



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 27 October 2009

Mardi 27 octobre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 October 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 27 octobre 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIP ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ORDRE DES MÉTIERS DE L'ONTARIO ET L'APPRENTISSAGE

Mr. Milloy moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure to participate in the third reading of this bill, which would establish Ontario's first college of trades. At the outset, I would like to indicate to the Legislature that I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Oakville. I'd like to publicly thank him for his work on this bill, as well as my former parliamentary assistant, the member from Richmond Hill. As members are aware, there was a shuffle of parliamentary assistants a number of weeks ago. Both of them have done great work in terms of moving this piece of legislation forward.

Just to put this bill in a bit of context, it's not surprising that it's all about the economy. I think everyone here in the Legislature recognizes that that's the focus of most of the work that is happening here at Queen's Park. Of course, when it comes to the economy and preparing Ontario to move forward, we have to make sure that we have one of the most highly educated and highly skilled workforces imaginable. There's no way anymore that we can compete on the basis of low wages or even a low dollar. We have to prepare ourselves. Certainly education at all levels is very much a part of it.

Today, of course, we are talking about education around the skilled trades, which members may be surprised to know represent 10% of our workforce. In fact,

here in the province of Ontario we have more than 150 apprenticeable trades which people can pursue in a variety of areas, not simply in the construction trades which we often think of, but in the automotive sector, the service sector and a whole variety of sectors moving forward.

I think members are aware that there have been numerous reports that have come to light over the past number of years which have predicted that we may see a shortage in the area of skilled trades, and that as Ontario moves forward, for a variety of reasons, partly demographic, but also just the overall demand that's increasing here in our society, we are going to see shortages of skilled trades.

Certainly the government has taken this very seriously. When we came to office in 2003, one of our commitments was to increase the number of apprenticeship registrations by 25%, and I'm pleased to report that in 2003 we had 17,100 individuals coming forward to be apprentices, and as of 2009, we now have 28,000 individuals who came forward this year to be apprentices, to register. In fact, right now in the province of Ontario, we have 60,000 more apprentices than when we took office.

Now, is there more that needs to be done in terms of building this system of apprenticeship and the system of skilled trades? Certainly there is. I think it's worthwhile just to give a bit of context to the bill and how it came about. A number of years ago, my predecessor—the now Attorney General—in his role as Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, was confronted with one issue around the area of skilled training, and that's the issue of compulsory certification. Although many members of this Legislature may understand what compulsory certification is, for those watching this debate on television, I'll explain: It's the system whereby someone is obligated to be fully trained and to receive their qualifications in order to practise a trade. One, of course, can think of the trade of an electrician. You wouldn't want someone coming to your home or business to fix your electrical system who is not a fully certified electrician. That is a compulsory trade. There are a variety of other trades where someone may pursue the apprenticeship option and may write their certificate of qualification, may do that, but in the end they also have the option of pursuing that trade without that qualification.

My predecessor, faced with this issue of compulsory certification, of which trades should be certified and which ones shouldn't—because there's interest in having others join this list of about 20 that are compulsory—

asked a leading labour expert by the name of Mr. Tim Armstrong, a former head of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, to take a look at this issue.

What Mr. Armstrong came back with was a very interesting take on the whole apprenticeship system. He said that although there is a need for a system to review compulsory certification, there are a variety of other issues in the training sector: things like ratios, something that we discuss often here, the number of journeypersons who are needed to train an apprentice; things around training standards, how do we set training standards for apprentices; and the issue of diversity, the fact that we don't have enough women and that we don't welcome new Canadians into the trades as readily as we should and that we need work to be done there.

In terms of research, we don't have the research of what's going on in our skilled trades. How are people being trained, and how are people moving through the apprenticeship system and completing, or perhaps not completing, their studies? He looked at the issue of enforcement and said that we don't properly enforce the rules and regulations.

What Mr. Armstrong said was that rather than deal with one of these issues surrounding apprenticeship, the province of Ontario should embark on a very creative and bold idea and establish a college of trades, a self-regulatory body similar to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Law Society of Upper Canada and the Ontario College of Teachers, something that came about not that long ago; a self-regulatory body which would bring everyone together. It would bring all those involved in the skilled trades—employers, those who are training apprentices, and obviously we want to hear from apprentices themselves—everyone who is involved, bring them together into a college that would set up mechanisms and set up a structure to examine all these issues, and in a sense, be the real point for apprenticeship training and skills training in the province of Ontario.

0910

At the core of its mandate, as well as dealing with a whole variety of issues, would be the idea of promoting the skilled trades, particularly among young people, and encouraging them to pursue apprenticeships and to finish their apprenticeships.

The report that Mr. Armstrong brought forward certainly captured the imagination of many here in Queen's Park, but also out in the sector, and it was a very, very welcome report. As a follow-up to that, we asked Mr. Kevin Whitaker, the current chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, to go out and consult widely on the idea of a college and what its structure might be. I want to very publicly thank Mr. Whitaker for his work, as well as all the individuals who came forward during that consultation, during Mr. Armstrong's consultation, and subsequently during the committee hearings on this, the input that we received on how we might establish this college. Of course, as a result of this work, as a result of these hearings, we're now at third reading, where we have a bill in front of us which would establish this

structure, which would modernize our apprenticeship system.

I'll just take a minute or two to talk about what this college would look like and how it would function. Its membership would include both certified journeypersons and persons who employ them, or who sponsor or employ apprentices, and thanks to debate here and in the committee, we have welcomed the proposal that apprentices would have a place at the table as well. The college, in setting it up, would ensure balanced representation, including employers and employees. Representatives from the four skilled trades sectors include non-affiliated members representing the public and a representative of our college of applied arts and technology, which is so crucial in terms of apprenticeship.

The proposed governance structure is based on a review of models from other provinces in Canada and other countries, as well as other college models in Ontario, including those regulating health care providers, teachers and early childhood educators. The college would be governed by a board of governors with the chief executive officer leading a dedicated staff to carry out the activities of the college.

Divisional boards—one each for the construction, motive power, industrial and service sectors—would report to the board of governors, advising it on issues relating to their respective sectors. Trade boards representing individual trades or groups of trades in a sector would advise the divisional board on issues relating to its trade. I think this recognizes that some issues affect all trades, while others are particular to and may arise only in one of the four sectors or even in an individual trade.

Appointees to the college may have particular stakeholder constituency backgrounds and would be selected based on that expertise; however, their first duty would be to serve the college and the public interest. Appointments would be balanced, reflecting different workplace realities across the trades, the appropriate proportions of unionized and non-unionized employers and employees, small and large businesses, rural and urban settings. The college of trades would provide an open, systematic and transparent process to deal with critical issues affecting the trades sector. I've mentioned some of those, which would include compulsory certification and apprenticeship ratios.

We have heard from the industry, we have heard from apprentices, we have heard from all those partners involved in the province of Ontario, about the strength of our apprenticeship system, but we've also heard about the need for further reform. The only way that reform is going to take place is if we pull together all partners, all those involved in the sector, and provide them with a forum to have open and honest debate and to reach a way to move forward on a number of these pressing issues which are so crucial to allowing more young people to come into our skilled trades program.

I'm very, very pleased with Bill 183; it is the result of a great consultation, both before the introduction of the bill, and of course, through discussion at the committee

level and debates here in the Legislature. I think it will go a long way forward in ensuring that we have a very strong skilled trades sector here in the province of Ontario. I urge all members of this Legislature to support this bill as it comes up for third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to third reading debate of Bill 183, the college of trades act. Our party supports anything that will help make sure Ontario has the educated and trained workforce that we will need to compete in the 21st century. We have long believed that the trades are not getting the credit or promotion they deserve as a career that will be able to provide a high-paying job for our young people of the future.

We have constantly called for the government to lower the journeyman-to-apprentice ratio from three to one to one to one. This government has refused to act to date, denying many young people a chance to become qualified tradespeople and denying many businesses the chance to grow and prosper in this modern economy. We were glad, at least, to have the government acknowledge that this new college bill, if passed, will have the ability to set apprenticeship ratios. I would hope that the college would soon set this as a priority.

We are also disappointed that the government passed up the chance to accept any amendments that were brought forward by the opposition that would have, in our opinion, made this bill much better. As Linda Franklin from Colleges Ontario said:

“As many of you will know, the Conference Board of Canada, in a study a couple of years ago, estimated that we will be short 360,000 skilled workers by 2025 and over half a million a few years later. A disproportionate amount of that shortage is in the skilled trades. So it’s really critical that in the years ahead we get more women, more underrepresented groups and more groups who traditionally don’t see the trades as a viable option for them to consider and choose a skilled trade for their careers.”

In terms of labour shortages, those numbers are really frightening. We need to be able to work together with all sectors of this economy to make sure that we are ready to meet this shortage. This will be a huge challenge. Now isn’t the time to play partisan politics when it comes to skills training. As an example, Colleges Ontario, which was here last night, had a real concern with making sure that they had a say in developing curriculums at our community colleges. For example, in my riding, Lambton College would then have a seat at this board to make sure that they were listened to. We have not to date got any such commitment from the government.

Many people don’t realize that our community colleges play an important part in the delivery of our apprenticeship programs. They were legitimately concerned that they would be called upon to play a new role without any new resources being put behind them. Again, to quote Linda Franklin:

“We think there has to be a strong connection between the regulatory body and the education community. Without that strong connection, we think there are real risks that the training and education of the trades will not be effectively coordinated with the regulatory function. Opportunities to address major issues related to attracting students to the trade could be lost because of the absence of that connection.” She went on to say, “As advocates and promoters of the trades on an ongoing basis, our colleges want to ensure that the growth of apprenticeship is not inhibited.”

We put forward, as a party, a number of amendments that would have accomplished what Colleges Ontario wanted, and the government rejected these.

The Ontario Home Builders’ Association, a group many of us know well, had raised concerns with a cookie-cutter approach to training that may not reflect the actuality. The incoming president of the home builders, Mr. James Bazley, said:

“The current regulatory system governing apprenticeship and training across the province is not perfect. There are numerous challenges we face, such as labour shortages in some trades. These shortages are the result of several factors, including:

“—the negative public perception of a career in construction;

“—interprovincial trade mobility issues;

“—an aging workforce; and

“—the rigid system of apprenticeship training, where there is currently a three-to-one journeyman-to-apprentice ratio in many of the trades, such as plumbers, electricians and sheet metal workers.”

The Home Builders’ Association is a fairly forward-thinking organization that wants its members to prosper into the next century. He went on to say:

“Bill 183, which has now passed second reading, represents a potentially serious problem for the provincial residential construction industry. We believe that the current legislation is seriously flawed.”

He stated in his deputation to the committee:

“First, it appears that the Ontario College of Trades bureaucracy, as set out in this legislation, is far too politicized to be effective or fair. We have serious concerns about the appointments council, which will be responsible for appointments to the board of governors, the divisional boards, trade boards and the roster of adjudicators. The nine individuals that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities appoints to the appointments council will have the ability to appoint members to the boards and will therefore affect the orientation of the entire college structure.”

Our party agreed with this position. If the college of trades is set up in this manner, it will be to the detriment of it.

0920

The second concern that they expressed: “The Ontario College of Trades does not adequately consider the significant differences in labour geography. Outside the few major cities in the province, it is not unusual that

tradespeople do a wide variety of work to ensure their ability” over time “to earn a livelihood. For example, a certified carpenter in Quinte may also do other tasks, such as installing siding or roofing. However, this legislation does not recognize these provincial differences.” I don’t believe that the government gave this concern the consideration they should have. We all agree that a licensed carpenter in Kenora should have the same training level as one in Toronto, but the government would hear none of that. We think this was a mistake on their part.

It’s interesting that the Ontario Home Builders’ Association asked the government to conduct a serious economic impact analysis on Bill 183 before it was passed. On our side, we think you should know and be aware of the economic ramifications of any new bill or regulation, so we don’t think it is out of line to make this request. But it was again rejected. Our first amendment called for a neutral party to do an economic analysis of this piece of legislation, and the government, in their so-called wisdom, turned it down.

One of the most interesting criticisms of Bill 183 came from a concerned group of tradespeople who have religious objections to joining unions and other organizations and have serious objections to being forced to join this college of trades. These citizens raised very valid concerns in committee and to us individually that, frankly, Ontario in the past has recognized this through many labour laws. For example, you can have a religious objection to joining a union but you may make a donation to a charity that is equal to the dues you would pay to that union. That’s recognized in legislation. I don’t think it is unreasonable for this same exemption to apply to the college. I understand that the government, through the ministry, made commitments in some way that the new college would deal with a number of these issues through bylaws and regulations, but I would be worried when they are unwilling to put that in writing as of yet. I brought forward an amendment that would have offered the religious protection to this group of workers. Again, the government did not see fit to accept it.

One of the issues that our party raised and submitted through an amendment that the government didn’t agree to pass had to do with the democratic makeup of the college board. We had proposed that the board be elected by the members of the college. That is fairly common for other colleges. David McDonald from the Merit OpenShop Contractors Association said, “All colleges in this province are completely democratic. Everybody votes. Everybody votes for how much they’re going to pay; everybody participates. This creature of government that the government is creating is completely appointed: The four levels of boards and the panels who are going to adjudicate compulsory trades and ratios are completely appointed by government, yet it’s an arm’s-length government institution. This is nonsense. It’s ridiculous and it is a political powder keg, because you can change the appointment board government” through different changes in government “and you can change the whole structure and essence of the whole college.”

We couldn’t agree with Mr. McDonald more. We know that the college will be levying a fee on its members; it has admitted so. Of course, we think that this is a tax on tradespeople. But what is worse is that the government can’t tell us how much this levy is going to be or how often it will be levied. Will it be just levied against tradespeople or will it be levied against their employers as well? For example, people who belong to a provincially recognized trade now pay a fee, I think it’s every three years. There’s some indication that this could be yearly, but we have no commitment on that. The government’s response is that the college will decide that. This is a college board that is completely appointed by the government, and they will get to decide how big this tax is. I think that’s an abdication of responsibility.

Interestingly enough, we are told that the cost of running this new college could be as high as \$40 million. No one seems to be able to tell us where that money is going to come from. Will it come out of existing Ontario community college budgets? I ran this up the flag pole yesterday with members of the college board of governors and representatives here, and I don’t think they thought about that before. I asked, “Is that \$40 million going to come out of present community college funding, or is it going to be new funding that the government, in this deficit, probably will have a hard time coming up with?” No one had the answers to that. Will it be funded by a levy on tradespeople? No one seems to know that as well.

This bill raises so many questions that I’m very disappointed that they have used time allocation to try and get it through this House so quickly. This follows a pattern of this government. They will let the Legislature debate for hours issues that are meaningless to most Ontarians, but as soon as the opposition raises an issue that is serious, they cut off debate. This is the party that promised they wouldn’t use time allocation; they have now used it on virtually every bill that has been sent to committee.

My party doesn’t like this move to where we pass enabling legislation and then leave the details to be decided later. The old saw that the devil is in the details leaves many people with trepidation.

This government seems to have an addiction to this kind of behaviour. I would have liked to see the government stand up and say how much these fees were going to be for this new college, and not leave it up to someone else.

In closing, my party has some very serious reservations about this piece of legislation. We don’t believe the government has come forward with enough of the details on how this new college will work. There are questions about the college that need to be answered, questions about apprenticeship ratios that need to be answered. The question of how big the tax on our tradespeople will be needs to be answered.

For all of those reasons, our party is against this bill, but we recognize, at the end of the day, with the government’s majority, that it will pass, and we hope that it will

be successful in making Ontario a leader in skills training.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to be able to speak to this bill this morning. As you may well be aware, our critic, Rosario Marchese, is also scheduled to speak this morning, so my remarks will be relatively brief.

The intent of this bill is to set up a college of trades to regulate the trades, to give them more say on how apprenticeship programs are run, and to set up a regulatory framework that people will understand clearly, one that we in our party would hope would advance the cause of ensuring that tradespeople are properly trained, that apprentices have a clear road to go forward to become journeypersons, and that there is, in fact, a method in place to ensure that we have skilled people who do the work that's so critical to the functioning of our society.

I have to say that, at the same time as we're discussing this college of trades, Bill 175 is coming forward to enhance labour mobility between the provinces. It strikes me that these bills are at cross-purposes. On the one hand, we today are debating a college of trades piece of legislation that will allow the trades to set standards, that will be setting out a road for people to move through training and become fully qualified. At the same time, we have another piece of legislation that will allow people from across Canada who may not have the level of training that we want this bill to provide us with to simply come and operate as though they've had the training that's required in Ontario. I'm not saying that we have the highest level of training—we may. There already is a national program, the red seal program, that strives to have a standard level of qualification right across Ontario.

So I have to say that for all the words from the minister about the need for a college and about certification, training and regulation so that we have capable people doing this work, I have tremendous concern that, at the same time, the government is bringing forward legislation that will undermine everything that they expect this college to do. That is a tremendous problem.

With regard to the bill itself and its contents, the NDP supports an arm's-length body to deal with approvals of industry recommendations regarding new compulsory trades, journeyperson ratios, curriculum and other matters. It's not clear, and I look forward to hearing more debate, whether the new structure will be truly industry-driven or whether the new college's structure, which we see as cumbersome, will merely substitute one bureaucratic barrier for another.

It's not clear what the province's apprentices and journeypersons will get from their membership fee in this college, particularly if the government goes ahead and passes this bill on labour mobility, which in fact would undermine the standard-setting that this college is supposed to be given responsibility for.

0930

If you look at the overview of the apprenticeship situation, Ontario's apprenticeship system provides future skills for industry and the economy and supports the provinces to better compete in the global economy by ensuring that an adequate supply of skilled workers is available. It goes without saying: If you're going to have electrical equipment, if you're going to have an electricity infrastructure, if you're going to have buildings that stay up when they're put up, then you want to make sure that you have capable and trained people actually doing that work.

