxième lecture du projet de loi 201, Loi prévoyant l'examen des dépenses dans le secteur public.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to talk about the Public Sector Expenses Review Act in second reading. This bill gives the Integrity Commissioner the responsibility to

review expense claims at government agencies designated by cabinet. I ask, why only the ones designated by cabinet? Why not every single Ontario government agency, board and commission, not all to be reviewed in the same year, but on a rotating basis, with certain of them randomly selected each year for extra attention? The government has stated that the following agencies will be designated.

Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., the poster agency not only for questionable expense claims, which are likely just a drop in the bucket compared to the insider ticket agency lottery win scandals, the untendered contracts and a host of other financial offences occurring at this organization.

Next is the Ontario Power Generation. Then we have Hydro One—let us not forget the Hydro One yacht—Independent Electricity System Operator, Ontario Power Authority.

And a favourite of mine, the WSIB, which has its experience rating and its dinners at steakhouses in Ottawa. Where do we begin with this outfit? First, it will require more than a full financial or expense claims audit to get this outfit sorted out. It will need a complete overhaul. The expense claims review will undoubtedly show an air of entitlement equal to that of eHealth, but the real crime with that organization is how it handles claims of injured workers.

A remnant of the Harris era, the WSIB acts like every other insurance company: Rather than having workers' compensation mentally, it acts like injured workers are cheating the system and somehow robbing the WSIB of its own money. On the other hand, the WSIB freely waves its money wand and bestows pots of gold on employers in excessive experience-rating bonuses. Does the WSIB check to see if any of those companies had employees who were ill or injured because of their work, or who were being coerced to perform phantom duties so that they would not have to report the lost-time accident? The answer is, of course, no—not, at least, until this scandal was uncovered by the OFL and our party.

Will the Integrity Commissioner be mandated to look into the concept of justice delayed and justice denied? The long wait times for injured workers to have their cases settled are obscene; some as long as—I can't believe this—10 or 15 years before they're dealt with. But will there be any investigation of that? I doubt it. Will anything be done to ensure expedited processes? I doubt it. Will anything be done to ensure that injured workers are trained and returned to work and that they can do jobs that are actually available for them? Maybe.

Other agencies on the list include the LCBO; eHealth—I could speak for hours on the myriad problems at this outfit and I sincerely hope the auditor is able to figure out what's been going on there and financially provide the answers that Ontario's people demand.

Cancer Care Ontario: Will the integrity commissioner find any reason why this outfit should handle the northern diabetic program? I doubt that, because the mandate won't permit an investigation of that organ-

ization. Will it permit an investigation into the wait times? I don't think the mandate will work there either.

Infrastructure Ontario. Ontario Energy Board. What's the number of energy organizations in this list? Five so far, maybe, or more? How many do we really need? And why do all five energy agencies belong on this list when other agencies are excluded? Is the government's flagging these areas trying to tell us something? I'm not sure.

Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario; also the Ontario Financing Authority; Ontario Realty Corp.—Again, will the Integrity Commissioner be mandated to find out why developers have undue influence with this outfit on the loss of environmental lands like the Eramosa Karst feeder lands in my area? No, they won't.

1610

Ontario public service pension board. Metrolinx—That's it, Mr. McGuinty, set up an agency to hide behind when transit decisions are made that are bound to cause discord in many communities, and you can say that it was this agency, not you, who made the decision. Will this legislation ensure that the real environmental and safety concerns of communities affected by increased diesel train traffic are heard? Of course not. But those are questions of significance for many of our communities.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission; Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre Corp.; TVO/TFO, the Ontario Educational Communications Authority; the Ontario Racing Commission; and the Ontario Clean Water Agency.

The Ontario Racing Commission is especially unique. I can speak to this; I have friends who are in that industry. They have owned horses, and they do racing throughout Ontario. That agency has become very dictatorial at the tracks. The people who run the tracks are pushing the harness racers and the horse racing out and replacing them with slot machines. This is a traditional industry in Ontario that creates a lot of employment for breeders, for trainers, for farmers, for racers, for all kinds of jobs in Ontario that are disappearing because we're moving toward slot machines.

I personally enjoy a good horse race at the track. It's exciting, and if you watch yourself, you don't get into too much financial trouble—you can. But they have their 10 or 12 races, whereas you go into a casino and you could lose a lot of money in a very short period of time—and continue to go back every night. They don't race every night at the same racetrack. So I think that might be beneficial to some of the people who live in the area who might be coerced into continually going to these gambling facilities. If it's less and they don't do it as much, it may benefit them in the long run and maybe they won't get addicted to it.

The list goes on, and that's a fairly long list, although there are still some big agencies that are missing. The government hasn't made it clear why they've selected the agencies they have and not some of the others. My thinking is that some of the ones they may not have picked may have some problems. They may have some

skeletons in the closet that they don't want to get out. I firmly believe that is the truth, and I believe that there are going to be more things coming out as time goes on.

If transparency is vital, why not apply it to all agencies, boards and commissions? Why not the Ontario Securities Commission; or FSCO, the insurance and pension regulator? As Mr. Kormos pointed out earlier today, the insurance business in this province—the private insurers—certainly has a mandate and certainly controls the insurance business in our province, as far as I can see, especially car insurance. I'm hoping that eventually we do turn to public insurance for cars and automobiles. I think it'll make a big difference in this province. I don't know if it's on the horizon shortly, but I certainly hope that after some of the comments from the official opposition today and from our party—I feel that we have a mutual agenda to maybe see public insurance come back.

If there's a special reason why FSCO and the Ontario Securities Commission are not included in this list, we'll need another piece of legislation to authorize an investigation of these agencies, so why not do it now rather than have to legislate more investigative procedures? Is it because the kind of expenses tolerated on Bay Street should be tolerated for their publicly controlled regulators? I certainly hope not.

We also wonder whether the Integrity Commissioner will have enough staff to handle the workload. I doubt it. Nine people? Wow. Just in the company where I worked, Stelco, we had a whole financial department that might have involved 30 or 40 employees to deal with 17,000 employees. We're talking 14 million people and all the agencies? It's interesting. After all, the Integrity Commissioner's office has nine staff, as I pointed out. The office was created to enforce the Members' Integrity Act in 2002. It was supposed to keep an eye on MPPs and cabinet ministers. Well, I think they've got that down pretty good, but now we're talking about a bigger ballgame. We're talking about a lot more agencies and a lot more coverage that they're going to be required to do, and believe me, nine people won't cut it.

Since then the government has expanded that office's purview to include the Ontario public service, and now public servants at government agencies, boards and commissions. That would require more people also. It's a significant increase in workload and it raises serious questions. Will the government increase the budget of the commissioner to hire new staff? We don't know. Is the commissioner deliberately being distracted from what were supposed to be her core duties: monitoring the Members' Integrity Act? I hope not. Are they spelling out who is monitored and why? No, they're not.

We insist that the government provide this information, with full details spelled out during committee and heard directly from the Integrity Commissioner himself or herself. The revelations of this spring and summer have been quite disturbing, to say the least, and I'm sure that Ontarians agree. They want to know that their tax dollars are being spent wisely, especially when there are

so many other uses for their dollars, like hiring new nurses and teachers, investing in job creation, making post-secondary education more affordable and improving special needs services in schools. We need a lot more EAs. The list goes on and on. Needless to say, public money is a precious commodity these days, and this government should begin to treat it that way.

Over the spring and summer, we heard about the gross—I repeat, gross—abuse of public money by the expensing of some outrageous examples. Some of these people were making thousands of dollars a day and they were charging us \$1.65 for tea at Tim Hortons. They couldn't pay for that themselves? Most of the people I know don't make \$3,000 a month. This guy's making \$3,000 a day—\$1.65; \$3.99 for Choco Bites; \$30 for a car wash. Can't he wash his own car? I do. Child care expenses: Why are we paying for a guy or a woman who's making that kind of money to take care of their kids? Can't they afford to do that? And a speech that cost us \$25,000: That's unbelievable—just to go and talk for a couple of hours? I don't know. They're either geniuses or they're really crafty with money; I'm not quite sure which.

Perhaps more alarming is the fact that consultants were being paid, as I mentioned, \$3,000 a day. Do you know how many families could live in affordable housing for that money? How many children would go to school with breakfast in their tummies for that kind of money? Do you know how many grandparents raising their grandchildren would be able to provide the education, recreation and medical programs that those children desperately need for that amount of money? It's absolutely ridiculous. At the rate of \$3,000 per day, it would take 20 days to reach the average annual household income in Ontario. This person makes in 20 days what an average Ontarian might make in a year. I don't know who's worth that kind of money. There can't be any justification for obscene daily rates of a \$3,000 consultant. Bring the work in-house and hire full-time workers who could do the job just as well and would have a permanent job. We've all been searching for more jobs. Maybe they should hire somebody full-time. It'd be a lot cheaper.