Apprenticeship training itself is cost-effective, and it's an efficient method of training for industry; 90% to 95% of apprenticeship training is done on the job. The success of an apprenticeship training program is dependent on its unique combination of workplace and academic education.

The time-based workplace component of apprenticeship training is essential in that the apprentice must have an adequate period to learn from the journeyperson. In-school training must support what is taught in the workplace.

I have to say—and we've had this debate before in this House—that ensuring that you have the right ratio of journeypersons to apprentices is critical. There are people who have made the argument in the past, and I expect will make the argument in the future, that that ratio has to be radically altered so that far more apprentices can come on stream. But the reality is that if you have too many apprentices per journeyperson, those apprentices in the end become floor sweepers and coffee-bringers rather than people who are getting one-on-one training on skills that can have a huge impact on the viability of a product or a building, or on the safety of a building.

So my hope—our hope—is that with the way this act is written and the way, ultimately, the regulations are produced, we will have a college that will be able to make sure that those standards are protected.

We think that apprenticeship training must be more widely used as a mechanism to promote entry for workers new to the labour force, re-entry for workers returning to the labour force and transition for those already in the labour force.

Apprenticeship training must be promoted more effectively in the school system in order to provide opportunities for students not going on to post-secondary education in an era of high youth unemployment.

Apprenticeship training must be accessible to all. Marketing and education initiatives must be expanded to ensure that existing female, aboriginal and visible-minority employees are recognized as potential apprentices by current and future employers.

Under the Mike Harris government, the apprenticeship system in Ontario was split in two by placing industrial trades in the new act and leaving construction trades under the old Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. These actions deregulated the system and shifted the focus from apprenticeship as an employment relationship

to apprenticeship as an education and training relationship. It removed the enforcement of the regulatory provisions that regulated ratios and wage rates, and it removed entry levels and duration from the legislation.

The NDP believes that skill sets must not replace whole trades. While there must be flexibility to recognize genuine new trades—

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: You're up, Peter. Talk.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I understand. I'm free to proceed?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Compulsory certification must be significantly expanded after re-establishing whole trades. Employer-established non-regulated designer trades must come under the regulation through the established apprenticeship training programs. With that as a starting point, over time, the NDP believes that the entire system should move toward compulsory certification for most trades. Compulsory certification will ensure increased flexibility and mobility as well as higher standards, higher skill levels, higher quality and increased confidence in the apprenticeship system. Compulsory certification will also help ensure public safety and consumer protection.

I will wrap up my comments here and leave the balance of my time to our critic, Mr. Marchese.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We're in rotation.

The member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning and support third reading of the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. As members will know, if the act is passed, it's going to establish the college of trades as a regulatory college, and that's going to help to modernize the province's apprenticeship and skilled trades system, something we all know is really necessary.

What the bill is about, for those who are watching at home, is promoting the trades; it's about helping the skilled trades sector succeed; and, more importantly, it's about providing more opportunity for all Ontarians—all important goals for stakeholders in apprenticeship and the skilled trades and for the province, and something that's worthy of this House's support. We've come up with a model we believe will help us achieve the goals, and it has come up after careful consideration. We've

conducted thorough research on the bill. The legislation stands on a very firm foundation of discussion with industry, with partners, participants in the skilled trades and the apprenticeship training system.

Joining us today in the members' gallery, for example, are Ken Wragge from Northridge Electric, who followed the hearings through, and Alex Lolula, formerly of the Ontario Building Trades and now with the IBEW, who followed the hearings through as well. During that process we were able to hear from a variety of stakeholders who expressed a very strong interest in the bill and brought us very valuable input and advice as to what we should include in the bill.

What we also did was examine a number of other models in other jurisdictions to see what those other jurisdictions are using, and we were examining the current state of trades and apprenticeship training in Ontario, how it's evolved over the years, and we investigated areas where Ontario can improve the process. We consulted very widely with stakeholders.

Let's just go back a little bit and see where this legislation came from and how this proposed legislation came about. That's going to help reinforce why it's important. I hope the bill receives the full support of this House.

The previous Minister for Training, Colleges and Universities, who is the current Attorney General, took the first step towards addressing a number of issues that were identified at that point in time as issues that were holding the skilled trades back. Minister Bentley called on Tim Armstrong, who we all know is a respected public policy adviser and legal counsel. He's an author and he's a recipient of the Order of Ontario. We tasked him with reviewing compulsory certification in the skilled trades. He was asked to look at this issue with particular reference to the impact on health and safety, on apprenticeship registration and completion rates, on consumer protection and on the economic impact and other relevant factors that may influence decisions. He was asked to recommend a framework for dealing with and advising on applications for compulsory trade status, something that has been talked about a lot. He also conducted broad stakeholder consultations and engaged external advisers and labour market economists as well as federal government agencies.

He reported back to us in May 2008. What he said was, he suggested that we couldn't adequately address compulsory certification without looking at all other aspects of the system. According to Mr. Armstrong, there was "substantial potential to improve and enhance the standing and the effectiveness of the apprenticeship trades and their continued, strengthened contribution to the growth of the Ontario economy."

0940

Out of all the recommendations he made, the most significant recommendation was to consult with the stakeholders regarding the objective of establishing a new, all-trades government institution, which has come to be known as the college of trades. He offered structural suggestions for consideration in establishing the

proposed college, and what these included—and which we discussed in some depth at committee—are a board of governors with a balanced membership, and a certification role that, together with the college name, would enhance the prestige and the status of the trades. He also wanted us to include the capacity to deal with the needs of each individual sector and the ability to establish expert panels that should consider decisions on ratios, for example, and certification; and he wanted us to discuss and consider a role for the college in enforcement and complaints on these issues.

In September 2009 we announced our intent to move forward with Mr. Armstrong's recommendations, announcing that we intended to introduce legislation that, if passed, would establish the college of trades. We appointed Mr. Kevin Whitaker as the implementation adviser. He was asked to make recommendations to the government on the college's proposed governance structure, scope and mandate. Like Mr. Armstrong before him, Mr. Whitaker also developed his recommendations after wide consultations. He met with employer and employee organizations, with organizations that provide apprenticeship training and with experts from among the more than 150 trades in the province of Ontario today. He reviewed submissions from the public and interested parties, he held meetings and regional public consultations and he got a wide array of input and feedback. He worked with the government in conjunction with a committee of representatives of all government ministries that were involved in the apprenticeship and skilled trades system.

The recommendations he brought forward that came from this process are reflected in the bill we have before us today, the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act.

The proposed legislation retains important elements to replace the existing Apprenticeship and Certification Act and the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, standardizing governance for the sector. Under the act, the college would have a duty to serve and protect the public interest in carrying out all its objects and functions. The college membership would include certified journeypersons and persons who employ them or who sponsor or employ apprentices. Thanks to the discussion in the Legislature, at the committee level as well, and the advice that we received from a number of stakeholders in committee, membership has also been expanded to include apprentices in this province.

The college's balanced approach to governance considers the needs of employers, employees, apprentices and other stakeholders in the process. It's going to ensure balanced representation comes from employers and employees, representatives from the industrial, service, construction and motive power sectors, and it includes non-affiliated members who are representing the public.

Thanks to the discussions we also had in committee, the representation that's envisioned under the act has been expanded to now include a representative of the colleges of applied arts and technology. It includes a

board of governors, four divisional boards and individual trade boards. This recognizes that some issues affect all trades, while other issues are particular just to certain trades and may arise in only one of the four divisions or to individual trades.

Appointees to the college may have a particular stakeholder constituency background and they're going to be selected based on that expertise. However, the first duty of those appointed is to serve the college and, most importantly, the public interest. Nevertheless, as in any normal decision-making process, there are going to be differences of opinion that will arise, so the governance structure is being designed to prevent any deadlock on decisions.

College appointees will reflect the diversity in Ontario society and the college's membership. College appointments would be made with attention to groups that have been historically underrepresented in the trades and are long overdue changes. They will target francophones, aboriginal Ontarians, women, visible minorities and persons dealing with disabilities. It's going to provide an open, systematic and transparent process to deal with critical issues affecting the trades sector. Those that have been talked about include compulsory certification and apprenticeship ratios. It's going to be difficult to achieve consensus on these issues, but this is the way to make it with this existing framework.

This is a huge step ahead for the skilled trades in the province of Ontario and for the employees in this province. It's worthy of the support of all members of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Bill 183: Having worked in industry myself for 30 years, I am very interested.

I suspect that in all things there are balance and relationship issues. The bill was introduced in May 2009 and it strikes me as—I have a lot of respect for the unions, skilled trades specifically. They're very organized and have their own educational functions and trade standards functions—and to an extent the CAW. They definitely have their place and I wouldn't want to be on the record as saying otherwise.

When I read this bill, though, I'm a bit suspicious about it because it has some inherent conflicts, unfortunately. I'll just go through a few things here.

It's sort of a monopolization of who can do what. This is in an innovative economy and a fast-moving global economy. If you look at books like *The World Is Flat*, talking about globalization, we need to know that we're in a different type of economy than we were, say, 20 or 30 years ago. If you look at the large manufacturing sectors—Stelco, Inco, Dofasco, General Motors—they're pretty well in some stress right now, if not completely out of business. Having worked there 30 years, I owe most of what I have to those years, and to my family as well. So I'm thinking that this isn't quite the right thing to do. I think the standards are important.

I'm just going to read some of the preamble here: "The bill sets out a scheme for the governance of the practice of trades in Ontario through the establishment of the Ontario College of Trades and through revising the current framework of apprenticeship training and certification contained in the Apprenticeship and Certification Act...."

It goes on to say, "Part II prohibits a person from engaging in the practice of a trade designated under the act...." Does that preclude me from wiring anything or fixing my plumbing? Not yet.

Employing a journey person in those trades, or sponsoring or employing an apprentice: We've talked for ages here about the apprenticeship ratio issue. Let's look at best practices globally, internationally, and make sure that our young people have opportunities here in Ontario, if not in Canada.

There's the inter-jurisdictional issue now, the AIT. That's another problem, where we're trying to harmonize the standards across the provinces. I look at not just the skilled trades group but at health care, for instance. Opticians in Alberta take about four months' training; opticians in Ontario take about four years' training. They're not the same. Let's change the standards. But the colleges that train the opticians here in Ontario want the four years of tuition, not the four months of tuition like Alberta. I hope the standards will be no lower in Ontario if we agree to bring them in here. Our people are spending four years to learn the skill that's being taught somewhere else.

Some of the other professions—my son's fiancée was rejected by the Ontario College of Teachers. She didn't get into the training at Western or wherever, and she went to the United States. So we need to be a lot more versatile.

I'm concerned. If I just read through here, the next part: "Part III contains general provisions relating to the objects, organization and administration of the college and its board of governors. This part includes provisions respecting the relationship between the college and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The board will be appointed by a council...." It sounds to me like a lot of administration here.

How is it happening today? This is all new.

By the way, it's mandatory membership, probably \$200 or \$300 a person. That's a tax on jobs. For me to belong to the trade and now I've got to pay \$300 or whatever to belong to this new college, that's a tax on a job; I don't know what for, personally.

Then they go into this whole thing of the discipline committee. Well, wait a minute here. I recognize the college of doctors—we have a couple of physicians here this morning. The colleges of professions usually is the disciplinary body; they set the standards and the discipline for non-compliance. If a union is running it, their job primarily in the workplace, as I recall, is to guard against unnecessary discipline. How is discipline going to work in this? I think there's a conflict of interest in the very design of the role of this.

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I think the best example of that is the college of teachers. When the Royal Commission on Learning talked about professionalizing the profession of educators, they formed a college, much like the college of nurses. The definition of a college or a profession is it's self-regulating, like doctors, nurses, teachers, veterinarians, opticians and optometrists. Anyway, the majority of votes on the college of teachers is actually the heads of the union. I'm not opposed—there's a structure in all things, so it's not a negative aspersion. What it's saying is, it's a conflict of their interest. To protect the workers and the workers rights is the role, and I respect that. I dealt with it for 30 years.

There are sections of this bill that are simply redundant. If I look at the whole first section—there are over 100 sections to this bill. Look, I've gone through this thing. There's so much red tape in here it's unbelievable. There's a college to elect a college and then there's a disciplinary committee and then there are provisions for procedures for relief from sanctions. And then there is an ability here that permits appeals to the Divisional Courts for somebody who is wrongfully dismissed or something like that. I am not opposed to standards—and high standards—in the trades. I'm proud to say that we have the red seal program across Canada. I hope it's going to be co-operative with other inter-jurisdictional commerce issues.

On the one hand, the goals of this, establishing and enshrining the standards of quality and expertise in the trades, is laudable; I agree with that. This is duplication. It's a tax on jobs. In my view, it's probably, unfortunately—and I remember, when we were discussing apprenticeship review back when we were in government. I remember meeting Pat Dillon, a fine gentleman. It would be my advice here that if Premier McGuinty would appoint him from the Working Families Coalition as the head of the college, that would complete the circle that I'm talking about. It's a payoff by Premier McGuinty for the last election and that's the fact—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Colle, now he knows—

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order: That is not parliamentary language, impugning motive, and should be ruled out of order. You should be objecting to that kind of speech in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I am very reluctant to withdraw, but I will withdraw because the chief government whip couldn't even keep enough members in this House—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Would you continue the debate? Time is—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Further debate? The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: New Democrats are going to support this bill.

But I also want to add that I'm not quite sure why the government has decided to time-allocate this particular issue. We normally have third reading debate, and we usually take a day, two or three if our members want to speak to the bill. I am not quite sure why the government was in a hurry to move a motion to time-allocate this bill so all we get is 20 minutes of third reading debate and the issue is dead.

Mr. David Zimmer: That's enough time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We have 10 minutes to debate this bill that has taken us many—still have enough time?

Mr. David Zimmer: Oh, we've got a lot of time; 10 minutes is enough.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My good friend from Willowdale says we have a lot of time. It's easy for the governing member to say we have a lot of time because he doesn't want the opposition to have much time to debate the bill.

Even though I'm supporting it, and our party is supporting it, I just don't quite understand why you time-allocated this bill. I don't get it. I needed to make that point, member from Willowdale. I'm not quite sure what you're not understanding about the issue, but we normally debate in full on third reading. If the member from Willowdale wanted to speak, he should have gotten up and should have forced his own government members to give him time to speak, give him the level of his blah, blah on the left flank over here.

I wanted to tell you that we support this bill. It's not a perfect bill, but we believe it moves in the right direction.

New Democrats have been critical of this government for quite some time. We believe they have mishandled the issue of apprenticeship for years. We have been critical of this ministry and the minister in terms of how they've handled the apprenticeship program from the very beginning. They have given away money for programs they call apprenticeship programs which, in my view and in the view of many in the trades, were not real apprenticeship programs. All they were obsessed with and still are obsessed with are numbers, i.e., how many register in a program, whether it's worthwhile or not, versus how many complete the program. It never bothered the government too much that many of these people going into these trades and some not-so-great trades were not completing the program. They were obsessed with registration, and never for one moment did they obsess about why they were not completing the programs. It has been a dismal failure from the get-go.

The second part of it is the Second Career program, which this minister has been talking about and bragging about for quite some time. They say that New Democrats didn't support the program. What we said about this ministry, this government, is that from the very beginning, the Second Career program was restricted so as to make sure that few people were able to apply and get into the program. In fact, in the early six months of the program only 1,100 people had applied to get into the Second Career program. We made fun of this govern-

ment because they were bragging about how great the program was, yet only 1,000 people had, within a six-month to one-year period, if I recall, applied to get into their program. Then, with the criticism of New Democrats, they stretched the criteria so as to allow people to apply. Then, lo and behold, 21,000 people apply to the program. Why? Because they made the application process less restrictive, and as a result—

Hon. John Milloy: You were mocking it way after the changes were made.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I mocked your ministry, Minister. I mocked your ministry and your government for their failure to do the right thing with unemployed people. We have unemployment at 10%, and it's going to remain so for the next two years. High unemployment, when people desperately need access to these Second Career programs in order to have a second opportunity to get a job, and what does this government do? It closes the criteria once again, puts a cap on the program and says, "We can't do it anymore," and in the same breath it says, "We need to continue, but we need to make it sustainable." What does that mean? It means getting it back to the first six months, where fewer people will be able to apply and get into the program. That's what "sustainable" means in the words of the Liberal government. The same words applied to the Conservatives in the past as well.

I've been critical of this government in terms of what it has done. The member from Oakville, you will agree that I've been critical of you guys, and I have been nice inasmuch as this initiative is one of the better initiatives you introduced in order to make apprenticeship programs work better for people.

We believe that there's a desperate need to make this more efficient, and we believe that this college of trades will move us in that direction. We had many, many deputations from which and from whom I learned a lot, based on the presentations made by the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Coalition of Compulsory Trades in Construction, and OPSEU, which made a good recommendation that was rejected by this government. Their recommendation was that, "given the fact that Bill 183 ... retains ministerial responsibility for apprenticeship, that there be no reduction in either the current number of positions or hours worked to administer and enforce apprenticeship agreements.... We further recommend that all employees hired under Bill 183 as employees of a trades governance structure be considered OPS members with full successor rights, seniority and pension benefits as those currently working on apprenticeship...." That was a good recommendation they made that was rejected by this government.

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The Coalition of Compulsory Trades in Construction said that we should move ahead with the compulsory trades and wait and leave the voluntary trades for another day. Let's get it right, they said, and then have the volunteer trades apply for membership at a later time. It was a useful suggestion, rejected by this government. But the fact that good suggestions were made by various bodies doesn't mean that we're going to not support this bill.

The Ontario Federation of Labour said that we should separate the trades into two parts: the authentic trades and those that are not authentic. By “authentic,” they meant those trades that are compulsory, those trades that require an apprenticeship program for two, three, four and, in some cases, five years; those are the authentic trades. In those trades we trust, by means of and by way of the skills that they acquire after a long apprenticeship program, versus the skill-set trades, as evidenced by the Apprenticeship and Certification Act versus the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. What the Apprenticeship and Certification Act does is reduce those skills into skill sets. In my view and the view of the Ontario Federation of Labour, those skill sets mean that they have less time on the job to train. It means that they get less than the two years, less than the three years, less than the four years that are required. It was a useful suggestion to separate the occupations as defined by what I said: skill sets versus the authentic trades, which are compulsory and ought to be compulsory. Useful suggestions made by various bodies were rejected.

Another suggestion that I’ve made for years now the member from Oakville will remember. He says, “We have gone all over the world to review what they have done.” I’m not sure how well you did that, by the way, because I don’t think you looked very closely at what Ireland was doing and what France was doing. By the way, I don’t think you looked very closely as to what it is that Quebec is doing, just around the corner. It’s only a—what is it?—six-hour drive to get to Montreal. It wouldn’t take that long to get to Quebec if you had to go by plane or if you had to ride a car, and you would learn something from it.

What have they done? Modelled on Ireland and France, they have obliged corporations whose payroll is \$1 million or more to put 1% of their dollars into training. Why is that good? Why is it important? Because it obliges the corporations to do the training that they should be doing to help out not just its own workers, but to help out with the lack of trades that they’re going to desperately need in some of these professions, in some of the occupations, in the next 10 or 15 years.

Corporations are leaving the job of training to the government alone. It’s just wrong in my mind. They have a responsibility to do training, and they should be doing it. Instead, they attack governments for not training the workers as adequately as they should be to get them into their workplaces. You get sick and tired of the government having to pay the full load as opposed to the corporations paying their fair share.

That was a suggestion, member from Oakville, that I had made quite a while ago with a bill that I introduced in this Legislature that you and many Liberals over there defeated and many Tories—all the Tories—defeated, of course. So there are useful suggestions to make it better.

You took one or two of my suggestions, and I thank you for that. You didn’t do it for me; you did it for yourself because you made the bill better. What you did in one of the amendments was say that he trades can make recommendations, the trade boards can make

recommendations to the divisional boards, and the divisional boards have to, within a reasonable time frame, respond. Thank you. It was good. More could have been done. That’s okay.

We would have loved to have had the full hour to debate this bill so that I could say just a little more, and you didn’t allow me to do that. You cut the debate, and I don’t know why you did that. I regret that you did that, but I will be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 6, 2009, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Milloy has moved third reading of Bill 183, An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after question period today.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1005 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: On behalf of our colleague from Mississauga–Brampton South, I’d like to introduce three of her constituents, who will be joining us this morning: Monique, Giordan and Kieran Kendal.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Nepean–Carleton and page Jeremy Pagé, we’d like to welcome his mother, Nicé Pagé, his father, Rick, and his brother Tyler to the galleries today. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

On behalf of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and page Bethany Ricker, we would like to welcome her mother, May Lynne Emiry, and her sister Gemma Ricker to the galleries as well today. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Seated in the Speaker’s gallery today is my nephew Nicholas Peters, my brother Joe Peters and some of his work colleagues: Joe Rajab, Carolyn Young, Catherine McEachern, Sarah Penny and Mark Cottril. Welcome to Queen’s Park, all.

STANDING ORDERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you very much, Speaker. I apologize for the delay. I thought there would be more introductions, as is usually the case.

I want to reference a number of standing orders which I believe, and I would pose to you—perhaps did not violate the strict word or the broader definition of the specific standing orders but could be interpreted as definitely breaching the spirit of a number of standing orders in this place.

I'll reference 35(a), "Ministerial Statements," matters of which the House should be informed; 40(b), the distribution of materials to opposition members; standing order 48, the rights of the minority; and standing 54 with respect to notice. I had a very limited opportunity to review the standing orders this morning, and I'm sure that others would also be applicable in this situation.

This is an issue that you have spoken to, and a number of your predecessors have as well, and that's essentially dealing with an announcement made today by the Premier that specifically directs the allocation of public funds—significant public funds—in an announcement made outside of this chamber.

In referencing a number of rulings that you have made, Speaker—March 31, 2008, where you referenced a previous Speaker and quoted him at length, I'll use the quote that was in your ruling: "administrative discourtesies do give rise to 'a valid grievance of which the government should take serious note.'" In that ruling, you expressed your personal disapproval of this kind of activity, and we very much support that and appreciate your comments and your ruling.

This year, in a ruling related to a point of order raised by the member for Oshawa, who dealt with an issue, you also made reference to this in terms of the limitations placed upon the Speaker in terms of dealing with this kind of issue.

But I think that this goes well beyond the bounds. We're looking at a government that is facing a record deficit in this province. We're talking about an expenditure that could exceed \$1 billion of public funds, yet the government does not see it appropriate to make that kind of a significant spending announcement in this place.

We are very much concerned, as well—we can't talk about the absence of specific ministers to deal with these issues, so I will not get into that issue, but again, this is an issue showing disrespect for the opposition members in this place. We express very serious concern and I want that to be on the record with respect to this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually unclear as to what the member was objecting to. He listed four standing orders that he felt in some way had been violated but gave no reason why. I am actually unclear as to what announcement he was referring to, because I don't think he referred to one. But I would remind the member opposite that, in fact, his government was the one that introduced an entire budget off-site.

So if they are accusing us of something, I'm unclear what it may be. I would like a little further direction before he casts aspersions on the way our government is doing business without giving any detail or any actual violations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member from Leeds–Grenville for his point of order and, as well, the government House leader. I will take this matter under advisement and provide a ruling at a subsequent date.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Premier: Premier, when you were asked about your lack of a plan in light of your record-breaking \$25-billion deficit, you said, "Don't just do something—stand there, think, and then do something."

Has the Premier finally emerged from his thinking place and come up with a plan to clean up the incredible mess he's made?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. I think what Ontarians are asking of us is to be thoughtful in terms of the approach that we bring to balancing the budget. My honourable colleague advocates, let's say, a particular approach which we reject. He thinks that we should cut everything yesterday.

We want to do two things. We want to both chart a course towards a balanced budget and at the same time protect those services that Ontarians rely on, like their health care and their education. And there's something else they are asking us to do, which is to ensure that we also make the kinds of investments that will help grow our economy; hence the reason I was so proud to make an announcement just a few moments ago that we are going to proceed with full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario. That's the foundation for a highly skilled and educated workforce.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, all taxpayers are seeing with the lack of a plan is a Premier who has become paralyzed with his own economic mess and a second-term rot setting in. I would have expected the Premier would have had some action, not to wait for six months. I thought at one time Premier McGuinty might actually exceed expectations and come up with a plan.

Premier, one year ago the global crisis hit, but you have yet to bring forward a single item of restraint to prevent the deficit from growing even bigger still. Every hour that you stand in place thinking, \$2.8 million is added to our debt. We expect to see a Premier who will lead and not be frozen in place. When will you emerge from your thinking place?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm just not going to get the positive support that I've been looking for, I guess, Speaker. I'll have to look elsewhere for that.

Again, what did Ontarians expect of us at the outset of the recession? I think they expected us to do the kinds of things that we have done. They've asked us to find a way to support the auto sector; hence the billions of dollars of

support we put there. They asked us to provide retraining opportunities for people caught up in the economic dislocation who have lost their jobs though no fault of their own, so we've invested in that as well. Those are the kinds of initiatives that my honourable colleague would not and does not support. Those are the kinds of things that we have done in the face of the recession.

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Now, given the fact that we've made our deficit public—it is significant; there's no doubt about that—we will begin to work together in an earnest way to find ways to chart a course towards a balanced budget without compromising public services and at the same time making investments in a stronger economy.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is clear that the second-term rot is setting in deep across the McGuinty government.

Last week, the Premier was asked about steering the economy out of this mess and his failure to have any kind of a plan to pull out of it. The Premier said, "You folks pay a lot closer attention to this than do our families. By and large, they have been focused on their own economic challenges." Premier, the economic challenges families are worried about is your failure to create any private sector jobs since your budget and the \$13,500 in new debt put on each and every household. This province needs a new direction. When will it take Ontario's version of Mr. Dithers to bring forward a plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I always appreciate the enthusiasm, but I'm just not sure there is a lot of light accompanying the heat.

I'll tell you about some of the programs that we have put in place: In addition to our Second Career program, which is to help moms and dads in particular who have lost their jobs and help them get back on their feet through a one-of-a-kind program in Canada, we're also moving ahead with tax cuts to help our businesses grow stronger. We're going to move ahead with tax cuts for our families to help ease the pain which they experience, particularly as a result of lost savings through the economic recession. We're also going to move ahead with our harmonized sales tax, which my honourable colleague knows is the right thing to do, but he shrinks from embracing his responsibility in this particular regard to help us build a stronger economy.

The fact is, we have a plan; my friend says we don't. We do; it's just not one that he embraces.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I ask the Premier, who ordered officials to obstruct the Auditor General's investigation of the McGuinty government's billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague ought to know better in this particular regard. I think the deputy minister has had an opportunity to speak to this, I think the auditor has had an opportunity to speak

to this, and I think my colleague knows the truth: No such order was given by anyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Come on, Premier—you think the Auditor General made this up? Do you think this was just a coincidence? You have, for six months, tried to stone-wall, to delay, to dither, to try to cover for your mess and your Deputy Premier, your right hand man. Now you're telling me the Auditor General—this is his fantasy? Give me a break.

Premier, you've had three weeks to get to the bottom of this interference with the Auditor General's investigation of the Ministry of Health and your eHealth boondoggle. Will you stand in your place and tell us today who gave that order? Was it you? Was it one of your ministers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In addition to a lot of heat and not very much light, my honourable colleague is given to flights of fancy. The auditor has had an opportunity to speak to this. The deputy minister has had an opportunity to speak to this. The secretary of cabinet has had an opportunity to lend direction to future activities on the part of people working within the bureaucracy.

Let me just take this opportunity, once again, to reassure the auditor and all the other officers of this government that we will always, in each and every instance, provide all the co-operation that they need to complete their work.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You can see the evidence of the second-term rot: a Premier who would rather sweep this sordid tale under the carpet than give answers that taxpayers deserve.

Premier, if they blocked it, what are the consequences? Who pays the price for those misdeeds? But I think you know the answer and that's why you're trying to cover it up, and if you're not willing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdrawn. I think the Premier doesn't want to tell the Legislative Assembly exactly what happened—what was the role of his office, what was the role of his minister's office and what was the role of his Deputy Premier—because you know as well as I that public servants would not put their careers on the line for no reason whatsoever. Premier, did that order actually come from you or your office?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've already answered that. My colleague is engaged in a partisan pursuit, and I understand that, but it's not the way we operate on this side of the House.

If you take a look at what we've done, in fact, in terms of increasing transparency and accountability, we've taken a number of measures. Most recently, we've said that we want to bring Cancer Care Ontario within the ambit of the freedom-of-information legislation. We took government agencies which had been removed from the sunshine list by my colleagues opposite when they were

in government and brought them back into that; I'm talking about OPG and Hydro One. We've given new authority to the auditor to take a look at our schools, our universities and our municipalities when it comes to finding out exactly what's going on in there. The fact of the matter is, we have a strong record of increasing accountability and transparency for the benefit of Ontarians.

CORPORATE TAX

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Way back, way back in 2008, the Premier rejected a call by the big banks for a lower corporate tax rate, and I'm going to quote him: "Getting into deficit is no problem, getting out is the challenge. So we want to make sure that we don't get in so deep that it becomes just extraordinarily difficult to get ourselves out of that predicament."

Ontario has a \$25-billion deficit, yet the Premier is insisting on a corporate tax giveaway. Why did he say no to the banks 10 months ago but is saying yes today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question from my honourable colleague. She's talking about our last budget. That was a budget that was supported by poverty groups, it was a budget that was supported by food banks, and it was a budget that was supported by business groups and others. It struck the right balance in terms of recognizing where we find ourselves at this point in our history and in terms of ensuring that we have competitive levels of corporate taxation. Also, my colleague hasn't had the opportunity to speak to this very much, but we accelerated the rate at which we are going to invest in the Ontario child benefit to help families that are struggling, living in poverty, whether they're the working poor or those who don't have jobs. That's all part of a budget which we think is thoughtful and essential for the times.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier's priorities are pretty clear: Instead of making it easier to find a job, he's introducing a job-killing tax that makes life less affordable. Instead of making sure that health care is there for families that need it, he looks for ways to cut services. Instead of trying to bring the deficit under control, he gives a \$4.5-billion corporate tax giveaway to the very companies that do not need it.

How could the Premier's unbalanced priorities be so out of whack with those of everyday Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would argue that it's not our budget that is unbalanced; it's my honourable colleague's perspective. I know that my honourable colleague does, in fact, support our Second Career program, and I wish she would say that. I know that she does support our Ontario child benefit, and I wish she would say that. I know that she does support investing in full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds as the foundation for a highly skilled, educated and competitive workforce, and I wish she would say that. I also know

that she does support the fact that the low-income earners in Ontario will be paying the lowest levels of personal income taxes in all of Canada. She supports that, and I just wish she would stand up and say that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know, people really are looking for a balanced, thoughtful approach from the government. Instead, though, it seems that the fix is in: for some, a multi-billion-dollar corporate tax give away; for the rest of us, a new tax, a job-killing one, on everything from hydro to your coffee in the morning; for some, \$1 million a day in high-priced consultant fees; for the rest of us, cuts to local hospitals. And the Premier says more is on the way. Is the Premier being reckless or is he simply out of touch?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've always brought balance as a government and we will continue to do that. When it comes to the matter of addressing the deficit, we will continue to hear on a regular basis from the party on the left that we need to spend more, ever more and lots more, and we should pretend that the deficit is not part of our reality. From the party on the far right, we will continue to hear every day that we need to cut and hack and slash in an unthinking way. What Ontarians want is balance. They want us to recognize our fiscal reality. They want us to protect their public services. They want us to invest in a stronger economy for tomorrow. They want us to protect their health and education. They want us to deliver their public services in a more efficient manner. That's the task that we have before us, that's the task that we really take on and that's the challenge which the Minister of Finance is taking on as he prepares his budget.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I certainly wouldn't choose \$5 billion in corporate tax giveaways, I can tell the Premier that.

My next question is to the Premier. Families across the province expect their government to make quality health a top priority. Instead, they see their government cutting hospital beds, firing nurses and investing scarce public dollars in consulting contracts. If the Premier can find half a billion dollars to invest in corporate tax giveaways, a million dollars a day in consulting fees, why are Ontario families losing health care services they so desperately need?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: They're not. They're not losing services. The fact of the matter is that year over year we continue to invest more in our health care services. More than that, more than just simply putting in more money, we have more doctors, we have more nurses, we have more home care, we have shorter wait times, we have more drugs being funded, more surgeries, more technologies. The fact of the matter is, we have invested significantly more. I think the health care budget

is up by about a third. Since 2003, the cost of living has gone up by about 11%. So we've gone up about three times the cost of living. We're proud of that and we're proud of the results that we continue to get for Ontarians when it comes to better quality health care.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The problem is, we all know where that health care money went; right? It went to a billion dollars at eHealth, it went to consulting contracts that were untendered. In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, in fact, consultants are doing fine and they get lucrative contracts to recommend cuts to services. Seniors and their families are told the funding to meet their needs simply isn't available, yet this government gave McKinsey and Co. a \$750,000 sole-source contract to recommend cuts. The McGuinty government needs to provide some real transparency here. Will the Premier table all of the details of the McKinsey consulting report on the Ontario drug benefit plan, including the total cost and all of the recommendations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows that we invited McKinsey to come in and tell us a bit more about our new program that we had in place. It was a program designed to find savings by reducing the cost of the drugs that we've been buying for Ontarians. We're still buying those drugs; we want to pay less for those drugs. So far, we have found \$700 million in savings. All of that has gone towards purchasing more drugs. That's the whole purpose of the program: to find a way for us, as buyers, to pay less for the drugs so that we can take the savings and put them into purchasing more drugs for Ontarians. That's what we're doing.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is asking people to simply accept his word, but we keep seeing health dollars—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask the Minister of Finance to withdraw that comment, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is asking people to accept his word, but we keep seeing health dollars spent by the millions in secret deals with well-connected insiders. The McKinsey report is just the latest example. The government hid the report when it was supposed to be released with everything else. They denied it actually even existed. And now the government refuses to share the details with the people of this province. How can the Premier expect to be believed by the people that he's going to be protecting our health care when he's constantly—constantly—keeping the facts about health care spending from the people of this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The secret McKinsey report can be found online. Again, to be very clear, we put in place a new program that was designed to help us drive down the cost of certain drugs. We wanted to make sure that the program was doing well and accomplishing its

intended objective. We asked McKinsey to review that for us, and they have done that.

So far, we've generated about \$700 million worth of savings. All of that has been reinvested in purchasing more drugs for the people of Ontario. I think this is exactly the kind of approach that Ontarians want us to take. They want us to get the best possible value for the money they invest in health care and specifically the money they're investing in drugs. That's what we continue to do for Ontarians.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Casino Niagara's lease expires in March. Initially, the McGuinty government was ready to do another untendered deal to renew the lease, but when the casino's landlord learned the McGuinty Liberals were thinking of putting the lease to competitive bids, they retained the Premier's former director of issues management, Bob Lopinski. Now there's no competitive process. Why is there one set of rules for the Premier's ex-staff and other Liberal friends and another set of rules for the rest of us?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The rules apply to everybody. I know that the firm that Mr. Lopinski is a member of also employs Charles Harnick and Don Cousens. I also know that member and his party renewed the very same lease in 2002 in the absence of a process.