Just to make it really clear for those listening, here are some more questionable expenses that I have seen. A vice-president of OLG spent \$3,713.77 on one meal. That's about four months' rent for an average family. He spent it on one meal. What's wrong with this picture? Another OLG executive was reimbursed for the \$1,000 he put forward renting a Florida condominium after work requirements forced him to cancel. Why are we paying for a guy to have a vacation in Florida in a condominium? That \$1,000 is the car repair or Christmas for grandchildren being raised by their grandparents. We're paying for this millionaire's condo.

1620

At least three executives charged \$250 for their gym fees to the crown corporation to go work out. I pay for my own. I don't know what they do. Why are we paying

for people to work out? That \$250 would pay for recreation programs for at-risk children and is more—I repeat, more—than the full monthly income for grandchildren being raised by their grandparents. I had to sit in this House and fight for a year to get this government to reimburse grandparents for \$251 per child per month and \$188 for the second one. That's a total of about \$400 a month to bring up two kids by a grandparent. I don't think they go to the gym to work out. We're paying for this guy to go to the gym and he's getting more than the grandchildren do for a month? Wow. This province really needs a shakeup.

And it goes on. Valet parking at \$30. The guy can't park his own car and walk around to the front of the building? I do. Unbelievable. Let's get a grip here. This is absolutely outrageous, that this is going on.

Luggage replacement, \$615. Since when is the government in the travel business and an insurance company for employees' lost or damaged personal property? That's a new one. Every other employee is told to claim lost or damaged personal property on their own home insurance, but this guy—or she, whoever—charged the government \$615 to replace the luggage they lost. The taxpayers of Ontario paid for that. But they were only making \$3,000 a day; I'm sure they couldn't afford that.

I don't know what planet they're living on. The air of entitlement is rampant in this province. Open expense accounts: easy living. Just roam freely. Do what you want, spend what you want and charge the government.

Here's an interesting one: an account manager—I imagine he's making a fair wage—who claimed \$7.70 for a pen refill, and \$1.12 for a cloth grocery bag at the store. That's obscene beyond words. How do you justify that?

And let's go to eHealth. A well-paid consultant charged \$5.64 for a cup of coffee and a chocolate chip cookie. Wow. That is one expensive cup of coffee. I'm sure it wasn't North American coffee. It must be a specialty coffee and a special cookie, maybe. Who would think that they could expense this in the first place, but, even more, who would have the nerve to put that in? Once again, the air of entitlement seems to run up and down through these cushy outfits—up and down, up and down.

I want to talk a bit more about eHealth: more than \$5 million worth of untendered contracts, conflicts of interest and anger over high-priced consultants who nickel and dime the taxpayers. They're nickel-and-dime the taxpayers. Meanwhile, some of the taxpayers—I can speak for my own riding, where 20% of the people live below the poverty level. I don't think they're going out for \$6 lattes. It's not happening.

What about eHealth's predecessor, the Smart Systems for Health Agency, another boondoggle that has cost the Ontario people hundreds of thousands of their hard-earned tax dollars? The inside friends of the government must just be salivating when they get a call for an ABC appointment. They know that they now have an open chequebook to live the high life at the taxpayers' expense: "Please pick me, please nominate me, because I know it's a walking gold mine."

Before there was eHealth Ontario, there was Smart Systems for Health Agency. It went to work in 2003 with the goal of making a “secure, integrated, province-wide information infrastructure” to allow electronic communication between health care providers. Well, we’ve seen the fiasco there that has developed over the last few months, and people are resigning, people are defending themselves on TV about their expenditures and how they don’t understand why everyone is upset. I don’t know how they can actually face the camera without a smirk on their face, because it’s absolutely outrageous, their explanations of why they figure they’re entitled to this stuff.

Three years into operations, Smart Systems had little to show for its work, and criticism began to mount on a daily basis. A scathing 100-page operational review by the consulting firm Deloitte and Touche LLP in late 2006 detailed the agency’s troubles, this is what they said about the agency: “Little or no meaningful progress.” Millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money spent on this system to set it up for Ontario for health, and the system hasn’t come to fruition yet on creating an emergency health records system. It’s still up in the air.

What were those fat cats doing for those three years on the public payroll? Maybe they were at the golf course, I don’t know, maybe at the yacht club. Not well regarded in the health care community and lacking strategic direction, how did they get these jobs? Were their resumés even read by the appointments secretariat? They might have read them or skimmed over them, but I think who they were and who they supported is why they got the jobs.

Privacy policies are “incomplete and not widely understood” by most people. This is an organization tasked with ensuring that the privacy of each and every person in Ontario is protected in a new electronic era. How could they not understand even the basics of this?

There are many systems throughout the world—Scandinavia, Europe—that surpass us by 10 years. Who was sleeping at the switch? Who are these experts that they hired to revamp our system? Were they highly educated? Were they information specialists? I don’t think so, or they wouldn’t be 10 years behind.

In early 2007, Ontario’s Information and Privacy Commissioner also dug into the Smart Systems, criticizing it yet again for privacy and security issues. Interesting.

And then, in late 2008, Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government decided to scrap Smart Systems and start over with a new agency. The first group didn’t do anything for three years, so we’ll put more high-paid consultants and executives in a position so they can start all over again with the new agency. What did this disaster cost the Ontario taxpayer? Would this legislation even come close to providing the answer to those costs? I doubt it. What kind of nudge, nudge, wink, wink, handshake payouts did those government appointees walk away with? It would be interesting to know. Their severances are absolutely off the map in some of these situations.

Days after the creation of eHealth on September 29, 2008, McGuinty placed one of his key health care problem solvers, Dr. Alan Hudson, in one of the lead eHealth roles. When Dr. Hudson resigned less than a year later, he was publicly quoted as saying he wished the agency had moved at a slower pace in its attempt to finish an “enormous”—huge—“task,” focusing on one task at a time rather than three of the agency’s priorities.

So I guess this guy, Dr. Hudson, feels that he should have just worked on one issue and there probably were many, so he probably could have stretched this out for another 10 years. A diabetes registry, an eHealth portal, and issuing prescriptions electronically were the three categories that they wanted him to work on, and he felt that was too much, that he should have just worked on one.

But let’s not forget Sarah Kramer. Kramer came under specific scrutiny for signing off on some of the contracts while Hudson signed the others. She also was lambasted for \$51,000 spent on her office renovation. Her annual salary was \$380,000 plus \$114,000 bonus. She makes more than the Prime Minister of Canada—a bonus that was twice the agency’s allowable rate. Now, get this: That bonus was twice the agency’s allowable rate. How was that allowed to happen? Not much oversight there.

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She was shown the door on June 7 in the midst of battling the scandal. She walked away with a severance package worth 10 months’ salary, or about \$317,000.

So, basically, “You screwed up. You were taking money that you shouldn’t have, spending it on things you shouldn’t have been spending it on. There was nothing being done of any importance at the agency, and you’re such a bad girl, we’re going to fire you. But on the way out the door, here’s a cheque for \$317,000. Thank you very much. Thank you for helping out the people of Ontario.”

Not a bad paycheque. “Sweetheart deal” is what comes to mind on this one. First of all, who’s given the authority to approve her bonus? We’ve got to find out who allowed her bonus well before a year of being in the job—she was approved before being in the job—and then who was given the authority to give an amount more than double the permissible rate. Was no one concerned about these blatant abuses of the basic rules? I think somebody should have been looking at it. I don’t think somebody was. She got double what she was entitled to for severance. Interesting.

But as we all know, it gets much deeper, much further than that. Let’s talk about some of the consulting firms that are benefiting from the government’s largesse.

Three companies in particular came under the media’s microscope during the eHealth scandal. I’ll start with Courtyard Group. Courtyard Group, a management consulting firm, received three untendered contracts worth nearly \$2 million from eHealth Ontario during its first months of operation. These included a \$915,160 contract dated October 24, 2008, for help—help with strategy, executive assistance and transition support. These high-

priced CEOs and executives needed help with strategy, executive assistance and transition support? Boy, I'd like to break that one down. I'm not quite sure why they would need that.

A \$519,760 contract was awarded on January 6 to manage the diabetes project. Wow. That's more than the Prime Minister of Canada makes too—for managing one project.

On January 30, eHealth granted an extension of the first contract worth a further \$562,296. "You haven't done anything. We're not quite sure who you're hiring, what you're doing and what you're spending, but here's another \$500,000 for a kicker to keep things rolling."