It's unfortunate that my colleague opposite can't get his facts straight, but we are pleased to deal with firms that employ former Conservative cabinet ministers, former Conservative MPPs and also support a policy that in fact his government did, and that was to renew the lease, sole-sourced, in 2002.

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, you may recall Bob Lopinski was the lobbyist who was helping the Maid of the Mist get a \$25-million untendered contract renewed. In his lobbyist registration form, Lopinski admits he has a "success fee" that pays him a bonus if Canadian Niagara Hotels is awarded the multi-million-dollar lease for Casino Niagara.

The Premier said this sort of practice would stop once he introduced new rules earlier this year. How much will Bob Lopinski get if his client is awarded the new contract?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Obviously, having been deflected on his first question, he chooses to go in another direction.

Let me remind him, the lease renewal has been subject to a report from the Integrity Commissioner. We followed her advice. We're aware that New York state has already renewed their lease with the Maid of the Mist for 40 years.

Interestingly, there is a contact in this House. I understand Mr. Hudak's own principal secretary was a consultant for the Niagara Parks Commission and helped author their communication strategy on the Maid of the Mist lease renewal.

I'd rather talk about getting people back to work than slinging mud irrevocably. This government is going to work hard to get people back to work, and I'd suggest the member opposite and his colleagues back there get their facts straight, look at their own record, and they'll see that this government's a darned sight better than that government ever was on the economy and on ethics.

Interjections.

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

New question.

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JOB CREATION

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question—

Interjections.

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

The member from Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question to the Premier: During six years of the McGuinty government, Ontario has lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs, unemployment is the highest it has been in 15 years, and this government's own forecast shows that Ontario's unemployment rate is not likely to drop below 9% until after 2011. To make matters worse, the McGuinty government is promoting a new tax, the HST, which will have a further negative effect on jobs. Either the Premier doesn't care about jobs or he has no idea how to create them. Which is it, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know my honourable colleague understands that Ontario is the second-largest manufacturing centre in North America—we come in just after California. I think he understands, as well, that the global recession has a disproportionately negative impact on manufacturing.

What I hope and wish and continue to pray that he will also understand is that manufacturers in particular will benefit from a harmonized sales tax. That's why they've come out overwhelmingly in favour of a harmonized sales tax. They want to reduce the cost of their imports, they want to reduce the cost of their exports, they want to become more competitive in a globalized economy, they want to be able to retain existing employees and they want to be able to hire more.

That's why we're moving ahead with the harmonized sales tax on behalf of manufacturers and so many other sectors, and I wish my colleague would understand that and support that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm well aware that corporations will always support a corporate tax cut, but there are other studies that indicate this is going to have a negative effect on Ontario's jobs situation.

Instead of a job-killing tax, Ontario could implement an aggressive buy-Ontario policy that would promote local jobs. This government hasn't done that. Instead of a job-killing tax, this government could implement a reasonable industrial hydro rate that would help sustain

jobs in the forest sector, the mining sector and in manufacturing generally. This government hasn't done that.

As the official unemployment rate nears 10%, we know the unofficial rate is actually much higher. With more families struggling to pay the bills at the end of the month, when are we going to actually see something from the McGuinty government that helps to sustain jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, it's not a case of us not having a plan; it's a case of my colleague opposite not supporting our plan, and I understand that.

With respect to buy-Ontario provisions, I know my honourable colleague would understand that it's important that we continue to find a way to strike a balance. We want to be as aggressive as we can to promote Ontario jobs using the money that we spend through the government, but at the same time we happen to be mindful of our obligation to the international community. We've got to be respectful of the reality that we enjoy today, that we live in a globalized economy.

We have been very aggressive in particular on our Green Energy Act, so much so—my colleagues may not be keeping up on this score—that there have now been concerns raised in the European Union community and discussion of some kind of a countervailing measure to be taken against Ontario.

We will hold firm. We will do everything we can to protect our jobs, but we'll be mindful as well of our globalized reality.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This morning, the Ontario Hospital Association put out a press release to propose that the government extend the province's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to the hospital sector. The association's president, Tom Closson, said, "While Ontario's hospitals are extraordinarily transparent and accountable, their justifiable pride in past achievements should not prevent us from moving to become even more transparent as a sector tomorrow."

Minister, Ontarians want to have confidence that their hospitals are using tax dollars wisely. Ontario's hospitals say they are willing to open themselves up to additional scrutiny. So I ask the minister, is the OHA's proposal something that this government will consider?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to thank my colleague for the question.

I am very happy to be able to reiterate just how important transparency and accountability are, not only in our agencies and boards but right across government.

I know Ontarians want to be assured that every dime we spend on health care goes to improving health care. When I first became Minister of Health, that was one of the priorities I discussed in this House. I'm very pleased to know that the OHA shares our goals, and I welcome their desire to fall under our FOI legislation.

As Tom Closson said, “Ontario’s hospitals value their communities’ confidence and trust...” So do we. That’s why I’m going to be working with the OHA and Ontario’s hospitals, as well as the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Together, we’re going to look at what steps we can take next to make sure that our hospitals are even more open and accountable than they are today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I think Ontarians across the province are going to benefit from more openness in the hospital sector. After all, with \$15.5 billion in annual funding, hospitals take up a significant share of the province’s health care budget. Ontarians want to know how this money is being spent. They expect their government to do everything it can to ensure that Ontarians’ valuable tax dollars are being used wisely, especially in health care.

I ask the Minister of Health: What else is this government doing to increase accountability? I know Ontarians want you to do more.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, thank you to the member.

I’m very pleased to tell the House that, as of January 1, 2010, Cancer Care Ontario will fall under Ontario’s freedom-of-information act. It’s an important step our government is taking to ensure that the agency is more accountable to Ontario taxpayers.

Since 2003, our government has added more than 80 organizations to the list of those that can be subject to FOI requests, and we made these changes to ensure that we’re more accountable to Ontarians.

We’ve also expanded the powers of the Auditor General. We’ve opened up our hospitals, our schools, our colleges, our universities and our crown corporations to value-for-money audits. By April 1, 2010, expenses for OPS senior management, for cabinet ministers, for political staff and for senior executives at Ontario’s 22 largest agencies will be posted online.

Moving forward, we’re going to continue to look at ways that we can do more to make—

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

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, again referencing Bob Lopinski, Premier McGuinty’s former political aide turned well-connected lobbyist. The last we heard, he hadn’t quite earned his success fee for the Maid of the Mist deal.

Last week, Minister Smith said the 25-year untendered lease with the Maid of the Mist still had to go to cabinet. There have been three cabinet meetings, apparently, since that comment was made—perhaps it wasn’t last week. Three cabinet meetings, I understand; that’s what we’re advised.

Can the minister tell us, did cabinet ignore the Premier’s edict against untendered deals for his friend and former staffer Mr. Lopinski?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the question. As I’ve told the House before, our government and its agencies are committed to openness, transparency and accountability.

The Niagara Parks Commission has reviewed its decision on the lease, as we asked them to, in light of the audit that was undertaken and the governance review. They’ve made a recommendation to the ministry, and the ministry is doing its due diligence.

As I’ve advised the member on the opposite side previously, I’m not going to speculate on how cabinet will decide on this issue. It will go forward in due course. I appreciate the question and the ongoing interest in this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: You would think the decision to open the lease to competitive bidding would be a no-brainer given the red ink that’s spewing out of the parks commission and the historic deficit that this government is running. The point of competitive bids is to get maximum value for the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

There’s another potential bidder, we’re told, willing to submit a tender worth at least \$100 million more than the deal that Bob Lopinski is lobbying for. That additional revenue, Minister, you have to admit, would come in handy given your record deficit.

If the McGuinty Liberals aren’t looking for a way to help a former insider get his success fee, then why haven’t they announced a competitive process for this bid? What’s the delay? What’s happening here?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would just remind the member opposite, as did the Minister of Finance earlier to another question, that the Counsel Public Affairs firm also houses former Conservative MPP Don Cousens and, of course, the former Attorney General of the Conservative government, Charles Harnick, which the member for Leeds–Grenville may have personal issues with, but I don’t think he would cast aspersions on the entire firm.

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I would also remind the member that the leader of the official opposition’s principal secretary formerly worked as an adviser to the Niagara Parks Commission and has helped in crafting a communications strategy around the renewal of the Maid of the Mist lease. So I’m not really sure where the member opposite is coming from on this, but I can assure him that the ministry is reviewing the decision that was made by the commission and it will be going forward to cabinet in due course.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Mercredi dernier, le commissaire aux services en français a publié son rapport accablant sur votre gestion des services en français. Le commissaire y dénonce une attitude minimaliste et rappelle que l’offre des services en français est une obligation en vertu de la loi, laissant entendre que vous la bafouez.

Au lieu de reconnaître l'urgence de la situation, votre gouvernement s'est auto-félicité d'un travail bâclé en matière de services en français.

Ma question est simple : pourquoi le gouvernement a-t-il volontairement laissé passer une occasion en or de motiver les ministères à passer aux actes afin d'améliorer l'offre des services en français?

L'hon. Dalton McGuinty: Je passe cette question à la ministre des Affaires francophones.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Premièrement, je voudrais remercier la membre du Nouveau Parti démocratique pour son intérêt dans les affaires francophones.

Je voudrais remercier premièrement le commissaire aux services en français; il a fait un rapport très intéressant. Comme l'an dernier, nous avons pris ses recommandations très au sérieux et nous avançons dans la mise en œuvre de ces recommandations.

Cette fois-ci, j'ai demandé à l'Office des affaires francophones encore une fois de revoir ses recommandations, et j'ai déjà commencé à parler à mes collègues qui sont mentionnés dans les recommandations. Nous trouvons que les recommandations sont très bonnes et vont aider à l'avancement des services en français, non seulement ici à Queen's Park, mais aussi dans tout l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: S'auto-féliciter pour un rapport accablant, ce n'est pas ça qui va faire avancer les choses. Cela me laisse sous-entendre soit que vous n'avez pas lu le rapport, soit que vous prenez les francophones qui l'ont lu pour des valises, puis vous ne reconnaissez pas l'urgence d'agir pour corriger l'état qui était donné dans ce rapport, ou, pire encore, que vous avez lu le rapport, puis vous vous fichez éperdument des opportunités que vous aviez pour faire bouger les choses et pour faire avancer les services aux francophones. Laquelle des trois options les francophones devraient-ils retenir?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je pense que les francophones en Ontario sont les bons juges de ce que ce gouvernement-ci a fait pour l'avancement des francophones.

Si j'étais à la place de M^{me} Gélinas, je regarderais plutôt ce que leur parti a fait en ce qui concerne les francophones lorsqu'ils étaient au pouvoir. Il y a eu des coupures de budget, il y a eu des réductions de personnel, tandis que nous, nous avons augmenté le budget des Affaires francophones, nous avons créé le poste de commissaire, nous avons investi d'une façon majeure dans l'éducation, dans les soins de santé—

L'hon. Jim Watson: TFO.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: —l'indépendance de TFO. Je pourrais continuer. Je pense que les francophones seront les juges. Je veux terminer par l'Hôpital Montfort, qui me tient beaucoup à cœur; cela a été le plus grand investissement dans la francophonie dans l'histoire de l'Ontario, et cela a été fait par notre gouvernement.

TAXATION

Mr. Eric Hoskins: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Minister, as governments face the global eco-

nomie recession, understandably, job creation has increasingly become a major focus. Good jobs will help pull people out of poverty and allow them to provide for their families. Maintaining existing employment and creating new employment will go a long way to help those in need, but we all understand that not everyone will be able to get back to work overnight. Some people, including many residents of my riding of St. Paul's, are relying on the government and the non-profit sector for support.

The HST has been mainly communicated as a job-creating tool and there are serious concerns surrounding the effect of the HST on those who are already facing tough choices on a limited income. Minister, will the HST place an additional burden on low-income Ontarians, forcing them to pay more when they can least afford it?

Hon. Mr. Wilkinson: I want to thank my new colleague for the question, and I would refer him to a quote from John Stapleton, from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, who says in regard to our budget, "This is a budget that favours low-income people, and the working poor most of all because when you look at all the benefits, it is clear that the working poor and those with low wages are going to be better off as a result of the budget measures."

What are those measures? Number one, we are going to cut the personal income tax rate on the first \$37,000 worth of income, and we will have the lowest personal income tax rate in this country. Some 90,000 Ontarians will not be paying personal income tax as a result of our reforms. Particularly for those who are struggling, we are more than doubling the GST rebate they're receiving now. We're adding an additional \$260 for every child and adult in a family, and that is designed specifically to ensure that our people at the lowest ends are in a better position than they are today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Eric Hoskins: Helping to get people back to work is the number one action we can do to assist low-income Ontarians. Income tax exemptions, tax credits and transitional cheques will help struggling families as we move forward with a new form of taxation. Targeted exemptions will greatly assist families in the short term and over the long term. These exemptions include children's clothing, infant and child car seats, books, groceries, rent and condo fees, prescription drugs and medical devices.

Minister, because of their importance to families, many social advocates would like as much clarification as possible when looking at these exemptions. What has been the reaction to the HST in the poverty and low-income sector?

Hon. Mr. Wilkinson: I say to the member that many, many have weighed in after taking a look at the comprehensive nature of our tax reform. They have seen through the facile analysis of just seeing part of our tax reform and are looking at the entire package. What they see is that we're putting people in a better position

starting next year. We are cutting personal income taxes on January 1. The HST does not come in until July 1.

Let's talk in real terms. If a family receives an additional \$260 per member, what is \$260? It represents an 8% tax on \$3,250 worth of purchases. For most low-income families, a single mom with two children, it is a substantial amount of money, because we want to make sure that they have more money in their pockets. Yes, as a society we are going to modernize our tax system, but we will not leave those people with the least advantage disadvantaged by our reforms. That's exactly why we're moving and reforming our income tax system—

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

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Attorney General. The Attorney General has repeatedly said that he takes the experience of the Marshall family in St. Catharines very seriously. We recently received a copy of a letter sent by John Ayre, assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law division, to Jody McIntosh, a resident of St. Catharines who wrote to express her concerns about this case. Mr. Ayre stated that the crown withdrew the charge in the Marshall case because there was no reasonable prospect of conviction. But Mr. Essert, the Niagara crown attorney, told Ms. Marshall he wasn't sure about that point and said that the charges were withdrawn in order to avoid recidivism.

Attorney General, there is serious confusion about this issue that needs to be clarified. Can you tell us why the charges were really dropped in the Marshall case?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We take any violation of one's personal sense of security, their privacy or their dignity very, very seriously at all levels. The crown did review the charge, the facts and the circumstances. The crown, in a very extensive letter to the family, indicated the reasons. The member also now has an additional correspondence, I understand, from the chief prosecutor.

If there is further evidence, if there is other evidence, I would ask everyone to bring it to the attention of the police because I know that they will investigate, as they always do, very thoroughly. But the reasons for withdrawing the charge have been addressed in terms of the fact that it was not appropriate to proceed in the circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: In fact, this issue hasn't been addressed. On September 29 of this year, the Attorney General said in response to my question that this issue has already been dealt with in court. But in fact, it was never dealt with in court in terms of either a plea or a trial and a resolution. Despite a videotaped, properly obtained confession, the charges against the accused were withdrawn with some vague suggestion that there was perhaps no reasonable prospect of conviction. In fact, as the Attorney General knows, if there was no reasonable prospect of conviction on those charges, what should

have happened was a further discussion with the police with a view to laying other charges. That was simply not done in this case. Instead, the charges simply vanished. The charge was withdrawn with no record and no penalty.

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Attorney General, you're asking the Marshall family, her family and the people of Ontario to trust that justice has been done, yet no one knows what happened in this case. Will you please tell us?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As the member, I believe, knows and should know, the charge actually was dealt with in court. It was dealt with in court by being withdrawn; that is being dealt with in court. It was withdrawn. It was withdrawn after a very thorough review by the crown of the evidence that had been provided as a result of the police investigation.

I know it's challenging in circumstances such as this, but the crown is duty bound to take the evidence and the charges laid and determine the appropriateness of proceeding. The crown did that in this case. The charge was withdrawn, and I know if there's any further information or evidence or incident, it should be directed to the police for their review and consideration.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Since the Port Colborne emergency room shut down this summer, the Welland hospital has seen a 20% increase in patients. The Welland hospital was already struggling with capacity issues and now a code gridlock has been declared.

Niagara Falls is also feeling the strain of Fort Erie's emergency room closure. The fact is, emergency rooms were closed without proper planning.

How are the remaining ERs in Niagara region supposed to cope with an influx of new patients when they're already at capacity?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do know that there is, understandably, anxiety in a community whenever there are changes made, especially in the way our health care is delivered because we so value our health care system. But I want to stress that our government's commitment to strengthening and improving health care in the Niagara region is as strong and stronger than it's ever been. I'm confident that the LHIN board continues to act in the best interests of the people of Niagara, making decisions that will ensure the sustainability of the health care system in Niagara.

I think it's important that we actually acknowledge the significant investments that have been made in the region. They've seen an increase of over 43%; \$88 million more is going into that region for health care than there was when we took office.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think that this minister needs to acknowledge the grave situation that we are in, in the Niagara region. The Niagara Region Public Health unit estimates that in the event of a pandemic, ER visits are

going to soar to close to 700 per day and hospitalizations are going to reach close to 2,000. Yet this government has closed more than 100 hospital beds in this region. It's a recipe for disaster.

How can the government find a million dollars a day for consultants and contracts that are untendered and not fund the desperately needed emergency rooms in Port Colborne and Fort Erie?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We do know that, as we are seeing now the impact of the H1N1 pandemic here in Ontario, there will be added pressure on hospital emergency rooms. It is too early right now to anticipate what the actual numbers will be, but we will see more demand on our emergency rooms across the province. That is one reason why it is very, very important that everyone in Ontario get the H1N1 vaccination as soon as it is available. It is the right thing to do, not just for an individual; it's also the right thing to do for your family members, for those around you, for those you work with. If we all do our part, take that H1N1 vaccine, it will have the impact of reducing some of the pressures on our emergency rooms.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Attorney General, and I ask the question with over 20 years' experience in community safety and crime prevention. There are things that we know. We know victims of domestic violence are largely women and children. We know that women suffering from domestic abuse face challenges when seeking relief. And we know this government offers services in the immediate aftermath, throughout the criminal justice process, as women rebuild their lives. We know a restraining order is available to prevent a partner or a former partner from harming children physically or emotionally. Yet the lack of a means by which to enforce breaches of restraining orders can weaken the effectiveness of the order and fail to provide women the protection they need. Can the Attorney General tell this House what the government is doing to strengthen enforcement of restraining orders to help protect women and children from domestic violence?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Kitchener–Conestoga raises a very important question. I know members of this House have spoken to it on many occasions for over a decade, and members of the legal community, whether judges or lawyers, victims' rights advocates and others, have said we need to strengthen restraining orders. That's why this government introduced and last May passed legislation, and on October 15 the new strengthened restraining order protections came into force. What do they provide? First, a breach of an order can be enforced as a violation of the Criminal Code—much greater strength. Secondly, there is a plain language guide. Third, there is a uniform order so the police will have the same order around the province, providing for better protections for women and children, all those who now live in fear.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm proud to be part of a government that's moving in the right direction to give women better access to restraining orders to help protect them and their children. Many of the vulnerable individuals who benefit from the protection of enhanced restraining orders also come in contact with the family justice system at some point. We know that when Ontarians become engaged with Family Court, they're often at a difficult time in their lives, with family breakdown or distress. The stress and cost of Family Court proceedings can sometimes be overwhelming, especially at these difficult times. Could the Attorney General please inform this House about how this government is making the family justice system effective, accessible and affordable for these vulnerable Ontarians?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Again, the member, no doubt as a result of her advocacy and familiarity with the issues, raises some very important points. Two things: First, in the legislation that we passed, there were some additional items. There is required financial disclosure yearly for those who are paying support, so there's no more hide-and-seek of assets. That will make it easier for those receiving support to get what they should be receiving. Secondly, there are new rules with respect to the division of what is often the most important asset: pensions. It used to be that families involved in a family dispute spent thousands of dollars and a lot of time arguing over the rules to divide pensions. Third, in custody proceedings there are new rules to make sure that the necessary information is before judges before they grant custody of a child to a non-parent. Finally, we're looking at the family process to make it faster—

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

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. You are aware of a program named the attendance support management pilot program. The program applies to staff within the corrections bargaining unit. Minister, staff within your ministry have approached me, and a number of them are concerned and disturbed that if they are injured while on duty and placed on WSIB they are then subject to a level one interview to discuss their absenteeism. I'd like you to explain why would you allow dedicated employees to be subjected to what amounts to an intimidating and stressful interview just because they're injured while protecting Ontarians?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think I can say categorically, as the minister responsible for correctional services, never has there been the level of co-operation between the administration within correctional services and the union representing the workers.

1130

Our workers do very important work. For the first time in a very long time, they are respected for the jobs they are doing. We believe it is imperative that that dialogue

between management and labour is ongoing. That is the approach we have taken, and that is the approach we will continue to take.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, Minister, they'll certainly be impressed with that answer.

I'm told by employees performing the interviews that the ASMPP program is simply wrong, and those are the people performing the interviews. What is the purpose of the interviews? Any employee injured on the job and receiving therapy or attending a medical examination has their status reported directly to WSIB, not a third party person in the ministry. These correctional workers protect Ontarians and want to be treated like all other Ontarians.

I've had numerous complaints about this program. I'm asking you today if you will commit to an immediate and complete removal of this program of intimidation of employees?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: What I can commit to today, what I've committed to in the past and what I will commit to in the future, is that there will be enhanced dialogue between management and labour. That has already taken place, that is taking place, and that will continue to take place.

You see, the difference is that under a previous government that was in power from 1995 to 2003, they did everything to get rid of OPSEU and correctional services officers. Then, before them, from 1990 to 1995, the NDP government was so busy cutting, slashing, burning and not building any capacity. We will continue to build capacity. We will continue to dialogue with our employees, because we understand the importance of doing that type of thing.

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

TERMINATION AND SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. We don't need to hear this government pass the buck to the federal bankruptcy and insolvency laws. We want to know what the provincial government should have, could have and would have done.

Last year, I walked the line with shut out Progressive Moulded Products employees, many with 10 to 25 years of service and mostly women, who arrived at work to find out they had lost their jobs. On top of this, these employees lost their severance and termination pay when their employer closed the doors without notice.

What does the minister have to say to these women and men who are still trying to get justice, still trying to get their severance and wages, but have had absolutely no help from this government?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It is always difficult to hear that anyone, a loved one, someone we know, a family member, any Ontarian has lost their job. These workers worked hard. They have put in countless hours, many

countless years. I say to the member that—and he's heard me speak in this House—we continue to urge the federal government, which has exclusive jurisdiction over bankruptcy and insolvency under that act. We want to move those workers from the back of the line to the front of the line when it comes to securing wages that they're owed.

We have also encouraged the federal government to increase the wage earner protection program to better help these workers who have lost their jobs, but we are doing everything possible to protect workers who have lost their jobs, and our hearts go out to them.

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess the minister didn't read my Bill 6.

These out-of-work employees understand there is little chance of receiving what is owed to them, yet they continue to fight so that future generations can be spared this injustice. Today, they're holding a silent vigil—silence that represents a response from this government. They are still owed more than \$30 million in severance and termination pay. The Minister of Labour did absolutely nothing to help these workers with the labour laws that are already in effect.

Stop passing the buck. And worse, Bill 6, which would have protected the severance and termination pay of these workers, is held up on the public agenda by your government. Why are the McGuinty Liberals deliberately keeping severance and termination pay from Ontario employees whose employers close the doors on their livelihoods and lives?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I listened to the member—but the member is well aware that this government has brought forward protections to help workers here in Ontario. The member has heard me speak in this House about our advocacy for all workers. We look to increase workers' benefits, we look to increase workers' protection—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member that he just asked the question. I would ask him to listen to the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I do understand the emotion when anyone has lost their job. It touches that employee, it touches their family, it touches the community at large, and it does have a serious impact on our Ontario economy. That is why we continue to urge the federal government to do the right thing: to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, to move these workers from the back of the line to the front of the line, to ensure that they are—

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

TOURISM

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: This question is for our Minister of Tourism. The peak summer season for travel, as you know, is now coming to an end. Of course, there is no

doubt that this year the economic downturn has had an impact on tourist operations in the province. In addition to the economic challenges, as you'll appreciate, the tourism industry has also experienced other factors which have impacted both the province and the city of Toronto. For example, fewer US travellers visited the province because of the fluctuating Canadian dollar, the state of the general economy and, of course, over the implementation of passport requirements. Minister, what is the government doing to help the vital tourism industry in the greater Toronto area?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you to the member for Etobicoke North.

Yes, as we've discussed in this House before, the tourism sector is suffering through a very difficult year, but we recognize it to be an economic driver in the province and, through our Celebrate Ontario program, have invested in 224 festivals and events, including this year in Contact Toronto Photography. This festival, which is held in the month of May in Toronto, focused attention on 1,200 local, national and international artists at 225 venues across the city of Toronto.

I had the opportunity of meeting with Darcy Killeen, the executive director of this great festival, and he told me that over 1.6 million people attended the festival—an 8% increase over last year—and 30,000 of those visitors were new to the festival altogether. The total visitor expenditures this year were estimated to be about \$11 million, a 23% increase over last year. This festival has now been recognized as the largest photography festival in the world.

We are incredibly proud to be a supporter of Contact photography, and we are incredibly proud of this festival in Toronto and Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIP ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ORDRE DES MÉTIERS DE L'ONTARIO ET L'APPRENTISSAGE

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Pendergast, Leeanna
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Craitor, Kim	McGuinty, Dalton	Tabuns, Peter
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Paul	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Runciman, Robert W.
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	Yakubuski, John
Hillier, Randy	O'Toole, John	
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 59; the nays are 25.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROY E. CARTER MEMORIAL PARK

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to advise this House of the dedication of the Roy E. Carter park in Blackstock, Ontario, on November 9 this year. Flying Officer Carter was a navigator on a Halifax bomber. He survived when his plane was shot down in the Netherlands on June 17, 1944.

Sadly, Mr. Carter was executed by the Gestapo about two weeks later, along with a flyer from England and one from Australia. The three were taking shelter in a safe house established by the Dutch resistance. The member of the resistance who protected the flyers, Mrs. Coba Pulskens, was sent to a concentration camp, where she later perished. The Roy E. Carter park, sometimes

unofficially called Crestview park, is located nearby the boyhood hometown of Roy Carter.

This is the time when we cherish and honour Canada's heroes who gave their lives for our freedom and our peace. The naming of this park ensures that the courage and sacrifice of Flying Officer Carter and his comrades are always remembered in Roy Carter's home community of Blackstock. I'm pleased to commit that the mayor of Scugog township, Marilyn Pearce, and others, including the Honourable Bev Oda, and myself will be there to show our respects during this time of Remembrance Day week.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: On October 24, a group of concerned residents from my riding gathered in front of Gisèle-Lalonde high school to have their picture taken to mark the International Day of Climate Action. In doing so, they joined thousands of people who took part in 5,200 events in 181 different countries in the most widespread day of environmental action in the planet's history. Hundreds of pictures from these events have been posted on the website 350.org.

Central to the day of climate action is the number 350, which is the level scientists have identified as the safe upper limit for CO₂ in our atmosphere. We have now reached CO₂ levels of 384 parts per million, and with business as usual may hit 525 parts per million by 2050 unless changes are made to decrease them. Average temperatures would increase four to six degrees by 2100, and that would be catastrophic.

A number of the participants in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans are also members of Project Karyne, a local environmental group that was formed in 2006 in memory of Karyne Maisonneuve, who died of complications from cancer at the age of eight.

As we move forward with our own environmental initiatives, it's important for us all to acknowledge that the impact of climate change remains an important concern among many Ontarians. Through my private member's bill, Bill 208, it is my sincere hope that this House will come together in designating April 21 as Climate Change Awareness Day in Ontario and in calling on the Ministers of Education and the Environment to work together to produce an annual report card for students in grade 5.

SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

Mr. Ted Arnott: In Acton today, at the McKenzie-Smith Bennett Public School, children are playing, as they have done for many years, on their playground. Yet that playground is still in jeopardy because of bad policy originating in the office of the Minister of Education. I have repeatedly raised this matter with the government. I have spoken to the minister personally. I have written to her more than once. I have raised the issue in the Legislature.

The minister may not believe that it's important enough for her to get involved, but the people of Acton are getting involved. They know it's important. In fact, I've been told that 5,000 people have signed their names to a petition.

Here's a constructive suggestion for the minister: The minister could immediately review regulation 444, which is being interpreted to compel the sale of public land considered to be surplus without consideration of the overwhelming wishes of the community. The minister has ignored this problem for months now. She should take this opportunity to review this regulation with a view to clarifying it, and advise the board to have a formal public process for consultation looking toward solutions. I believe there can be a solution, and if one can be found, Acton parents deserve all the credit.

Melissa Secord and the McKenzie-Smith Bennett Public School council have been tireless and exceedingly well organized in raising awareness of this issue. They deserve our thanks and the thanks of our entire community, but we still need the minister's help. We need her to put the needs of the community and the kids first. We need her to get out of the way of the children's right to play.

POVERTY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to recognize the students and teachers of St Lawrence Intermediate School in the city of Cornwall, who recently joined community leaders at a conference for Stand Up and Take Action 2009.

Stand Up and Take Action is an international initiative organized by the Make Poverty History campaign to draw attention to local and global poverty issues. The conference took place on October 17 and recognized the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Guest speakers included Order of Canada recipient and Child Haven International founder Fred Cappuccinno; Agapè Centre executive director Judy Dancause; Ontario disability support program action chair Denise Vernier; and local poverty activists Gary Samler and Hélène Paquin. Grade 10 student senators Charlotte McEwen and Victoria Boyd also made brief speeches on behalf of their school.

As a former teacher, I am encouraged to see these students rallying around the issue of poverty. Poverty is an ongoing issue which these young people will be dealing with over the course of their generation. The ideas from young minds are very important to the community, and these young citizens will be the leaders of the future. It is important to recognize those who have achieved or who have done things which stand out, especially in the area of poverty reduction. Today, more than ever, we need their energy, their enthusiasm and their idealism.

The students of St. Lawrence Intermediate School are a prime example of hard work, dedication and passion to

this important cause of poverty reduction, and I congratulate them.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Randy Hillier: Time and time again, we have seen the McGuinty administration choose who the winners and losers will be in their government by lottery. A billion dollars in eHealth has brought us nothing, while amidst the chaos and the confusion of the ministry, good, honest people are being left out in the cold.

Imagine the shock and the frustration for Cheryl Miller, who suffers from reflex sympathetic dystrophy and has a spinal cord stimulator implant. She requires a neurostimulator battery replacement and she has been denied this surgery by the Ministry of Health. Ironically, the cost of Cheryl's procedure is about the same as the speech done by the consultants at eHealth that her taxes helped pay for. It seems that Cheryl is at the mercy of a health care ministry that has money for its friends but none for its patients.

The neurostimulator battery replacement Cheryl requires is a listed procedure on page Z16 of the schedule of insured services in Ontario. Insured services, by default, are a contract and a guarantee.

I call upon the Minister of Health to look into cases such as Cheryl's to ensure that no citizen of this province is left behind and that the ministry is actually doing its job.

BREAKFAST FOR BURSARIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in the House today to notably mention an endeavour by Brescia University College. On October 23, they held their annual Breakfast for Bursaries, an event to raise funds for the Eleonore Donnelly Bursary for women with financial needs. It was an exciting morning as I had the chance to meet the guest speaker, Dr. Samantha Nutt, who is the founder and executive director of War Child Canada.

Out of the numerous scholarships and bursaries that help students across Ontario, I personally hold this one to be very significant because it caters to women who have great potential but are disadvantaged due to financial constraints. This bursary grant creates an opportunity to women who are generally overlooked by society and gives them the chance to flourish as leaders and decision-makers.

I am proud to have Brescia in my city of London. It is a landmark that still holds claim to Canada's only university-level women's college. This is a one-of-a-kind institution that offers a rich education that builds both leaders and scholars.

1510

I would like to thank Allison Holden for organizing the breakfast and the people who have established the Eleonore Donnelly bursary. I think it's a very important issue: to support women who don't have the financial

ability to continue their education and to help us grow as a province and have a prosperous future.

SPORT ACADEMY PROGRAM

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On October 23, I had the privilege of touring a number of schools in Hamilton to learn about several exciting new initiatives in education. In particular, I saw first-hand the success of the sport academy program. This unique program is designed for students who have demonstrated high athletic skill and a strong commitment to academics. It's offered at R.A. Riddell school in Hamilton; 127 students from across the area are given flexible timetables to focus on athletic excellence. Once at high school, the students are able to continue the program at Westmount Secondary School. I had the opportunity to speak to many of these students, and let me just tell you, they are inspirational. They love the program.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ken Bain, the associate director of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, for inviting me to take part in this tour. In addition, I'd like to thank one of the great trustees, Wes Hicks; as well as Wes Hahn, the principal; Nancy Radojevic, the vice-principal; and Amos Connolly, teacher at R.A. Riddell—who have made this program such a success.

I would also like to thank Ron Mauro, who is the vice-principal, and Tom Payne, teacher, at Westmount Secondary School, who have done a fantastic job with this program at Westmount.

This is just one example of the forward-thinking, successful initiatives being undertaken in Hamilton schools today. I am so very proud of all of them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just so the House will understand there's no favouritism here, the clock didn't start, so I wasn't able to time it.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty Liberals are engaged in a bizarre exercise in media spin. As children's aid societies across Ontario are required by law to extend health and protection to children at risk, the McGuinty Liberals are cutting the CAS budgets. The Minister of Children and Youth denies that budgets have been cut, but an examination of the government's own documents shows that Ontario children's aid societies are receiving \$23 million dollars less than what they actually received last budget year.

As a result of the budget cuts, the children's aid societies have been placed in an impossible situation. For example, the children's aid society for the district of Rainy River has had its budget cut by over \$400,000 this year. But, at the same time, the youth justice act and a judge making a decision under that act has ordered a child in the wardship of the CAS into a special residential treatment home at a cost of \$450 a day. Another child has had to be placed in another specialized residential

treatment home at a cost of \$350 a day. Total cost for a year: over \$200,000. Meanwhile, the McGuinty government is cutting the CAS's budget by \$400,000. What is the CAS supposed to do? Abandon these children?

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Dave Levac: We all know that Ontario's workers are some of the most productive and skilled in the country and indeed in the world. Apprenticeships are essential for this continued contribution, and the McGuinty government is committed to helping them succeed.

In the global economy, the McGuinty government is providing new apprentices the skills and training to succeed in skilled jobs closer to home, creating a stronger economy and to help us support our communities in general. Supporting apprenticeships is an investment in Ontario's future, and the McGuinty government's financial investments will help them fill the high-skilled, high-quality jobs of the future. This includes providing grants up to \$2,000 to apprentices upon successful completion of the training, and additional grants of up to \$1,500 to offset the cost of that school.