The sole-sourced contracts came under a cloud when it was revealed that there were personal links between—I repeat, personal links between—Courtyard and two members of the eHealth board. I wonder if that was one of the ones who resigned. Maybe. The same board had approved the hefty first contract. Wow.

Apparently, Dr. Hudson is an old colleague and mentor to Michael Guerriere, a founding partner at Courtyard—buddies. Guerriere was also related through marriage to another eHealth board member, Matthew Anderson. Wow, that's pretty tight. Guerriere's ties to Hudson dated back at least to the mid 1990s, when Hudson recruited him to join the University Health Network. Hudson was widely believed to be grooming Guerriere to succeed him as head of the organization. In the end, another person got the job and Guerriere left to help form—bet you can't guess—Courtyard, a consulting firm that seemed to have been guaranteed lots of over-the-top daily consulting fees. How cozy.

While Courtyard was on contract with eHealth, Guerriere also served temporarily as the provincial agency's senior vice-president of strategy, billing more than \$3,000 a day in his capacity as a consultant. A strategy guy—\$3,000 a day. I don't think the generals in Afghanistan make anywhere near that kind of money, and they're in a lot hotter position than that. Three thousand bucks a day. Wow. The work also granted him access to overseeing Courtyard's work—oh, oh, here we go—and advising his old buddy Kramer on the agency's future consulting needs. Wow. Those guys have been in the business for 30 years, and they need someone to advise them on consulting needs? I thought they were the consultants, or running the thing. Did the term "conflict of interest" never enter their minds? Obviously not. You know, with closely knit ties like that, people ask questions, and obviously they didn't seem to be too worried about it. Any elementary schoolchild would be able to see this glaring conflict of interest.

Guerriere's ties also extend to another company that won sole-source contracts from eHealth. His wife, Miyo Yamashita, heads Anzen Consulting. Uh oh, another connection—the Anzen Consulting firm, specializing in privacy issues—remember, privacy issues from the smart health days, when the audit said, privacy policies are "incomplete and not widely understood." The new eHealth outfit again failed. It issued an untendered

contract to Anzen on October 6, 2008, worth \$268,000, to develop a transition communications plan for eHealth—a transition communications plan. I don't know what you need a transition for. I would assume that you need to get ahead and get it done. You don't want to pay somebody just to do a transition.

The firm's founding partner, Yamashita, who charges \$300 an hour, billed the agency for such tasks as—you're not going to believe this one. One of the bills she put in was for reading the New York Times articles obtained from her husband, Guerriere; reviewing a holiday voice-mail message and debriefing during a subway ride. Most of our staff do this kind of work every day, but they don't get \$300 an hour. Not on your life. That's absolutely unconscionable, what they did.

Accenture Inc., a global consulting firm, received three untendered contracts worth nearly \$1.1 million during eHealth's transition period to work on the organization's design and work stream and to develop new mail and network services. New mail: I guess that's e-mail. I thought that had again been around for a while. Network services: They were networking all right; I'm not sure the services were being done. The organization's design: You would think that if they were coming in to take over a major operation like that, they'd have some sort of idea about organization design and not have to hire another consultant to consult to consult. Boy, if consultants were needed for basic organizational stuff like design, work stream and new mail and network services, what on earth were we paying them for? What does their staff do if these other people are being paid to do their work? What was the staff doing? I'd like to see some of their tasks that they were assigned.

Let's get back to Accenture. Its senior partner, Will Falk, had connections to Kramer through his wife, Kate Filion, a childhood friend of the former eHealth CEO. Falk served as a personal reference for Kramer when she applied for the eHealth job in late 2008. Did you hear that? Kramer's personal reference to get her eHealth job was a senior partner in a consulting company that received untendered contracts at eHealth. What a nice little payback.

I'll not be convinced that Kramer and the board didn't know that they were breaking the rules. I mean, come on, were they walking around with bags on their heads? They had to know what was going on here, but I guess that back-scratching comes naturally for some people.

Two of the contracts secured by Accenture were signed on October 29, 2008, during a period when Kramer hadn't assumed her eHealth post but was advising the board in an unofficial capacity on contracts. So she appears to have already been well into the practice of untendered contracts and the culture of entitlement which continued in her official capacity at eHealth. "This is a good thing we've got going here. Let's keep it going." Guess what? The third contract was granted in January—a third, to go with those two first outrageous ones.

I could go on forever, but it's clear to me that there's more than a little bit that's not right here. I think these

expenditure problems are really part of the broader problem of the government: a lack of transparency at many, many levels. That's why it's particularly disturbing to read, in Kelly McDougald's 18-page notice of claim, the extraordinary lengths that this government went to, waiting until the very last moment possible to release the FOI documents on OLG expenses.

I know that none of the allegations in the claim have been proven in court, but all of us in opposition know just how difficult it is to get real information out of this government.

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Freedom of information: I think that should be like a public system that should be available to anyone. We, government officials representing the population, have to pay big bucks to get information from freedom of information. What's our role here? Aren't we supposed to be overseeing or keeping the government in line as opposition, and we have to pay to get FOI? I don't know. This is very frustrating. Not your years of loyalty, your commitment to doing a good job, your family and friend ties with the government will shield you from taking the fall for this ineptitude. It's coming. Nobody's going to escape this one.

There's the question of accountability. When this government finally realized the FOI documents, it seems they had to find someone other than themselves to take the blame, and the person ended up being Ms. McDougald. I don't think she signed up for the job as a scapegoat, and I don't think the McGuinty Liberals realized they had such a fighter on their hands.

I look forward to knowing about the other scandals that come out at the trial. It should paint an interesting insider's picture of the workings of the McGuinty Liberals.

New Democrats acknowledge that this legislation is a basic first step. That said, there's much, much more to be done to ensure transparency in government and to reassure the public that their hard-earned tax dollars are being put to good use.

In conclusion, I'd like to say that over the years, before I was even here, I used to watch TV, read the newspapers and read the magazines about bus scandals, about golf courses under Mr. Chrétien out in Quebec. I saw more and more, but I'll tell you there's nothing like living it live. There's nothing like being here and seeing these things unravel up front. I'll tell you, there's a lot more that's going to unravel in the next couple of months. Believe me, a lot of people should be putting bags on their heads—the unknown CEOs, the unknown executives, the unknown politicians—because it's absolutely outrageous, what's been going on in our province, and it's not the first time. It's happened before, and under other governments too. But did it take this government being forced into a corner, being exposed, to actually move on it? I think so. I think that's why things are happening. But that's good because, if it can straighten it out, if it can actually bring some accountability and truth to these agencies that are governed by the government, then that's good for the people of Ontario.

But speaking of the average person, like myself for many years, from the street, you ask why people get this attitude toward government and politicians and big business. Well, these are the types of things that really disillusion the public as a whole. I hope in this term we can bring back some trust for the public. I hope we can bring back some accountability to the public, because they certainly need it in this province. I'm proud to be an Ontarian, I'm proud to be a Canadian, but when things like this happen, that just tears me apart. Hopefully we can rectify this terrible, terrible situation.

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

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I think some of us might be a little surprised at the take we just heard from across the way, so I'll explain what steps this bill actually takes.

Bill 201 means that the government is protecting taxpayers' hard-earned dollars by improving the oversight and accountability of expenses. This has never been the case in any government in Ontario's history.

On September 1, 2009, the Premier announced the proposed Public Sector Expenses Review Act, which would give the Integrity Commissioner the legal authority to review senior management expense claims made within Ontario's 22 largest agencies and take appropriate action should irregularities be discovered.

Staff at the government agencies will be required to abide by the same level of accountability and oversight that cabinet ministers and political staff must follow under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act. The act gives the Integrity Commissioner the discretion to make recommendations for other steps, as appropriate. For example, this could include the suggestion that the CEO or others require pre-approval of expenses. The proposed legislation would require the Integrity Commissioner to prepare and make public an annual account on the review of expense claims. Under the proposed legislation, the government has the power to require any government agency, board or commission to abide by these rules, by regulation.

This legislation is about making oversight and accountability of the agencies' accounts more transparent and stronger. I repeat, this is the strongest legislation in Ontario's history to do this.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the leadoff speech from the third party by the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on Bill 201, the Public Sector Expenses Review Act. He certainly made some good points in his opening speech. He talked about the fact that there's a lot more going to unravel, and I think that's true.

Certainly our party, the PC Party, is working hard to try to bring more accountability to the government. I think they were forced into a corner and they're reacting to the freedom of information requests that provoked them into finally doing something.

The member talked about the fact that this bill is going to require the Integrity Commissioner, who has a staff of nine, to take on the responsibilities. He questioned whether that staff would be able to handle the thousands and thousands of employees in the 22 largest agencies that they'll be required to review. I think that that's certainly a valid point.

He brought up the details of the scandals at eHealth, in particular: the \$2,700 a day in consultants; the \$25,000 speech for the CEO, which I think anyone would agree is completely outrageous; the bonus paid to the newly hired CEO just after three months on the job, over \$100,000; the big severance paid when that CEO was fired; the cozy relationships between the Courtyard Group and other various consultants, a very intertwined group; and all the various things that were paid for, like, as he mentioned, a transitional communication plan, hundreds of thousands of dollars for a contract for being paid to read the New York Times. I'm sure there's going to be a lot more coming out with the hard work of the opposition.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened, of course, with interest to my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. He made a number of extremely valid points.

I think, overall, what really struck is the point that he made about the increasing cynicism of the voting public, and the fact that exactly this kind of scandal with OLG and eHealth increases that cynicism. It is part of reason why people don't go to polls, because they say, "Why are we electing these people? All they do is hire their friends for top jobs. It's all graft and corruption. We don't want anything to do with it." That's a really disturbing aspect of this, because what are you going to say to the voting public? "Well, yeah, you are right. In part, you're right. Yes, the government does have ties. Government friends do get the best jobs. Then they bill you even more, and guess whose money pays for all of this? Yours." That's point number one.

Point number two: He made the point that the Integrity Commissioner was not set up to do this job. Her role was set up just to look after the affairs of MPPs and cabinet ministers. With a staff of nine, let's face it, there's just absolutely no way that her organization will be able to look after the affairs of a raft of new bureaucrats. That raises the other question: Is she going to hire a whole lot of new staff? Are we going to be looking at yet another scandal within the Integrity Commissioner's office in the next year? Where is that staff? Are those contracts going to be tendered?

And finally, the distance from ministry: Ministers are supposed to ultimately be the go-to people, those responsible for their ministries. So why aren't they? Why are ministers not the ones that we go to to ask about responsibility for their ministries? Why yet another arm's-length organization that's going to look into those affairs instead of the ministers? Ministers, ultimately—the buck stops there, or should.

So I just wanted to add that two cents', two minutes' worth, and bravo to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

1650

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I just want to add my comments on Bill 201 to the comments made by the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

The member asks a lot of questions, and rightfully so. I would ask the same questions; there's no denying that. I think because of those questions that he asked, some folks that get appointed through any government—we would hope that they would be responsible folks and do the right thing. In many cases that's not the case, and I think it's important that the government reacted as quickly as it possibly could to introduce this bill. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin went through the steps of what this legislation is going to accomplish so that those things don't happen again.

I say to the member or to the public in general, the province and taxpayers could save millions of dollars if every citizen were a 100% law-abiding citizen. Who would need police on the 401 to patrol that? We wouldn't need police to patrol our streets if we didn't have crime, if everybody was law-abiding. So, as we discover those things, I think it's the responsibility of government to put mechanisms in place not to have it happen again, to fix it.

So the question is, the Integrity Commissioner has nine staff, so they say. I want to commend the Integrity Commissioner for the great work that they do, and I have all the confidence in the world that they will be able to tackle this project, once the legislation is passed, with proper regulations and whatever government of the day providing appropriate funding like we do for policing or other law-abiding regulations that we put in place to deal with a situation. This has arisen. I think the government acted as quickly as it could. We're going to try to get to the bottom of it and this is, I think, a great mechanism to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the members from Northumberland–Quinte West, Algoma–Manitoulin, and Parry Sound–Muskoka, and the member from Parkdale–High Park, my colleague, for her kind words.

To the member from Algoma: I appreciate the fact that he explained the bill and the functions of the Integrity Commissioner to me. I kind of had a handle on it already. But the problem is not the fact of what his role is and what he'll be doing; it's the timing. Why wasn't this done years ago? And he's right: All governments have had problems and all governments will continue to have problems. I don't deny that.

As far as them moving swiftly, I think they sat back for a couple of weeks and looked at which way they were going to go at this before they actually moved on it. They didn't move quickly, in my humble opinion.

I really do believe that the population and the general public are disgusted—they won't deny it—with politicians federally, provincially, municipally. They're disillusioned. That's why we get poor turnouts for voting. The thing I get at the door when I go around is, "Things are never going to change. They're all in it for themselves." We've all heard those types of responses from our constituents. I'm hoping that this is the start of something, that we can change that attitude. Hopefully, we can get enough good people together in this House to change the rules, make people accountable for what they do wrong, and make them pay the price. I think then maybe, just maybe, the people of Ontario and Canada will respect this honourable profession.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I fully expected that a member of the government might take the opportunity to speak in this rotation, but it falls to me and I'm pleased to do so.

I want to, at the outset, say that I will be supporting the legislation. I think it's difficult not to, on the one hand. But I have some concerns about why this legislation is even here in the first place.

What I want to speak to is the doctrine of cabinet responsibility. I think that is an issue that we really should be focusing on.

I believe that if members of this government, particularly cabinet ministers, and specifically one cabinet minister, the Minister of Health, who has now overseen scandals in three ministries—if that individual, first of all, had been doing his job as a cabinet minister, those scandals could have been avoided and would have been avoided. Had that cabinet minister assumed the responsibility that is his, and had the Premier insisted that that cabinet minister demonstrate his responsibility, then, again, there would be no need for this legislation that's before us today, because the people of Ontario would have seen government exercising its responsibilities. But the very fact that instead of a cabinet minister coming forward, acknowledging that there is a business that has gone off the rails, a business over which that cabinet minister has a responsibility, the fact that that minister did not take that responsibility, I believe shows that we have lost sight of how the people of this province—in fact, any citizen within a cabinet parliamentary system of government—would expect their government to behave.

What I am concerned about now is that we have before us a piece of legislation that defers the responsibility for holding civil servants to account for how they conduct their business to, yet again, a third party. Cabinet ministers already have the infrastructure available to them to do precisely what this legislation will now call on the Integrity Commissioner to do, although the Integrity Commissioner has no infrastructure. There are nine employees there.

We visit with the Integrity Commissioner once a year to review our submissions and our disclosure documents. We know that with the added responsibilities that have been placed on the Integrity Commissioner over the

years, they already are under a great deal of pressure to simply do what they've been assigned to do.

Now, with the added responsibilities that this legislation overlays on that office, the question I have for the government is, how much will that cost the taxpayer, an unnecessary cost and an unnecessary building up yet of another bureaucracy?

Cabinet ministers have that infrastructure, as I said before. Why would we not call on cabinet ministers to simply do what they are expected to do, and that is to oversee the function of their ministries. Expenses that are submitted by civil servants within any organization can, in fact, be treated with the same kind of transparency and accountability that any organization would impose on their employees or their staff. The same is true for all of the agencies, boards and commissions for which these various ministries would have responsibility.

I see nothing in this legislation that sets out a framework under which that accountability would be delivered. I think that's a glaring error in terms of how the government is approaching this.

1700

I also have to question, as my colleague did who spoke before me, why the government would identify only a select number of agencies that would then be subjected to this scrutiny. I would think that the message the government wants to send to the electorate is that every civil servant and every public servant will be subjected to the same scrutiny, held to the same standard. Why a select few?

One of the organizations that I question why it's not included in this list is ServiceOntario. I would be very interested to know—in fact, I am making a request, if we can afford it, to put in some freedom of information requests for the consulting agreements that have been awarded by ServiceOntario, because I think we're just scratching the surface with some of these other agencies.

We're debating a piece of legislation now that is going to create more bureaucracy and that will allow the government to hide yet one more time from the very principle of cabinet responsibility and accountability. We have examples in this place. Speaker, to your credit, people in this province may well have forgotten that when you were Minister of Health and an issue arose within your ministry, you did the honourable thing. As minister, you made the choice to step aside until that issue was resolved. This government has not even so much as suggested that a minister should take on that responsibility, and it wasn't until the official opposition and the third party raised concerns about the former Minister of Culture and his mishandling of multi-millions of dollars of grants to organizations across this province that didn't even apply for grants—no accountability; this Premier defended that minister until he could defend him no more. Then, of course, he became a scapegoat. But even then it was too late, because the damage had already been done; the credibility of this government had already been lost. How can you defend, day in and day out in this place, the indefensible actions of a minister disbursing public funds without accountability?