This \$8.3-million investment is in addition to our government's increasing the apprenticeship training tax credit to \$10,000, making it the most generous tax credit of its kind in Canada. These investments mean apprentices can stay in Ontario and gain the skills that they need for the future they want right here in Ontario. We are putting students first, and the McGuinty government's support of skilled workers will help us build a stronger Ontario together.

With the inclusion of these new ideas that have come from the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, we are absolutely convinced that the apprentices and the private sector will come on board in order to provide us with an opportunity to ensure that the jobs of the future are filled by Ontarians right here in Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the October 27, 2009, report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on gasoline diesel fuel and tobacco tax from the

Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I wish to debate the motion right now, at least briefly.

The public accounts committee, which is a committee of the Legislature that reviews portions of the Auditor General's report—in this case, section 3.10 of the 2008 report—calls before it witnesses who are involved in the implementation or administration of programs. Our duty, as the public accounts committee, which is made up of members of all parties in this House, is to work to a large degree in a non-partisan fashion to come up with recommendations to try to solve the problems that the auditor has identified.

In this case, the auditor has identified a significant problem in the loss of taxes to the Minister of Revenue for tobacco tax. That is because there are a great many cigarettes being sold illegally, as we have heard in the news recently.

Our committee reviewed the administration and the enforcement of this area of our laws. The committee found that there are indeed a number of areas where improvements could be made. The committee made 10 recommendations, and many of those recommendations focus in on the coordination of the efforts of the Ministry of Revenue, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. All of these three enforcement agencies have different powers, but in some cases, the lack of power in the hands of one of those three inhibits their ability to actually enforce our overall laws.

The committee wants to make certain that the government works towards creating and having more comprehensive coordination and co-operation between the Ministry of Revenue of Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

For instance, the OPP cannot seize contraband tobacco unless they get permission or authority from the Ministry of Revenue. However, the Ministry of Revenue does not have 24/7 service, and many of the interceptions of illegal tobacco are made in the early morning hours of the day. So we make a number of recommendations relating to that lack of coordination.

As well, we make a number of recommendations with regard to things like having an allocation system for cigars for our aboriginal nations. Most other jurisdictions have an allocation for the number of cigars that can be sold on aboriginal First Nations property or reserves. However, Ontario doesn't have that, and we are asking the ministry to respond to us about when they are going to make such an allocation.

1520

This is a very, very serious problem that we have here. We've lost over half a billion dollars in revenue. It's time for the ministry and the minister to come forward with some concrete solutions to address this problem.

Of course, the committee was most concerned about the fact that many young people are gaining access to these cheap illegal cigarettes and therefore impugning the health of our young people of our province.

So it's a very important report. The committee worked very hard and diligently on this, and I recommend it to all members to read in the near future.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Bentley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts / *Projet de loi 212, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the minister wish to make a short statement?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: During ministerial statements, please.

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT (TRANSFERS ON WIND UP), 2009 LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE (TRANSFERTS À LA LIQUIDATION)

Mr. Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This will be briefer than my previous statement.

This bill does evolve out of a request by Nortel pensioners. The bill amends the Pension Benefits Act to expand the transfer rights that are available on the windup of a pension. On the windup of a pension plan, the act currently allows individuals who are entitled to a pension benefit but are not receiving the pension at the time to transfer the value of their pension to another pension plan, a prescribed registered savings arrangement or a life annuity. However, if that person is already a pensioner or a survivor of a pensioner, they're only given one option on the windup of a pension plan, and that option is for FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, to purchase a life annuity for them.

This bill would give the latter group—existing pensioners and their survivors—an alternative to buy an RRSP or an RRIF instead of having a life annuity, and that is important at this time because life annuities are at an all-time low in their value. Legislative legal counsel consulted with FSCO on the wording of this amendment. The morning, I gave a copy to the finance minister and hope for his support.

Time is of the essence because Nortel could be wound up at any time. I urge all members to support this on November 26 and urge the government to call it for third and final reading shortly thereafter.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 47 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOOD GOVERNANCE

LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the McGuinty government to introduce legislation that would, if passed, strengthen our laws by increasing transparency, accountability and effectiveness.

Good governance requires having the right systems and structures in place to carry out the original intent of

the legislation. In some cases, this means responding to new developments in technology. In other areas, changes may be needed to modernize terminology or replace outdated terms.

This bill is the combined response of many ministries. Each has reviewed its laws and regulations with the goal of increasing transparency, accountability and effectiveness. The result is close to 600 items from 22 ministries.

Bien qu'un certain nombre de ces articles apporment des changements techniques et de bonnes mesures d'ordre administratif, d'autres prévoient des initiatives qui amélioreraient une partie de nos systèmes et processus.

While a number of these items are technical changes and good housekeeping measures, the bill also includes initiatives that would improve some of our systems and processes.

La protection de la vie privée des Ontariens et Ontariennes est un sujet que chaque membre de la Chambre prend au sérieux.

The privacy of Ontarians is something everyone in this House takes seriously. The Information and Privacy Commissioner recently completed a comprehensive report which provides recommendations on ways to ensure the protection of individual privacy rights in the course of verifying juror eligibility under the provincial Juries Act. Today we're moving forward with proposed amendments to the Juries Act which would create a clear and transparent process for screening prospective jurors who are ineligible to serve on a jury because of a prior criminal conviction.

The amendments would authorize criminal record checks to be conducted centrally through the provincial jury centre. This would ensure that juror eligibility under the act is checked independently from court locations and that it is done according to strict confidentiality requirements. The proposed amendments maximize respect for privacy because the names of ineligible jurors would be replaced before lists were sent to court locations so that information is never provided directly to any of the participants in court proceedings. These proposed changes would also clarify the existing legislation.

Public inquiries can provide governments with direction and expertise. However, over the years inquiries have become increasingly complex, time-consuming and costly. The amendments to the Public Inquiries Act would, if passed, provide the government and commissioners with better tools to determine the scope and manage the cost and length of public inquiries. For instance, whereas commissions are currently formal, courtlike proceedings, these amendments would require future commissions to rely, where appropriate, on factual sources that promote efficiency, such as representative witnesses, agreed statements of facts, and existing records and reports. These tools reflect modern case management techniques. This will mean that when inquiries are necessary, they will complete their important function in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The bill would also allow for the establishment of specific rules and requirements in regard to completion dates.

With these proposed changes, Ontarians, commissioners and governments can be confident that future inquiries will return strong, constructive reports and recommendations.

1530

We're also looking to strengthen the integrity of municipal elections. The proposed changes to the Municipal Elections Act were developed in consultation with the public, municipalities and municipal and school organizations, such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. If passed, they would respond to issues identified by candidates, voters and election administrators. These changes include an improved voters list, a new contribution limit and firm deadlines for filing financial statements. The changes would help to clarify campaign finance rules, enhance compliance and enforcement measures, and help to ensure a transparent municipal election process.

Along with these proposed changes, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will continue to undertake a review of the municipal elections process and the Municipal Elections Act after every municipal election.

The proposed Good Government Act, 2009, includes a number of measures that will increase the effectiveness, clarity and accountability of government.

Elle propose des changements qui assureront à la population ontarienne la protection de ses droits et un service public efficace.

It proposes changes that will ensure that Ontarians' rights are protected and that the people of this province are well served by their government. Ontario is constantly changing, and our laws, regulations and systems must keep pace with the times.

I call on the members of this House to support these proposed amendments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):
Response?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to rise today and speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party and our leader, Tim Hudak, regarding the Good Government Act, 2009. Of course, the Good Government Act, 2009, begs the question, what did we have before this bill? Perhaps this bill is in reference to Terence Corcoran, who has labelled this government the worst government in Canada—but now we are going to have good government.

I'd like to begin by making some comments on the process undertaken here. I think we have 300 or 400 pages in the bill, and it affects 26 schedules and I think over 600 items by the minister's count; he referred to three of them in his opening comments. We received this document some 15 minutes ago, and we're expected to make some intelligent comments concerning this bill in that period of time.

At an earlier period of time, even a few months ago, we would have received this bill perhaps at noon and would have had perhaps three hours to go through it and make some comment on it as to whether it did live up to

the title of “good government” or not, but as it is, that didn’t happen. All that happened was that a lot of trees in Ontario died for the printing of this very oversized bill.

In listening to the minister and reviewing the compendium very quickly, we assume that “good government” means that we are going to be, hopefully, saving some money of taxpayers. But we didn’t see anything in this bill, in a very quick reference, that would lead me to believe that money was going to be saved by this bill. I wondered why the government hasn’t tried to save money. For instance, in the eHealth scandal, the Auditor General pointed out that the money was provided to Egon Zehnder, a recruiting firm, and they were paid \$1 million upfront for the hiring of three senior management positions. All fees were paid, but only five positions were filled and, to our knowledge, there has been no attempt by this government to recoup any of that \$1 million in the failure of that firm to hire 10 employees. Why that attempt wasn’t made, I don’t know, but I would hope that somewhere in the depths of these pages there might be something that refers to that, because certainly that would mean to me there was some good government taking place and that government is getting value for money—and we don’t see that happening there.

There were also other losses incurred in eHealth. There were losses incurred in the ministry and the Smart Systems process. None of these have attempted to recoup some of the billion dollars that Ontarians are so upset about these days.

Good government would indicate, it would seem to me, that there would be some attempt to prevent these kinds of things in the future. I hope there’s something in this legislation that would talk to the future of these bills.

There are none in the schedules that we very quickly looked at. Perhaps it’s there—I’m not saying it isn’t—but I didn’t see it. There was nothing about the 50% of tobacco that is being sold in this province today that we aren’t getting any taxes on and that is being sold out of vans and out of the back seats and trunks of cars, usually in juxtaposition to a high school or a school. And students probably have the ability to purchase things other than tobacco at the same time. It makes it very convenient for the criminal element in this province, and I think the government could go a long way towards having good government if they took a real shot at some of that illegal tobacco that’s circulating around this province.

The Progressive Conservative Party has been calling on this government to make some real changes, to bring out some good government and to try to move away from the possibly of incurring huge deficits in the future. You ignored our advice in the past. We now have a \$24.7-billion deficit. It is certainly time for some good government.

We on this side of the House look forward to supporting the principle of this bill in introducing some good government in this province, as opposed to what we’ve had beforehand.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: This morning I was told that, in the absence of my colleague the member from Welland, who is the critic, I would have to respond. I tried to find out what this bill was all about. We searched high and low. We asked questions of Liberal operatives who sit behind you. They were closed-lipped: Not one person would comment on what was contained within the bill.

Just as I walked in here, I was fortunate enough to go to the Toronto Star. They already knew what was in the bill, because they’ve already printed a news article on it. I don’t know how the Toronto Star could print a news article before we’re handed a copy of the bill. I’m not even sure that all the facts they have are right, but it’s there.

So here I am with 500 or 600 pages. I tried to read them all—but I’m not that fast a speed-reader—while the minister was speaking. A couple of things jumped out immediately to me, things which make me wonder if this is what the government intent is.

The first one that I thumbed through and found was that citizens will no longer have the right to petition the cabinet against an errant or wrong OMB decision. That is going to be taken away. That’s contained within the body of this bill.

The next one I looked at puzzled me, too, that the Solicitors Act removes the limitation on the rate of interest chargeable on a solicitor’s bill, so that a solicitor may now charge any rate of interest at all. I wondered why this is buried in the body of the bill.

I looked at the Municipal Elections Act. I was hoping, of course, to find out that there would be a municipal integrity commissioner who could delve into problems like those the city of Vaughan is currently experiencing, with all the lawsuits and counter-lawsuits and all of the problems that that municipality has. I didn’t find it.

I was looking to see that there were some difficulties around corporate and union donations that the city of Toronto is grappling with, but there’s nothing to that effect.

What I did find is that this government wishes to change the municipal election date so that it would now occur on the fourth Monday of October. Now, I don’t have any problem with it being on the fourth Monday of October, but every seven years that means it’s going to fall on Halloween. I don’t know who over there wants to hold a municipal election on Halloween, but that’s what this bill says.

I looked further and saw that they’re limiting the contributions to \$5,000 per contributor. I don’t have any problem with that aspect of the bill but I do think it’s kind of high. It means that any contributor can make a \$5,000 contribution to multiple members running for municipal council, including the mayor and councillors, and it means that the undue influence is going to continue to be there. But there’s nothing in the bill that I have read that says somebody who has multiple numbered companies can’t make \$5,000 and \$5,000 and \$5,000 and \$5,000 contributions, because I didn’t read that in there. But then again, it is 500 or 600 pages; it might be hiding somewhere inside.

1540

There is one good aspect that I found and want to commend. The one good aspect I was able to find in those couple of minutes was that the carry-forward of funds by municipal candidates will no longer be allowed. If there is one egregious section of the current act, that is it. You can always find something good reading through 500 or 600 pages, and I found it.

There's a section here on jury verification, and I think that as well is something whose time has come.

When I was looking for good governance, I was hoping to see within these 500 or 600 pages the government taking action on some of the more egregious issues of the day, those including the corporate tax giveaway that this government is hell-bent on going forward with, to the tune of some \$4.5 billion, while they wallow in a debt of \$24.7 billion. I was hoping there would be something in here that would make it impossible ever again for those things that happened around the eHealth fiasco to happen, but I was unable to find any references to those in these pages. I looked for the \$1-million-per-day consultant habit to see whether or not the consultants would be limited in some way by changes to the various acts, but unfortunately, I was unable to find any reference to that as well.

I was also looking to see whether or not there would be changes to the act relating to poverty and to poor people and to those who are on ODSF or Ontario Works and about how they might be funded or how the city might be able to pay for them, knowing full well that many cities like London and Hamilton have expressed real concern. Unfortunately, there was nothing in this act about that either.

Here we are; in a couple of minutes I was able to find a couple of good things in 600 pages and a whole bunch of bad ones. I think that this bill really, really needs some study.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Shurman assumes ballot item number 61 and Ms. Jones assumes ballot item number 73.

PETITIONS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John O'Toole: It's an appropriate time for a petition here that speaks to good governance, or lack of it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is conducting a review of the province's underserved area program (UAP) that may result in numerous communities across

rural and small-town Ontario losing financial incentives to recruit and retain much-needed doctors; and

"Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep doctors are essential to providing quality front-line health care services, particularly in small communities; and

"Whereas people across Ontario have been forced to pay Dalton McGuinty's now-forgotten health tax since 2004, expecting health care services to be improved rather than cut; and

"Whereas taxpayers deserve good value for their hard-earned money that goes into health care, unlike the wasteful and abusive spending under the McGuinty Liberals' watch at eHealth Ontario;

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

"That the McGuinty government not reduce or eliminate financial incentives rural communities and small towns need to attract and retain doctors" in their communities.

I'm pleased to sign in support of this and send it to the table with Rebecca, one of the fine young pages here.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to present this petition coming from the people of Sault Ste. Marie asking for a PET scanner, and it goes as such:

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

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

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;"

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

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

GARDE D'ENFANTS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I have a petition from Suzanne Hupé from St-Albert.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Nous, citoyens de la province de l'Ontario, méritons et avons le droit de demander des modifications à la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère, ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents, comme le prévoit le projet de loi 33, 2008, présenté par le député provincial Kim Craiton.

« Attendu que le paragraphe 20(2.1) de la Loi exige que les père et mère et autres personnes qui ont la garde d'enfants ne doivent pas faire déraisonnablement ob-

stacle aux relations personnelles qui existent entre les enfants et leurs grands-parents;

« Attendu que le paragraphe 24(2) de la Loi énumère les questions dont le tribunal doit tenir compte pour établir l'intérêt véritable d'un enfant. Le projet de loi modifie ce paragraphe de façon à inclure une mention expresse de l'importance du maintien des liens affectifs qui existent entre enfants et grands-parents...;

« Attendu que le paragraphe 24(2.2) de la Loi exige qu'un tribunal qui décide de la garde d'un enfant prenne en compte la volonté de chaque personne qui demande, par requête, la garde de l'enfant de faciliter les contacts entre celui-ci et ses père et mère ainsi que ses grands-parents, compte tenu de l'intérêt véritable de l'enfant;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adoptent le projet de loi 33, 2008, qui modifie la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents. »

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by what would appear to be just about every resident in my riding.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition, and I will sign it, as I agree with it.

WOOD HARVESTING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One has to speak up for themselves in this place, it looks like. I have a petition here that reads as follows.

“To the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the Departure Lake Cottage Association, the cottage owners, the citizens of Smooth Rock Falls and area, and other users of Departure Lake are opposed to the harvesting of wood by anyone in wood unit number TOA76;

“Whereas the impact on the environment, the wildlife and the tourism to our area would be directly affected, resulting in irreversible damage to the lake and permanent loss of local wildlife and its habitat;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to appeal to the Minister of Natural Resources to stop all harvesting activities planned for wood unit number TOA76 indefinitely.”

I’ve signed that petition and I’ve also sent a letter to the MNR.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I’m pleased to stand in my place and introduce a petition on behalf of Danielle Masse. She is an employee at the Lambeth licence centre, 2095 Wharncliffe Road South. The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

We are asked to stop the closure of the Lambeth driver’s licence office by ServiceOntario and continue to serve the surrounding community.

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

This petition is signed by 11,713 people, and I’m pleased to give it to Hannah.

1550

TUITION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have increased by 195% since 1990 and are the third-highest of all of the provinces in Canada; and

“Whereas average student debt in Ontario has skyrocketed by 250% in the past 15 years to over \$25,000 for four years of study; and

“Whereas international students pay three to four times more for the same education, and domestic students in professional programs such as law and medicine pay as much tuition as \$20,000 per year; and

“Whereas 70% of new jobs require post-secondary education, and fees reduce opportunities for many low and middle-income families while magnifying barriers for aboriginal, rural, racialized and other marginalized students; and

“Whereas Ontario currently provides the lowest per capita funding for post-secondary education in Canada, while many countries fully fund higher education and charge little or no fees for college or university; and

“Whereas public opinion polls show that nearly three quarters of Ontarians think the government’s Reaching Higher framework for tuition fee increases of 20% to 36% over four years is unfair;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to immediately drop tuition fees to 2004 levels and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce a new framework that:

"—reduces tuition and ancillary fees annually for students;

"—converts a portion of every student loan into a grant; and

"—increases per-student funding above the national average."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton: I want to first thank Alex and Olga Alexander for submitting over 2,000 petitions in support of Bill 33. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We the people of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents as requested in Bill 33 put forward by MPP for Niagara Falls; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relationships between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between the children and the grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child.