So we move forward: scandal after scandal that not one member of this government could defend, and I haven't heard them defend. To their credit, if credit is at all to be given, they acknowledge that the business of the Ministry of Health and the business of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.—that there were, in fact, serious breaches of the public trust. So they acknowledge that. But the problem is that instead of taking positive action and instead of demonstrating that there is, in fact, an accountability issue and a responsibility issue, they simply consider that the public will be satisfied with the Premier standing in his place and saying, "We'll move on. We'll just simply cover this up, and we'll do better next time." You know, there is such a thing as saying, "We will also deal with the people who have made the errors in judgment and who have failed to meet their responsibilities."

This legislation before us would actually have some efficacy if, in fact, it was followed up by the resignation of a minister who clearly is not up to the job, who clearly does not understand what his responsibilities as minister are and that it's not a function of trying to outlive a scandal; it's a function of maintaining the integrity of his office and the high calling to public office. That's what should be at the foundation of this legislation, but it's not there. Instead, it's simply a punting of responsibility to a piece of legislation so that we can have the debate and so that there can be the perception that this government is responding.

I don't know about you, but I have probably had more correspondence and e-mails on this issue of the government's lack of accountability and unwillingness to accept responsibility than on any other issue, and it goes to the heart of what people expect from their elected officials.

I want to just read into the record an example of the kind of e-mails that I've been getting.

"As a member of your riding, I want to express to you how much the recent activities of the Liberal Ontario government (specifically the eHealth fiasco) have shaken my faith in the Ontario Liberal Party.

"I do not consider myself to be affiliated with one party over another. My vote is swayed by the parties' stances on issues that I deem important."

She goes on to say, "In the next election, I simply will not be able to vote for a party that does not remove Caplan from cabinet. I will not be satisfied with a simple shuffle from health to some obscure portfolio.

"The overpaid consultants and the exorbitant bonuses without track records to support them is mere window dressing, and the firing of those people is an obvious scapegoat ploy. If you offered me a huge hourly salary for reading newspaper articles and offered me a six-figure bonus based on a very short amount of work, I would take it, too. The real issue is that, as the minister of that portfolio, David Caplan should have known what was going on and should have been aware of the murky ethics in which his ministry was operating. He, and no one less than he, should be held accountable and should be fired.

"As I said, if Caplan is not fired, I simply will not be able to vote Liberal in the foreseeable future. Wise, ethical stewardship of public funds, especially in times such as these, is a make-or-break deal for securing my vote."

What this constituent is talking about is in fact the doctrine of cabinet responsibility and accountability. This is not an academic; it's simply someone who is living in a cabinet parliamentary system of government and by nature expects that there would be an acknowledgment of accountability, and that there would be consequences for people who are not providing the kind of oversight that is simply an expectation on the part of taxpayers.

What I would have preferred to see, instead of this legislation that we have before us, is legislation that would, in fact, require accountability and transparency on the part of every ministry, every department and every agency of this government when it lets out contracts. Every contract that is let by the government or an agency of the government, in my opinion, should be posted on the website of the government for everyone to see. After all, it's taxpayers' dollars. Every person in my constituency should be able to go onto the website of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education or any other ministry or any other agency of any ministry and find out who's working for what, what's being charged, what are the hourly rates, what are the contracts that were let, and be able to understand clearly where their tax dollars are going. That would be a practical approach and would be demonstrating to the people of Ontario that this government really does care about being transparent and accountable and answerable to the electorate and the taxpayers of this province. But that's not what we have. What we have is yet another make-work project on the part of the McGuinty government. It will be interesting to see how many employees, how many more government employees, we end up with when this has been fully implemented. And then we'll find out just how effective this make-work project really is.

1710

I will support it because I believe that at the very least these employees and the Integrity Commissioner understand accountability and responsibility. I don't have that confidence in the front benches, in the cabinet ministers or the Premier of this province, because they have failed at every test of accountability and responsibility. So at least we have some hope that there will be some sense of accountability as the government carries out its business.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Newmarket–Aurora. He is often very eloquent in this place, and he had some very good, commonsense things to say. He talked about the doctrine of responsibility of cabinet and the doctrine of responsibility of those who are appointed to cabinet, and that's something that we often don't debate in this House, or perhaps don't pay enough attention to. There was a time when a cabinet minister would offer his or her resignation when some-

one within their department did something wrong. There was a time when a cabinet minister would resign when they had made an inopportune statement in the House. There was a time when a cabinet minister who obviously wasn't very competent in what he or she was doing would offer their resignation to allow the Premier to appoint someone who might be better at the job. Those days appear to be gone, and I think it would behoove this government to start thinking about that doctrine of responsibility, because it is not just a responsibility to the colleagues and the members of your party and the people who are on the government side of this House. It is a responsibility of the people of Ontario to provide the very best that can be provided. I'm not sure that in the circumstances over these last several months this doctrine of accountability has been taken very much into account.

He also had to talk about some of the pitfalls of the road down which we are heading and the fact that the transparency will not be there, save and except through a new and increased bureaucracy through the Integrity Commissioner. He ended by talking about the faith that he has in the Integrity Commissioner, or at least that position, and how he hopes to get some results for the people of Ontario. I commend him. It was a very balanced speech and much of what he said should be hearkened to by the government itself.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: My colleague from Newmarket–Aurora has just spoken, and again very well, about the problems that, to his credit, he and his party and the third party have found in the agencies, boards and commissions of the government of Ontario. Frankly, we agree with him. This is not the way that the government of which I am privileged to play a part does business. It should be noted, however, just to be complete and accurate, that when they had the privilege of forming government, they in fact closed agencies, such as those that they are now accessing information through, to that very freedom of information process. Earlier in this decade, our government opened it up. This is what we're supposed to do; this is actually people doing their job. And when our government finds these things, we shut them down, and that's what this particular act is intended to do. It's intended to take practices that we all in this House find awful and shut them down.

What this does is extend the same type of standards that we as members face in that we, too, have our expenses reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner and extend that same degree of oversight to people at 22 specific agencies, boards and commissions. This is also fair.

The proposed legislation, in fact, would require the Integrity Commissioner to prepare and to make public an annual report of the review of all of these expense claims. This is the same degree of transparency that effectively cleaned up a lot of the work in government in the last several years, and there's no point in pointing fingers at it now. This is something that the opposition has done a

service to the people of Ontario on, a message heard loud and clear by the province of Ontario and a practice that is going to get cleaned up once and for all.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I too want to commend my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora for a very good presentation on the ins and outs of the need for this legislation.

I think everyone in this House, and it appears now even the government side, realizes the need for something to be done to deal with the way government agencies and commissions and, in fact, the cabinet itself have been going. Somebody needs to have a look at that.

I think this was in the member's presentation, but I thought that's what ministers were supposed to be doing. Obviously every agency is responsible to a ministry. The reason for that is so we have oversight to make sure that the services are being delivered in a proper way. But it's become quite obvious in this process that the ministers, and particularly the Minister of Health—as this process started with the revelations at eHealth Ontario—doesn't seem to be able to or want to look at the proper way of dealing with the expenses of their charges, shall we say, of the people they're responsible for, so they appoint the Integrity Commissioner to look at that.

My concern is that the main items that we have been discussing for a number of weeks here are not things that the Integrity Commissioner will, in fact, be dealing with. The Integrity Commissioner looks at whether the expense is an appropriate expense. It was mentioned in a presentation earlier somebody making \$3,000 a day and then charging for going to Tim Hortons for a coffee. That going to the Integrity Commissioner would be a legitimate expense, but it isn't a legitimate expense for the people of Ontario when people have to look at that and say, "We pay someone that kind of money?"

Incidentally, the Integrity Commissioner would also find no fault with \$3,000 a day. I do believe that a minister should find fault with that. That's why I think it's inappropriate to do it this way, but I agree with the member from Newmarket–Aurora that I would be supporting this—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened with interest to the member from Oxford just now, and he's absolutely right. What is acceptable to a Bill Gates and a corporation is not acceptable in terms of a government employee spending tax dollars, and that's the concern with this bill and what we're trying to get at with this bill.

Certainly we in the New Democratic Party are going to support it. It's a baby step. As always, we'd like more from this government. The more we would like is more ministerial responsibility because, after all, that's what the electorate wants. They think that when they elect somebody and they're appointed to cabinet, that cabinet role carries with it the responsibility for their ministry. Responsibility implies that when something goes wrong

in that ministry, you account for it, you answer for it. You don't set up a third party to look into it and then sort of shove the responsibility on to them or create a new bureaucracy, which this bill has every sign of doing.

Really, this also doesn't address the fact that there was some direct culpability here. We were talking about Freedom of Information Act requests, for example, that were delayed by the government, it seems, and allegations. Who's going to investigate that? Will the Integrity Commissioner do it? Will they be up and running, or will the government take that responsibility upon itself—because, after all, it did that—and respond to the electorate and tell them what's going on? We haven't had a response from the government regarding the Freedom of Information Act requests and the ability to get at information.