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm proud to sign my signature in support.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition from the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

"That" Premier McGuinty's "government wake up to Ontario's" economic realities "and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Bethany, one of the new pages here at Queen's Park.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition, addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I would especially like to thank Dawn Pollard of Queen Street in Streetsville for having collected the signatures on this petition, which reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That Ontario develop, in consultation with high-growth stakeholders, a human services strategy for high-growth regions to complement Ontario's award-winning Places to Grow strategy."

It's a good petition. I'm pleased to sign it and to ask page Vladislav to carry it for me.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them from HOOPP and OPTrust to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of continuous service; and

“Whereas when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

“Whereas the government’s own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that government move swiftly to address this issue; and

“Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

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

“That the Minister of Finance support Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson’s resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions to OMERS from HOOPP or OPTrust.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ANIMAL HEALTH ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SANTÉ ANIMALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 19, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 204, An Act to protect animal health and to amend and repeal other Acts / Projet de loi 204, Loi protégeant la santé animale et modifiant et abrogeant d’autres lois.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak to Bill 204, the Animal Health Act. One reason I wish to speak to this is that I have some concerns with respect to this legislation: that it will not accomplish all that those who have been asking for this legislation expect. In fact, in my mind, it could get worse. It will probably, over time, saddle farmers with unnecessary expense. I also see in this legislation a plethora of rules and regulations, red tape, forms to fill out and hoops for farmers to jump through.

Having said that, it is important to point out that Ontario, as we know, is one of the largest producers and processors of livestock and poultry in Canada. It, as I

understand it, remains the only province that does not have this type of animal health legislation, although, if you go back into the decades, there always has been Ministry of Agriculture legislation to deal with many of these problems. However, given the tough times in the hog industry and the cattle industry—the cattle industry has not recovered from the BSE crisis, and that goes back a number of years now—I feel that now is not the time for government to mandate additional costs.

1600

Many will know of—and we’ve heard this a number of times in the Legislature—a fellow named Wayne Bartels. He’s a new hog farmer. He comes from my riding. This is a chap, with his brother and his family, who has invested millions of dollars just in building the sow barns and the finishing operation. He’s at the point where he cannot afford to even pay his electricity bill.

This proposed legislation obviously should allow government to take action to protect not only animal health but also human health, as well as to create a traceability system. In debate, some questions have come up about just where we lie as far as traceability. To their credit, livestock producers—I think of cattlemen in particular—have developed their own traceability system. We have a provincial government that, in my view, is playing a bit of catch-up and can learn a great deal, for example, from what the cattlemen have done as far as traceability. I would certainly hope this government isn’t going to unnecessarily duplicate what the cattlemen have already accomplished.

On the flip side, my concern remains that this bill will create, obviously, a new system of permits and licences and the plethora of inspectors that go along with that, and of course the red tape and the expense for farmers. Of note are the sections in this legislation that will further infringe on people’s property and rights with respect to their property. I understand the bill specifically says these inspectors are not allowed to bust into your house. That’s a start. As for the rest of your property—your buildings, your outbuildings—you will see inspectors on your property as a result of this legislation, something that is ill-advised in many parts of Ontario and certainly down in the Caledonia area, where many of the farmers are, out of necessity, keeping an eye out in the evening with respect to some of the problems down our way. This is not the time to have a government inspector walking around behind the barn unannounced. It’s very dangerous for an inspector to do that down in parts of my riding.

As you well know, the hog and the cattle industries have been suffering. So many young farmers—just about 100 hog farmers, for example—regrettably are falling through the cracks instead of getting assistance from the Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture payment program. Any added expenses in this legislation—you add it on to everything else that’s being downloaded on to business in general, let alone agribusiness, let alone farms—may well be that proverbial straw that breaks the camel’s back.

For example, this bill fails to address and it lacks the necessary detail concerning who pays for livestock

should contagious animals on affected premises be ordered to be euthanized. This is not the 1920s, this is not the 1930s, when so many herds, out of necessity, were put down because of a disease referred to as contagious abortion. I grew up with cattle. Our family has always had polled shorthorns. We used them for beef and for dairy. Every one of our animals had to be killed. They came down with contagious abortion. The human version, I think, is called Bang's disease or brucellosis. My father came down with that disease as well. This is a good example of the linkage between animal health and human health. My father was out of school for a year. He had no complaints about that, by the way. It was probably one of the best years for him. He ended up in England, as I recall, with the family on a trip. But it's pretty serious business.

Among our neighbours, so many herds were put down at that time, going into tough times. The agricultural economy was in very tough times in the 1920s in our area, let alone in the 1930s. At that time, there was no compensation. I would hope this government has come further than those tough times and is fully in support of compensation for those who have had a herd or a flock put down because of a contagious disease.

This proposed bill establishes a Chief Veterinarian of Ontario—stakeholders asked for this—and it does limit the people eligible for the position to public service employees only. I don't think that's a particularly good idea. It does not have any requirement calling for years of experience out in the real world. Compare that to Ontario's chief medical officer, who is required to have I think a minimum of five years of real-world experience and service.

I think Bill 204 goes down the road of being heavy-handed in how it relates to farmers, including allowing these inspectors, who would be created by this legislation, to enter premises other than one's house—other than dwellings—without a warrant in a very wide range of circumstances. I hope this particular issue is highlighted as we continue the debate on this legislation. I would fully expect this issue of this warrantless entry imposition to come up in public hearings. It has certainly come up in my travels with other pieces of legislation, with respect to clean water, for example.

I'm suggesting that this bill and the attendant and ever-predictable regulations have to be discussed in detail. Public hearings are fine. If you're going to bring in the amount of regulation that we expect with this particular law, I recommend we have public hearings on the regulation. As government, we had public hearings on the Nutrient Management Act; not only on the act, but also with respect to the drafting of regulation. We've got to give those who will be impacted the most by this legislation an opportunity to ask these kinds of important questions, and not only to ask the questions but to get some answers as to who will be paying for what this bill is intended to provide.

Much of the reason for this legislation is to further the public good. That's when the public pays. Don't focus on

one group. Don't focus on hog producers, chicken men, broiler guys, hatching-egg guys or cattlemen to pay the freight for something that ostensibly is put in place for the benefit of society.

I am concerned with the way this government rushes through legislation. It will probably be law by the time my local cattlemen in Haldimand and Norfolk, my local federation of agriculture and the local groups have their annual meetings. These annual meetings are usually held in January or February. We're debating a bill fairly hard on the heels of summertime. People are still—certainly cash croppers are very preoccupied right now trying to get beans and corn in. I would be very disappointed if this was rammed through before Christmas, before the annual meetings start.

In most of our ridings, those of us who represent rural areas—because I can guarantee you that I'll walk into the Haldimand Cattlemen's Association annual meeting down in Kohler and this bill will be discussed, and the cost that is going to hit the small cow-calf operators will probably be on the agenda. It would be quite regrettable if everything is passed and locked up even before they have their meeting.

I feel that this proposed legislation goes beyond what's required to protect animal and human health. What concerns me is, when you go above and beyond, who gets to pay for it?

1610

We know that submissions have come in, and stakeholders have been asking for a traceability system or an extension of traceability. They've asked for government assistance on this particular program, which is a good program, by and large.

I don't see anything mentioned in this legislation about traceability. It's largely absent when you read the bill. Again, this is a government that has left the door open: "We'll talk about that later. It will come up in regulation." We as legislators won't get a chance to be part of that process; it's not going to be discussed in this House. I just base that on what we've seen in the past.

They would like to see more emphasis on a traceability system, ever bearing in mind that we produce the best food anywhere, the highest quality anywhere. We should be doing everything we can to protect that status and to protect and support our agribusiness sector, and part of that is traceability. Why bury that in regulation? I would like to see amendments that would roll this into the bill itself.

We all recognize this desire of the McGuinty government to protect the health and safety of not only Ontario's livestock but Ontario's population. That's a laudable goal, and there's no denying that farm animal disease outbreaks, wherever they happen to originate, can have very serious economic repercussions to local farmers, and the potential is there for very tragic repercussions with respect to public health. I mentioned losing that herd of cattle to contagious abortion. That was transmitted to my father. I'm sure that was transmitted to a number of people at the time.

The federation of agriculture, the OFA, overall they support this bill “to enhance the competitiveness of Ontario’s agriculture-food industry and further safeguard the province from the negative health and economic impacts associated with animal health events.”

The cattlemen’s association as well has commented on the draft legislation. You’ve got to remember there are close to 20,000 cattlemen in this province of Ontario, and this government would be well advised to listen to our cattlemen. On June 18, they indicated the plans for this government to move forward on farm animal health and a traceability initiative. They see this as a good thing. They support the proposed legislation because it’s necessary. They see it as a necessary tool to manage disease outbreaks, and in my view, not only to manage but also to prevent, to deal with when they happen and to follow up and evaluate what happened, not only for the health of the animals but for the overall integrity of our food supply basically, as well as our own health as a human population.

The federation of agriculture commented on this issue of mandatory reporting, and they do recognize that immediate reporting is a crucial first step. There’s an education component that’s here as well. Most livestock people know how important it is to keep an eye on your flock or keep an eye on your herd, and when in doubt, you phone the local vet. Again, under this legislation, you would be required to contact Ontario’s chief veterinarian as well.

However, these producers are already subject to considerable administrative and reporting responsibilities as it is. These kinds of administrative and reporting responsibilities do impose a cost not only in time, but a cost that’s reflected in the price, ultimately. It’s very difficult to pass that price on to the consumer. So the OFA sees this kind of reporting as potentially a very significant burden. They recommend that the ministry establish a mechanism for mandatory reporting that does not—and I want to repeat this—does not invoke significant additional costs and does not contribute to further burden. To do so, a comprehensive mechanism for compensation should be developed and be made readily available.

The Ontario Cattlemen’s Association insists that industry be extensively consulted on the specifics, including implementation protocols. It is recognized that any new legislation like this recognize the Office of the Chief Veterinarian of Ontario as a definitive authority during an emergency. The OFA recommends that this kind of legislation be consistent with similar municipal, provincial and federal legislation existing in these other jurisdictions. In their view, it’s imperative that this legislation be harmonized with other jurisdictions.

Just going back to traceability for a moment, the OFA insists that farmers not be forced to bear the cost of regulations that result in a public benefit: “Although we are not aware of a definitive cost-benefit analysis, we believe trace-back systems will provide more benefit to the consumer than the farmer. Costs associated with introducing traceability must have a mechanism to enable

implementation costs to be transmitted down the market chain to be absorbed by the consumer, or otherwise covered by government assistance programs.” I don’t think that’s spelled out in the various sections of this bill.

Again, every group recognizes the importance of traceability and data. The OCA, the Ontario cattlemen, would not oppose mandatory premises ID; however, they do request that the registration be captured in the already-existing CCIA database and not through another new registry. We don’t need this kind of duplication and I, for one, do not recommend this government—in setting up this kind of a database, don’t even think about hiring up this kind of a database, don’t even think about hiring the kind of eHealth consultants that we’ve been reading about in the media. A billion dollars would go a long way toward helping our hog and beef farmers rather than paying the freight for consultants.

I’m going to wrap up now. If I had a bit more time, I would talk a bit more about Wayne Bartels, a hog farmer who is in serious problems. He doesn’t need these kinds of rules and regulations, red tape and cost.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d just like to commend the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. Many of his colleagues also have deep experience in the farming community in Ontario, and their input is always helpful in looking at these types of bills.

We don’t agree totally, once again, with the bill. But, once again, the government’s coming forward with a bill which is moving quickly. We hope, after second reading, at the committee level, that some of the amendments that have been suggested and some of the concerns that the official opposition and the third party will bring forward will be dealt with in a manner that would explain the situation and the concerns of farmers throughout Ontario, as well as people who deal with food.

I think that this bill will require some tuning for sure, and I hope that, once again, it doesn’t fall on deaf ears in committee and they just storm ahead without listening to suggestions from the official opposition and the third party. It’d be nice to see some of our amendments accepted occasionally, which would mean that we feel like we’re participating.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Yes, the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I know it’s a long name for a riding.

I just wanted to get up and speak a little bit further about Bill 204 and comment on some of the comments made by the member for Haldimand–Norfolk. I think that, actually, the last time we debated this, it was within a day or so of that debate that we had the outbreak of H1N1 at a turkey farm near Kitchener. At that time, the farmer acted appropriately in reporting what was happening at his farm. In terms of what this act would do, that farmer was already acting in a way that would protect himself and other producers.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk talked about inspectors coming onto the farm, and he implied that there might be some danger to the inspectors, but I think most inspectors are quite professional and don't go skulking around the back barns. They certainly would knock at the door to say they're there.

One of the things that has to be noted is that when you do have an event of an outbreak, you want professional people there; you want people who are very aware of biosecurity, who are going to take the appropriate measures, because it's very critical to any farmer that that disease is not spread any further. That's what we need to have in terms of regulations.

I also want to talk about reportability. The member talked about the reporting of hazards and of disease, and one of the things that the bill does do is create a protection from liability for people who do report. That's an important thing as well. Anyone who reports something, be it a veterinarian or a lab technician, and report it in good faith, is held beyond liability for what they've done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, it's questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Sorry. Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to just follow up on a few of the comments from the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and from others here.

There are always some clear components to a Liberal piece of legislation. First off, it's going to restrict people's freedoms and not respect our constitutional history; and the second thing is, it's going to add cost. It's going to add cost to farmers. All, of course, in this misguided thought of the public good, that we should continually burden business people with additional cost. Of course, we have seen the growth and the consequence of that cost. Our economy is faltering; our agriculture, our farms are suffering huge challenges today.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk mentioned Wayne Bartels. The people in the hog industry are being devastated right now. People in the cattle industry are being devastated, and what is the government's response? We have a bill that's going to create more paperwork, more administration, more cost without any value to the farms and farmers. That's a clear example of what we've seen throughout the tenure of this Liberal McGuinty administration: Add additional cost onto businesses.

We can see the consequences. We are now last place in this country; we are now a have-not-status province; we are underperforming every other jurisdiction. And what do the Liberals do? They bring out additional legislation that's going to add more cost onto our farms. Let's—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll have a chance to speak to this a little bit later, but I sympathize with the points that were

made by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk because I think he's trying to say that not necessarily is the idea of food safety a bad idea; I think he would agree that food safety is a very important issue. But I think what the member is trying to say is, "My God, at a time when there's a perfect storm going on in the agricultural industry of Ontario, is this what they need as a life vest?" I think that's the point that the member is trying to make.

You have farmers who are struggling. I listened to the Bartels family for a couple of days on CBC Radio One, who were talking about their situation where they couldn't afford to pay their hydro bills as a result of what's happened in the hog industry. The federal government was hurrying in order to try to move a program forward that eventually lent them some assistance. Their criticism was that the provincial government was nowhere on the radar screen, as Mr. Bartels put it. There was no help coming from the province whatsoever, and he was looking for the province to do something to assist him and others who are in a really tough situation as a result of what's happened to the hog industry.

I think the point that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk makes is, food safety, yes, but, my Lord, there's a whole bunch of other things that need to be done in order to assist the agriculture industry. If the only response that we get in lightning speed from the provincial government is a bill on food safety, the farm community says to itself, "Well, what about us? What about the issues we have to deal with, the things that affect the cost on the family farm, the things that we need to do in order to make sure that we have access to market and the things that we need to do in order to deal with the financing issues and the cost structures on the farm?"

I think what the member was saying is a perfectly valid point, and it's unfortunate that the government members didn't take it that way, because if there's an industry that needs some help right now, I would say it's the agricultural industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Haldimand–Norfolk has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the comments from various members. To the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: I wouldn't want that member to downplay the seriousness of this warrantless entry business. I recognize that they're not allowed to bust into your house, but for many farmers, to catch somebody in their barn, that can be, in their mind, just as serious.

We know these government inspectors will be instructed to use whatever force is necessary. That's in the legislation. They will be accompanied by the OPP, if necessary. That strikes me as pretty heavy-duty stuff. I've grown up on farms, and I suggest that is not the way to go. I won't get into details, but I can attest to that from personal experience. On our farm, we're surrounded by cattle. It's very important that these standards are based on science.

I attended the hearings two summers ago on Bill 50, where the OSPCA—that legislation was updated with respect to animal welfare. We respectfully request, and I

know I'm dealing with the Liberal government, but don't go down that road. Don't go down the road of animal welfare. Do not continue to go down that road with respect to the OSPCA. Anything like that should not be included.

Bill 50 was a very vague piece of legislation. It gave a lot of power to those people who may not know a heck of a lot about farm animals, livestock, and that is of concern to farmers. They know this business. They have an organization. There's an excellent organization that can look after these kind of protocols. It's called the Ontario Farm Animal Council. I would hope that more responsibility is directed towards that particular organization.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise to talk about the Animal Health Act, G204. This bill aims to protect animal and human health by preventing the spread of livestock diseases and enabling an effective response to animal health issues. Of course, the NDP and all Ontarians share these objectives. We know there is a need to improve safety for human health.

In the summer of 2008, deaths from listeriosis made this quite clear. We need to be able to respond more quickly to outbreaks. That's a big part of what this bill is about. We also need to be more proactive in preventing disease in the first place. We need to better recognize that farm animal health and well-being is important in its own right, not only in terms of protecting human health.