1720

With all respect to my friend from Mississauga—Streetsville, there is some responsibility here to be had by the government; it can't just be given over to an auditor and the government needs to answer for it and perhaps apologize for it, as the case may be. So although we support this, we don't think it's nearly enough and, of course, are looking for way more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Newmarket-Aurora, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Frank Klees: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues. I want to just wrap up my comments by making reference to the Access to Information Review Task Force paper that was published in August 2001. It speaks specifically to the doctrine of individual ministerial responsibility. It states that there are two components to ministerial responsibility: a resignation component and an answerability one. This government has failed; all of their cabinet ministers have failed on both counts. If they're not prepared to resign, then at the very least they should be prepared to uphold the answerability component of ministerial responsibility. In case they haven't heard about this, let me just read into the record what that means: "The answerability component of the doctrine requires that each minister answer to Parliament, in the form of explanation or defence, for all the actions of his or her department."

What we can't find anywhere in this government is any cabinet minister who will comply with either of those components of ministerial responsibility. On behalf of our constituents, on behalf of the citizens of this province, we continue to ask questions day in and day out, and we get no answers. All we get is deflection, and that is what this bill is to a large degree: simply a deflection of responsibility, not an acceptance of responsibility. We're hopeful; we'll remain hopeful that perhaps over time this government will come at least to understand the very fundamentals of the responsibility that members and cabinet ministers have to the electorate in this province.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand today to enter this debate, and I stand as a politician who has been around for a little while, perhaps a little grey, perhaps a little long in the tooth, but one who remembers that even 20 years ago when one knocked on the doors of one's constituents, there was a respect, sometimes a grudging respect, for the political life that we have chosen to lead. There was a respect because people thought that we were there for the purpose of the community; they thought we were there to oversee and to challenge the bureaucracy. There was respect because they understood that it was a difficult job where you could not please all of the people all of the time.

When I knock on doors these days, I do not see the same respect. I would ask members here if I am seeing something differently than what you're seeing, especially members like Minister Phillips, who has been around even longer than I. The whole public attitude to what we do, what we say, what we're about and about this august Legislature has changed. It has changed for the worse. It has changed because people think that politicians such as us, the things that we do, which used to be such a noble calling—it is no longer quite that noble calling. They say things like, "You're all the same" or "What difference does my vote make?" They say things like, "It won't matter what happens there. It won't affect my life." They say things like, "You can't catch these people in the bureaucracy who are cheating the system. You're not a very good watchdog." They say all of that and more. We all know that that's true, and we all know that if this institution is to survive, it needs to survive by having a much better handle, both in terms of the responsibility of the actions of this House and by carefully monitoring the public good to a point that we can clearly pull out the bad apples, that we can clearly change direction when we need to change that direction.

So I look forward to this bill coming out and I look forward to what it might contain. Although I am generally pleased that there are going to be a number of agencies added to the list, such as the lottery and gaming commission, Ontario Power Generation and others, the list is not exhaustive. I fail to understand why it is not exhaustive. I fail to understand in several key respects why agencies that very much should be monitored, hugely should be monitored, have been left out.

The key one to me is the Ontario Securities Commission. Perhaps one of the government members opposite can explain to me why the Ontario Securities Commission has been left off this list. I know that most of you have had an opportunity, even those who have been here but two years, to serve on some of the committees of this House. The committees that have dealt with the Ontario Securities Commission in the last two years, and some beyond that—the finance committee has had numerous hearings on the powers and authorities of the Ontario Securities Commission, the government agencies committee has appointed people to the Ontario Securities Commission, and the public accounts committee met quite recently and talked about all the things

that have to happen inside the Ontario Securities Commission to make it a viable entity, one that the public, the investing public particularly, can look to with confidence. And none of that has seen the light of day; not much of that has seen the light of day.

I remember the first time I sat on the finance committee, around six years ago, when the new government came in. We were mandated to look at the Ontario Securities Commission and to talk about changes that needed to be made. And the recommendations, I still believe to this day, are good recommendations. They weren't my recommendations. They were recommendations unanimously adopted by the all-party committee. The Liberals on that committee supported it. The Conservatives supported it. I as the lone New Democrat supported it.

We talked about really important things. We talked about splitting the adjudicative and enforcement functions. It's never been done, because the securities commission doesn't want to go down that route, in spite of the fact that our Integrity Commissioner at that time, Coulter Osborne, gave a very impassioned and reasoned argument why it had to happen for the benefit of the people of Ontario. We have asked that we put a watchdog on the board, that small investors have an opportunity to serve on the Ontario Securities Commission to make sure that everything is being done right by small investors, and it's not just the big players and it's not just the banks that are being protected. We have asked that the Ontario Securities Commission be given the kind of teeth that allow it to do investigations and take people to court.

Why is it that in this country, at the Ontario Securities Commission, which has up to 200 charges a year put on people for insider trading, people who are jiggling the system, people who are cheating those who are putting their life savings at risk—why is it that there are next to no convictions? When people get caught in Ontario cheating the system at the stock exchange, very often what happens is that they are fined. Sometimes their licence to practise is taken away for a little while, or sometimes indefinitely. But very seldom is anyone sent to jail—very seldom. Now, if you look at what happens south of the border, you will see a whole different system. If you wonder why Conrad Black is in a jail in Florida and not in a jail in Toronto, look at the difference between their system and ours. In our system, he would still be walking around doing whatever he wanted to do. In their system, they understood that prosecution was absolutely essential.

We have asked in this House to vet the salaries, we have asked about insider trading, we have asked about the hundreds of charges that come up each and every year, and nothing seems to happen. Yet when an opportunity comes for the government to look at this agency above all agencies—to vet it, to look at it, to see what they're doing, to see how they're doing it, to see whether people are cheating the system, to see whether they are taking the proper and appropriate enforcement action, to see why they're not appointing people to the boards who ought to be appointed to the boards, especially small con-

sumers and investors—we laid them off. I don't understand that. I hope somebody on that side of the House can explain to me why the Ontario Securities Commission is not named and somebody like the Toronto Convention Centre Corp. or the Ontario Educational Communications Authority, TVO or TFO, or the Ontario Clean Water Agency is included, because although I'm thankful they're included—I'm not going to say they shouldn't be. But I am saying that when you see an agency which has not been performing up to world standards, in my view, and you see agencies that are and we're not including the bad ones, I have to question this government as to their motivation.

1730

I also have to wonder about FSCO. I've asked a couple of questions in this House since we've come back from summer recess and made some statements about the fiscal review of insurance policy, and the minister said, "We're studying it." He told me the same thing last May, he told me the same thing last June, he told me the same thing in estimates over the summer and he said the same thing in this House in September: "We're studying it." And each time the timeline goes back and back and back.

The people of Ontario expect an answer. The people of Ontario who buy insurance, the people of Ontario who have to claim against that insurance, expect an answer. They expect an answer from that agency and they expect to know how that agency operates. That agency is responsible for billions upon billions of dollars of taxpayers' and insurers' money going in, and they need to see some transparency that the money is being wisely spent. They need to know why an agency like FSCO is making a recommendation for non-catastrophic injury being reduced by 75%, from \$100,000 down to \$25,000. They need to know what the minister is studying, why he's studying the recommendation, and the rationale behind that reasoning. They're not hearing it. They need to know about pensions, which is also part of their recommendations, and about all the studies that have taken place and the people who are making the recommendations and what consultants they're using and where they're getting their information from. It needs to happen, and it's not happening.

All of that included, we come down to the poor Integrity Commissioner. My goodness, what a small office. All of you in this room know who the Integrity Commissioner is. You've all been to the office. You all know that when Coulter Osborne left, Lynn Morrison, God bless her, took over the job, and you know that she's still doing that job, and she has nine staff. There are nine of them. And every year in September we are required to fill out forms, as members of this Legislature, documenting all of our assets. I've done it and I'm sure all of you have sent yours in too. We've sent in those forms, and they're pages and pages long. If you can do it on a computer—if you're smarter than me on a computer, you can probably do it. I have some difficulty. I write it out; I have somebody else help me with the computer to put it in. But it's put in.

That was the chief responsibility of the integrity officer of the province of Ontario: to vet the ownership and the assets of the people in this room, to know that when we are taking action, we don't have conflicts of interest. And they did so, and they did so remarkably, and they have continued to do so remarkably. I have no complaints against the Integrity Commissioner whatsoever. I do have a complaint a little bit—and I know I'm part of the process—of how long it has taken us to find a new Integrity Commissioner, because Coulter Osborne, I think, retired a couple of years ago. We have not yet found a new Integrity Commissioner, although the negotiations are ongoing and I am part of those, because we are very specific as a Legislature about who we want to take over this role. The limited number of people who could and should be doing this job is very small. So we have had a hard, hard time finding a new Integrity Commissioner. But now, without a new Integrity Commissioner, we're going to have an act here. We're going to have an act that is going to, I suppose, quadruple, quintuple, 20 times the number of employees that are going to be needed to work in that office.

In the last couple of years, we have increased the duties of the Integrity Commissioner. Before, it was 107 people, MPPs duly elected by the people of Ontario, who were the responsibility of the Integrity Commissioner. Last year or the year before that, we included the entire Ontario public service. We then added tens of thousands of employees across this province on to the duties. And now we are saying we are going to add a whole plethora, a whole group, of public agencies. But nowhere in this legislation that I saw, nowhere at all, is there any explanation, ministerial statement, comment, commitment to increasing the staff, as clearly it is going to have to be increased.

I'm not sure the Integrity Commission is the right place to go here. It would seem to me that the Ombudsman's office would be equally good or perhaps slightly more attuned to looking at government agencies and waste and mispractices, because, in fact, that's what the Ombudsman's office has been doing in the province of Ontario for more than 20 years. We have been reluctant to expand the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, although he has asked for that expansion of jurisdiction, but here we are doing it to an agency which was originally set up not for this purpose at all but for the purpose of vetting 107 people.

We have not said how we are going to change the agency. We have not said how it is going to bureaucratize, because clearly, if there are hundreds of people who will be required to do this kind of job, it will need a whole organizational structure which will not be eight people reporting to an Integrity Commissioner, as was originally envisaged; it will be something completely different. There's nothing in the bill that indicates the amount of money that this is going to cost the taxpayer. There's nothing in the bill that indicates, even in broad, ballpark terms, how many staff are going to be required. There's nothing in this bill that indicates what the budget

is going to be or how it's going to be spent. But most disturbing to me is, I have not received an indication from the minister or anybody from the government side—because they are choosing not to speak—how much weight in terms of time and effort and expertise the Integrity Commissioner, once appointed, is going to put into this. Are they going to continue to do the bulk of their recommendations, the bulk of their investigations, on the 107 members of this House? Are they going to branch out and spend most of their time with the Ontario public service? Or are they going to end up spending almost all of their time on these agencies, some of which, according to the last few months, have been rogue and some of whose members have spent monies in questionable ways? I'm not sure, because I'm not sure what is happening here, and no one is providing that explanation.

I listened earnestly to what the member from Newmarket–Aurora had to say, and he did talk about the doctrine of responsibility. There is no responsibility for these actions being taken by the cabinet. Although I have only been here eight years, I remember coming here as a student at the University of Toronto. It wasn't very far away, and it was often quite entertaining to walk across the street through the underground there, out of Hart House and the immediate area around Hart House and University College, to walk over here and sit up there—I usually sat up there—and to watch what was going on in the House. Sometimes there were spirited discussions. But I do remember in those days that there was a real sense of ministerial responsibility. I do remember ministers resigning. I do remember that when things went wrong, even though ministers were not personally to blame, they took responsibility on behalf of their departments, and it was a doctrine that was adhered to. Sometimes ministers had to leave. There was a certain period of time when they were felt to have been rehabilitated and were reappointed again. But they took responsibility. And I have to tell you, with the greatest of respect, that I do not see that responsibility in this House today. When things go wrong, the minister simply stands up and says, “When you were in government, things weren't any better,” and sits down. That is not why I'm here, that is not why the people elected me to come here, and that's why, going back to where I started, they're starting to become cynical.

If this place is to restore itself, if this place is to be the magical place where great ideas are debated and people are listened to, then we have to all collectively start taking responsibility. I, as a critic; ministers, as ministers; people who work here in their various jobs; people who are bureaucrats with a sense of purpose in their jobs; and those we appoint to these ministries have to take responsibility too. I'm not sure that's going to start with the Integrity Commissioner. I think it's much broader than that.

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But I am going to support this bill. I'm going to support it because it may be a small part.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora was absolutely spot-on when he talked about responsibility. Until the

time comes when all members of this House take responsibility for their actions, for the people who work for them and with them, then the public cynicism will continue.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening carefully for the last 18 minutes to the member from Beaches–East York as he outlined his position on the bill before us.

He knows very well that cabinet or ministers or the government cannot micromanage all the civil servants in the province of Ontario, especially those not directly controlled by the ministry or by the government. That's why we have some kind of accountability act. It's accountability management, rules and regulations, in the province of Ontario, and everyone is subject to audit: all the people, all the agencies, all the management. When they are audited, I guess they pay the price and take responsibility.

That's why we're introducing this bill: so everyone in the province of Ontario, all the agencies, all the people who work for and are supported financially by Ontario, will be subject to the Integrity Commissioner in order to make that accountability obvious to all the people of Ontario. As you know, those taxpayers' dollars should be protected, should be invested in the right place, shouldn't be mismanaged. That's why everyone should be subject to the Integrity Commissioner. If the Integrity Commissioner is good for us as elected officials, as politicians, I think it should also be good for all the civil servants who benefit from this province, who have the responsibility to manage the taxpayers' dollars.

So I respect his opinion, and I respect his direction.

I know it's going to be a big, huge expansion of the Integrity Commissioner's role. As he mentioned, there are only nine people working there. They'll probably need more. But I think it will be addressed in the future if this bill is passed and this bill is supported by both sides of the House, because it's very important to show the people out there, who trusted us to be in this place, some kind of responsibility and also to watch that their dollars are invested very well in many different directions.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to make some comments on the speech from the member from Beaches–East York on Bill 201.

The member, toward the end of his speech, talked about ministerial responsibility, and I would agree with him that it seems to have disappeared around this place. There was a time when ministers actually did feel a sense of responsibility for their ministries, and also a time when the Premier held the ministers to account for what went on in their ministries. There are lots of examples in past PC governments where a minister stepped down, sometimes just for a few months until a situation was cleared up, but that certainly has not happened with this current government. We'll wait to see whether it ever does.

The member also brought up the Integrity Commissioner and whether that is the right spot for this oversight to be placed and the fact that the Integrity Commissioner has a staff of nine. He noted that we're looking for a new Integrity Commissioner. I happen to think the current one, Lynn Morrison, is doing a fine job. She'd be fine just to stay on, as far as I'm concerned.

The question is, is there another new bureaucracy about to be created? We've seen a huge increase in the public service under the McGuinty government. It seems that the only growth industry in the province is the public service under this government. Is this the best answer, to now create another bureaucracy to try to address this problem? What about just holding some ministers responsible?

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The member from Beaches–East York, my colleague, gave reasoned and wise comments, and one of the challenges he put out to the government that I haven't heard an answer to is, why isn't the Ontario Securities Commission one of these agencies when it's one of the most problematic? That's number one.

Number two: There's nothing that makes the voters more incensed than when you've got an over-bloated bureaucracy that's spending money willy-nilly, like eHealth and OLG, and the answer to that is another over-bloated bureaucracy to be set up to investigate them as well.

This makes people crazy. These are tax dollars at work. These are tough times. We have a high unemployment rate. This doesn't wash. The member from Beaches–East York is quite right: We have the Ombudsman. He's done an incredible job, actually, and a very non-partisan job of critiquing the government on a number of issues, looking at a number of issues. He's asked for an enlargement of his agency. He's asked for increased responsibilities. Why not give it to him? That's where this responsibility should lie.

But most importantly, and this is the most important point that a number of members in the opposition have made, this is the minister's responsibility. We don't need another bureaucracy. We don't need more expensive expense accounts. We don't need one bureaucracy investigating another bureaucracy. We need ministers to do what ministers are supposed to do, which is not to micromanage, in response to the member from London–Fanshawe, but to take responsibility for their ministries. Simply do that, not create yet another body.

Again, I'd love to hear some actual responses from the government's side to the issues that my colleague raised, and they're substantial issues. People in Ontario want to know, and they would like to hear from it their government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? The honourable member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened carefully to what I consider very thoughtful comments from the member for

Beaches–East York. He spent some time today on something that we need to remind ourselves of, which is commonly referred to in history as the Bevan principle of ministerial responsibility. He was the famous British member of Parliament, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who resigned because he accidentally released budget information the day before he was to officially release his budget in the British House of Commons. That is often referred to as the principle of ministerial responsibility.

The member spent some time talking about the Ontario Securities Commission. As an individual member of Parliament, I happen to agree with him, but I would go one step further. I think it's always been a bit of a ridiculous situation, in a country as large as Canada and having such a sophisticated securities operation, that we don't have one national securities exchange commission. Eliminate the 10 provincial commissions and give that national commission the kinds of investigative powers and staff it needs to look into these things, somewhat modelled on the United States, where they have aggressively prosecuted people who, by and large, have committed fraud in the securities area. The number one issue, of course, is the many small investors—by and large, that's the basis of the securities activity in many jurisdictions—who in fact have been the unfortunate victims of many frauds within that area.

One of the things that we'll be looking at is about 400 individuals who will be put under the review of the Integrity Commissioner of the province of Ontario. This is an important step forward, because I think all of us in this House share the common concern that we want to evaluate and look at ways we can enhance our—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member for Beaches–East York, you have up to two minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Parkdale–High Park and Peterborough for their thoughtful comments. I must say I am very pleased today because all of you, which doesn't happen very often—all four actually referred to the speech and the things I was trying to say instead of giving their own comments and things in the scripted notes they were given in advance.

So I thank you for listening intently, all of you, with the exception, I must say, of the member from London–Fanshawe's one statement about micromanagement. I am not suggesting for a minute, nor would I ever suggest, that any minister micromanage his or her portfolio. No matter how small that portfolio is, you have to trust the people who work for you. You have to trust that they make the right decision. But ultimately, just as if somebody on my staff were to screw up, if somebody were to say something or do something that was inappropriate, it is my responsibility to do the correct thing by law and take the appropriate punishment or penalty. But ultimately I am the one whose name is on the ballot. I am the one who is responsible. I am asking the minister to do no more and no less than that.

To the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka: He talked about the responsibility and the growth in

bureaucracy. I too share some of those things about the growth in bureaucracy. I was a federal bureaucrat for a long time. I understand the necessity of having people in the field. But when you have bureaucrats investigating bureaucrats, as this is being set up, I'm not sure it's healthy.

1750

To the member from Parkdale–High Park, who talked about the OSC, and the member from Peterborough, who did too: Absolutely, I would concur that we need a national regulator, but we don't have a national regulator. I believe you were on the committee with me five years ago when we talked about having a national regulator, and all of us agreed that if we didn't have one within a year, we had to proceed on our own. Well, the five or six years have come and gone, we still don't have one, and with Quebec refusing, we may never have one. The time to act is now.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 201, An Act to provide for review of expenses in the public sector, tabled by the Minister of Government Services, Mr. Takhar.

As I say, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to it. I note the government members don't seem interested in speaking to it, except to do some two-minute hits. Perhaps that's because the government has decided that they want this bill to pass as quickly as possible, with as little notice as possible and with as little time as possible spent talking about the lack of oversight in terms of some of the scandals we have seen.

So I say to the Speaker, why has this bill come forward? I'd like to answer that question. That's because of the scandals, the summer of scandal we have seen this past year, starting off with eHealth, and I'd like to take a little time just to explain how that all came about. It came about because of the diligent work of the PC Party and their research staff, who provided freedom of information requests into expenses at eHealth. And I have to say that it wasn't a simple process of asking and getting all the information handed to us. It was a matter of doing requests and having the government delay as long as possible the time frame in giving a response and then giving no response and then our asking again and going through the same process over and over until in May of this year, finally, after repeated requests, we did receive a lot of information to do with eHealth and the misuse of public funds at eHealth. But it took a lot of persistence on the part of the PC Party to get that information.

That was, I believe, in May. That's when we learned that there were many untendered contracts, as has been mentioned by other members, and about the connections that a lot of the consultants had to each other and to the Liberal Party. We learned about things like the \$2,700 a day for some consultants and about \$16 million in untendered contracts. I think probably one of the worst abuses that I see is a \$25,000 speech. You know, it is just hard to fathom that the CEO of eHealth would spend that much money on a speech and also that the minister

wouldn't note something like that, something so significant—\$25,000 for one speech to her peers. I mean it's an outrageous waste of money, as far as I'm concerned, and I think most people in the public would agree with that. So it took a lot of work on the part of the PC Party to get that information out. That was back in May, and the story is still in the news.

We did the same thing with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., starting back in January. So the government has seen how eHealth has been a big news story. Maybe eventually people will realize it was the lack of oversight by the Liberal government that was the cause of it.

The government has taken a bit of a different strategy this time, and that is that the Minister of Finance decided to just dump all the information, just as they were finally about to give us the information through our freedom of information requests after many, many months. They decided to do a pre-emptive strike this time, so instead of having it come out slowly, the Minister of Finance dropped all the information in one day and then took the step of firing the CEO of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., I think hopeful that the story would just be over. From that information we see excesses like executives of OLG paying for things like car detailing and child care services, some abuses of alcohol and meals—meals of \$3,000 with a lot of booze involved in them. I would have to say, the government has been in power for six years; why did they not have rules about alcohol? I think, to the average taxpayer, the idea that executives of OLG would be going out and dining with themselves and having \$3,000 meals paid for by taxpayers is just not acceptable. That's why this bill has come about.

It's come about because the PC Party has been diligent in doing freedom of information requests on just two agencies. But there are roughly some 630 agencies and boards in the province of Ontario. We have FOIed two, but we are working on many more. To give a short list of some of them, we're actively making freedom of information requests on the WSIB—the Workplace and Safety Insurance Board—on the Ontario Racing Commission, on the Ontario Securities Commission, on the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, on the Ontario Realty Corp., on the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., on Hydro One, on Ontario Power Generation, on the Ontario Power Authority, on the Independent Electricity System Operator, on the Ontario New Home Warranty Corp., on AgriCorp and on the local health integration networks.

I suspect that from those freedom of information requests there will be a lot more information coming out. I fully expect we'll find more untendered contracts. When the government did sort of drop all the information on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., they didn't reveal the untendered contracts of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. So we'll be interested to see what information comes out to do with that.

We've been working diligently to try to hold the government to account, as is our job, but what about the accountability of the government, what about ministerial responsibility, as was brought up by the member from

Beaches—East York? I have to say I find it a little bit ironic, I guess, that the minister who has introduced this bill is the Minister of Government Services, Mr. Takhar. He was the minister who was, I think for the first and only time, found in violation of the Members' Integrity Act when the then Integrity Commissioner, Coulter Osborne, did his report on January 4, 2006, a detailed report, and found the member in violation of the Members' Integrity Act. Seeing as this bill is about having the Integrity Commissioner review expenses of 22 boards and agencies, what was the penalty, what were the ramifications of being found in violation of the Members' Integrity Act? The answer is, "Nothing." The minister is here introducing the bill. He wasn't kicked out of cabinet, wasn't asked to resign. So you wonder, what are the consequences? I would also ask, what exactly does a minister in the McGuinty government have to do to lose their job? We haven't seen an answer to that question yet, and I really do wonder exactly what you have to do. It is a little ironic that it's this minister who is introducing this bill.

I know we're just about out of time, and I have a lot more I want to say, but I will just begin wrapping up by saying that I think the circumstances requiring this legislation are particularly offensive given the tough economic times so many Ontarians are facing right now. So many have lost their jobs and tightened their belts, and then we see this sort of government waste. It's no wonder voters are so cynical, with an ever-growing sense of entitlement by agents and agencies of this government. Just to give you an example of that, I just received a letter from a constituent in Parry Sound—Muskoka, and he writes to me:

"Hi, Norm.

"Just a quick note from one of your constituents. I am once again disgusted and discouraged with the abuse of my hard-earned dollars that go for taxes in this country. I earn very little money each year and have four different jobs in order to make a living. Some of that money goes to the Ontario government. I am appalled by the attitude of entitlement that seems to permeate the government, not only of Ontario but all of Canada.... Those people buying golf green fees and exercise club memberships are stealing tax dollars. They should be arrested and charged with theft. Period."

He signed his e-mail "Mr. Disgusted."

This bill is going to require the Integrity Commissioner's staff of nine people to be looking after some 80,000 individuals and their expense reports. I think that's obviously not practical. I wonder whether the Integrity Commissioner is in fact even the right office for this to be happening.

I see you looking at the clock, and "It being 6 o'clock" I think is what you're about to say, so I will wrap up my talk at this time. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L’hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L’hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L’hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l’Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L’hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l’Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l’opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	St. Paul’s	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Leeanna Pendergast
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziatti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Laurel C. Broten, Helena Jaczek
Kuldip Kular, Amrit Mangat
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
David Oraziatti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Yasir Naqvi, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Arnott
Ted Arnott, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craiton, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Sophia Aggelonitis, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
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Maria Van Bommel
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