Ontarians want to know that the food they and their families eat is safe. They want to know that they are being protected from viruses and diseases related to tainted meat. And an increasing number of Ontarians want to know that the animals that they are eating are being treated as humanely during their lifetime.

We need to ask of this bill: Will it improve human health? Will it improve animal health? Will it prevent farmers from being hit with disease outbreaks that undermine economic competitiveness? Are there any downsides to farmers, consumers and animals?

Let's look at its protection of human health first. This bill enables the government to more effectively respond to disease outbreaks. It allows the government to put in place a system to trace animals throughout the food system. It provides the minister with the power, upon the advice of the chief veterinarian, to issue control orders to limit the spread of diseases. It also allows the minister to take action to respond to hazards that prevent disease in the first place.

These are all important and positive and should be supported, but there are a number of cautions that need to be raised. First, some agricultural stakeholders have raised the concern that this bill may lead to government overly dictating and circumscribing animal production practices in the name of health protection. We have recently seen what that can look like in the same ministry which recently received coverage in the Toronto Star, where the turkey farmers of Ontario passed a regulation restricting turkeys from going outdoors, on safety grounds. Inter-

esting. However, this regulation conflicts with the requirement that turkeys have access to the outside in order to be certified as organic. There is a debate about whether the outdoor requirement is a health concern, but what is clear is that the turkey farmers of Ontario were able to basically strike out organic turkey production on farms with more than 50 turkeys with the stroke of a pen, with only questionable health benefits.

Efforts by organic farmers' organizations to suggest a compromise—such as the one reached in Quebec, where feeding was outside—were scuttled. The turkey farmer regulation was upheld by the OMAFRA tribunal, although now that the issue has hit the pages of the Toronto Star, the minister has been sparked to action to possibly help find a compromise.

In the US, farm industry groups have also cited health and safety concerns as a reason for opposing improvements in animal welfare. Opponents of proposition 2 in California, which bans restrictive caging of animals starting in 2015, have argued that free-range eggs are more likely to carry salmonella because the hen's cage temperature is carefully calibrated. Interestingly, research actually shows lower levels of the disease when hens have more space.

The point to be made here is that sometimes the protection of health can be used as a pretext to marginalize alternative farming methods such as organics and biodynamics. We must not allow this legislation to do this. My understanding is that ministry officials have assured stakeholders that it's not the intention of the ministry to impose a monolithic approach to production with this bill. Yes, lots of new powers are opened up, but the intention here, according to the ministry officials, is to create legislation that is flexible enough to move us into the future by providing mechanisms to intervene on the public's behalf. But assurances are not enough. This intention should be clearly elucidated in the preamble to the bill.

A second and related question is how it will be determined when there is a real need for the minister to intervene with orders and restrictions on farm practices. As it stands, the minister can take action based on the advice of the chief veterinarian. Not to question the expertise of the chief veterinarian, but that is a lot of responsibility to put on one person's shoulders.

There are numerous interests and perspectives at stake here, and a forum for dialogue by those involved would seem to be more important. My understanding is that the ministry officials have spoken of intentions to set up an advisory council to advise on when intervention is needed. That's a good thing, but again, why is there nothing in the bill about this? Who would make up the advisory body? Why not put in the bill that the advisory body will be formed with representation from all farm sectors, including growing organic and biodynamic sectors, and farm animal welfare groups?

Third, like many of this government's bills, this is an enabling bill. It enables government to set regulations around reporting, traceability, quarantines and other animal

practices, so the effectiveness and scope will depend on the nature of the regulations. Unfortunately, discussions about regulations are less open and democratic than discussions about legislation, so the fight will go on behind closed doors; already it has started. Industry groups want to limit the scope of the bill and the scope for regulations to emergency situations involving the containment of outbreaks. They do not want handling and housing of animals to be included.

Here's the key debate, then: To what extent should the bill allow the promotion of animal health and welfare and the prevention of hazards in the first place, and to what extent should it focus more narrowly on the containment and control of disease? This is an important discussion, and it would be good to hear the perspectives of all parties on this as we move forward.

There is understandable concern among farmers that government will intervene too much in the day-to-day practices of their farms, imposing costs and burdens that farmers aren't in a position to bear. Some groups have argued that broader animal welfare practices are covered by the SPCA amendments and by a voluntary code of conduct. Here, SPCA amendments exclude farm animals, and according to many, voluntary codes of practice are insufficient. We know how well industry self-regulation worked at the federal level on food safety.

Other jurisdictions appear to be recognizing the importance of a more comprehensive approach to animal health that includes the promotion of animal welfare. The European Union's new animal health strategy recognizes the importance of public health and food safety, economic costs, and animal welfare considerations. It is entitled *Prevention is Better Than a Cure* and has a key goal of promoting farm practices and animal welfare which prevent animal-related threats and minimize environmental impacts. It's interesting that environmental impacts are not even mentioned in this bill. Why is that?

Clearly, protecting animal health is about more than controlling diseases; it's about preventing diseases in the first place. This is more difficult, and as we have seen in our health care system, we are much better at responding to illnesses than preventing illness in the first place, as evidenced by the rising rate of chronic disease. It is clearly part of the genesis of this bill that it should contribute to the prevention of the disease as well as the control of the disease.

The OMAFRA June 18 discussion paper for the bill states:

"The proposed legislation would give the province clear authorities to protect and promote animal health. The main purpose would be to establish a framework for animal health management in Ontario that would provide for prevention measures, including enhanced efforts to protect animals from hazards; proper animal handling; and proper use of medicines...."

"If introduced and passed, the proposed legislation would cover a broad range of hazards that could affect the health of animals—not just diseases." Emphasis: "not just diseases."

Under the title *Animal Health Promotion*, the paper reads: "The handling of farmed animals and the condition of their environment can have a direct impact on the health of the animals. The purpose of the regulation-making authority would be to promote adequate care and handling and facility standards for farmed animals in Ontario."

Given that the bill was intended to be about much more than responding to outbreaks—to be about preventing disease—it is a bit surprising that animal health promotion is not mentioned at all in this bill. It is also surprising that animal welfare is not mentioned more explicitly in the bill. The European strategy is clearly motivated by both public health concerns and animal welfare concerns.

There are other good reasons for the government to pay greater attention to farm animal welfare in this bill and more generally. One is economic. The market for humanely treated animal products is growing, and Ontario is in danger of failing to fully benefit from that market. There is also a growing concern about humane and healthy treatment of farm animals in North America as a whole. A 2003 Gallup poll found that nearly two thirds of Americans support passing strict laws concerning the treatment of farm animals. Even Oprah dedicated a show to food-animal care just recently. If it hits Oprah, it's big stuff.

The demand for cage-free eggs grew by 63% between 2001 and 2005 in the US. The demand for organic eggs grew by 85%. The potential for further growth is very significant. In western Europe, non-cage egg production has reached 35% while it comprises a mere 3% in Canada.

Europe is recognizing the health and economic gains of protecting animal welfare, as well as the ethical importance of doing so. In 2007, the EU banned veal crates, which are so small that a calf cannot turn around for most of its 16-week life—very cruel. Sow stalls, which keep pregnant pigs in such close confinement, they are virtually unable to move throughout their 16-week pregnancy, will be banned in the EU in 2013. Tethers, used to further restrict sows' movements, were prohibited in 2006. And the EU has agreed to ban battery cages for laying hens in 2012, stopping a practice that denies the birds virtually all of their natural behaviours and keeps them so cramped they cannot even flap a wing. All these systems and practices remain in use in Canada, where farm animal welfare is governed by an entirely voluntary, unaudited set of "recommended codes of practice."

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Farm animal welfare is also moving forward in the US. Citizens in California recently passed a ballot initiative that would ban battery cages, sow stalls and veal crates by 2015. Colorado, Florida, Oregon, Arizona and Maine have passed legislation banning intensive confinement systems.

Industry associations realize that these changes are in their interest. Smithfield Foods, the biggest pork producer in the US, is phasing out gestation crates. The

American Veal Association has urged an end to veal crates, and Safeway and Burger King have taken steps towards selling and using more cage-free eggs.

In Canada, we are falling far behind the movement to more humane animal treatment. A report by the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies released earlier this year ranked Canada well behind Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the EU in terms of farm animal welfare. The report found that all these jurisdictions spent millions of dollars on animal welfare, while Canada's latest five-year agricultural plan virtually ignores this issue.

Some jurisdictions in Canada appear to be moving towards more comprehensive approaches to animal health that integrate public health and animal welfare concerns. The Newfoundland government has taken this approach and is updating its animal health and protection legislation. Its minister responsible has stated that the new legislation will ensure proper animal treatment and humane handling, as well as minimize the risks within the industry and for the public. So the segmented approach here in Ontario—separate public health and animal welfare—is a bit surprising.

A fourth issue with the bill relates to cost and compensation. What will it cost to implement the tracing system? Who will pay? How will this link to and avoid duplication with the federal system? What compensation will be provided for the culling of herds? We know that farmers are already hurting, hog farmers like Wayne Bartels, who faces bankruptcy in part because he didn't qualify for a government support program due to a clerical error, or other beginning hog farmers who are just starting out and who were excluded from the government's cattle, hog and horticultural payment program, even as retired, bankrupt and dead farmers—do you hear that, Madam Speaker? Bankrupt and dead farmers received support.

Will this bring on another set of burdensome regulations that are stacked against small farmers? How will the regulations be made to fit with small producers and organic producers? Will organic farmers continue to be compensated at the same level for killed animals, when organically raised animals have a market value of two to four times that of other animals?

There was a recent series of articles in the *Globe and Mail* about how Canada needs a new food strategy. I would say that Ontario needs a new food strategy, a strategy that rewards instead of punishes farmers for engaging in humane, healthy and environmentally friendly practices; a strategy that makes farming a viable undertaking again by building markets for domestic products; a strategy that supports farmers the way that we support our other manufacturing sectors.

Let's hope that this bill will be a launch pad for such a strategy rather than another set of regulations that punish innovative and growing sectors of the Ontario food economy.

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Speaker: I wonder if we have a quorum present.

Interjection.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. You may continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now that we've got a full House, I'm thrilled to begin again. Actually, the member interjected at a good time. I was right near the end, so it was very good timing.

All I can say is that obviously, once again, there are a lot of things that we would like to see differently, different amendments. We're hoping at the committee level that we'll be able to implement some of the suggestions from the third party and the official opposition because obviously a lot of their members have a lot of expertise in the farming community, and I think they should be tapped into. I feel that we will continue to hope that the government, in their infinite wisdom and their five members to our three, will see their way to listen to some of the good suggestions that might make this bill a little better and benefit the farmers and the people of Ontario. Their food supply is extremely important, and we can see how things are getting worse, with some of the things that have been coming in from other countries that we're forced to buy because we are not buying home-grown, which we should be doing. It might also help us in the future if we buy Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I appreciate the comments that were made by the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek—when the break occurred, I was just about getting writer's cramp taking notes here—and also the comments that were made by members earlier in the first go-round.

I'd like to remind everybody that the purpose of this act includes providing for the protection of animal health, establishing measures with respect to a broad range of hazards associated with animals that may affect animal health, human health or both, and regulating activities related to animals that may affect animal health, human health or both, and enhancing the safety of food and other products derived from animals that humans may consume.

A lot of comments have been made about whether the bill goes too far surrounding the regulations, things like that. I'd just like to remind everybody of the devastation that would occur to the agricultural sector if supports weren't in place. We know what happened with the outbreak of mad cow disease. The borders were shut down when that happened. It was a devastating loss to our whole agricultural sector. A member spoke earlier about the outbreak of H1N1 last week at a turkey farm. The process that was in place was followed. It was contained. We didn't hear about the whole sector being shut down.

This is what this bill is going to assist in doing: to make sure that the sector is secure; to make sure that the

containment and control of disease is in place. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek mentioned quarantines. It gives the authority to the chief veterinary officer to quarantine a farm, a section or a region to protect the farm and protect the sector. I think that's of ultimate importance to the agricultural sector, and I urge all members to support that because of the help it provides.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Responding to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and his comments, this bill is a 69-page bill. Much of the authority that's contained in here the federal government already has under its agencies, police already have, humane societies already have.

I think what we're hearing from the commodity groups and livestock groups like the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and Ontario Pork—which is the hog producers, who are having a terrible financial crisis right now that the government has failed to respond to to any extent—is that they're worried about warrantless entries, which has been mentioned, and the tremendous new powers that government inspectors will have. I hope the only government inspectors who will be assigned to these cases or to complaints that come in are people who actually live on a farm or have grown up on a farm, because sometimes when you go out to the farm and you see the cattle being castrated and the tails being taken off, you might think that's cruel, but that's not cruel. That's called disease prevention. It's a necessary part of what cattlemen do.

Debeaking: It's not a very pleasant thing to debeak a bird, poultry, but it's done so they don't peck the heck out of each other and end up with sores and disease. Dehorning cattle for the same reason: It's not a very pleasant thing to see, but it's something that's necessary.

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Even factory farming—not all factory farms are bad. As the honourable member did mention, the European community is bringing in some pretty good standards to make sure abuse doesn't occur, or when it does occur, that people are penalized appropriately. Most of our food—not all of it's free-range chickens—comes from factory farms. That keeps the costs down, it keeps the production efficient, and they're not all bad. So what I'm saying is that people who are doing the inspections better know what farming is all about—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I have the following question: Did the government go to the plowing match in Timiskaming just recently and announce anything having to do with this bill when it came to the good newses—“newses,” new word; that's what happens when you get a flu. All my staff are sick and they're giving it to me.

Anyways, when they have the plowing match, there's an opportunity to give good news to the cattlemen and to

the farm community of Ontario, and if the government was so into this bill, why didn't they go to the plowing match and say something about it? I would suspect the reason they didn't is because they'd probably get an earful. I'm not saying that food safety is not important. That's not the point that I'm making here. The point that I'm trying to make is, you have a farm industry that is in crisis; you have people who are closing down farms because they can't afford to keep the doors open. Why? Because commodity prices are down; cost inputs are up; the American protectionism that we see in the United States is affecting us. We need to deal with all of those issues in some kind of way in order to be able to assist that industry.

What I want to say to my friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and I'm pretty sure he would agree with me, is that this, in itself, may not be a bad thing. But is this what the farm industry needs today? I would venture to say, probably not. It doesn't mean to say that we shouldn't be doing this. I don't argue that for one second—I don't want to go on the record saying that we can't be doing any of this. That's not my point. My point is, the farm community is saying, “Okay. Nice bill; 69 pages—Bill 204. Somebody else is going to tell me how to run my farm, but what are you going to do to help me? Is there going to be anything when it comes to the issues of cost inputs, when it comes to me being able to operate my farm? Are you going to have some sort of rural electrical program in order to assist farmers to pay their hydro bills? Are you going to deal with the costs that are associated with all of the other regulations that you put in place?” I think the answer would be, “No.” So I think the government has to go back and do a bit of work on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: There's something else that we have to make mention of here. Of course, the original intent was supposed to be traceability, and traceability is not included at all; that's lost in the minutiae of the bureaucracy at some other point in time that none of us will see. However, all these 69 pages of animal health are a duplication of an existing bureaucracy. We have the CFIA federally; that's who's empowered to make sure that our farms and our herds are in good order so that we can export and that we can try to have a vibrant farm economy once again. So why are we adding additional cost and duplication of services?

We've all mentioned in here, the people who have come up and spoken today, that farming is in a difficult time. We talked about the hogs and cattle especially. What is this government doing for those farmers other than putting more bloody cost on them without putting any value out there—just putting more cost, duplicating bureaucracy, adding cost and not doing anything that will actually promote and help them? This is atrocious, that this government has their head so far buried into the bureaucracy and red tape that they can't see what to do at any time.

A couple of things: They will require the recording, the maintenance and reporting of specified information

related to any animal, animal product, blah blah blah. That's not going to help Wayne Bartels. That's not going to help any hog farm. Let's get on with doing the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd first like to thank the members who addressed my words.

The member from Simcoe–Grey is quite knowledgeable in the farming community as well, and I respect his opinion.

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock: I'm pleased that he was taking notes and paying attention to what the third party has to say. That's a refreshing change from the Liberals.

The member from Timmins–James Bay: I agree with him. That would have been a perfect place to announce the bill—at the plowing match. Maybe they would have met with some resistance. I don't know; I wasn't there. He was, and I guess that didn't happen. That might have been an ideal position for the Liberals to announce there. They would have had a captivated audience and a lot of people who would be—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Interested.

Mr. Paul Miller: —interested, and well-informed on the farming business.

Once again, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington always adds a good spark to the conversation, and he has his passion. He's also well aware of what goes on in the farming community in his area, and I'm sure that he will add to the discussions when it goes to committee.

All I can say is that every bill that's brought forward requires some changes and amendments to make it a better bill. But unfortunately, since I've been here, I've seen on so many occasions at committee that it falls on deaf ears. They don't even read the bill. They just plow ahead. I don't want to use the term “plow ahead” because it's a farm term, but I guess I will. They plow ahead with their ideas and they don't even consider some of the good input that comes from all sectors of our society.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order: I would like to introduce Mr. Crozier's twin brother, who is here with us in the galleries today. I'd like to welcome him to the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order, but—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm delighted to have some time here to talk about Bill 204.

Before I go to some of my comments, I just want to go back and revisit what this legislation, Bill 204, proposes to do.

I heard from a previous speaker that nobody wants this. Well, the proposed legislation is something that our industry partners have been asking for to protect animal

health and to focus on livestock and the poultry sector, to strengthen consumer confidence in supporting this great economy.

Ontario is the last jurisdiction in this country to introduce such a piece of legislation. So, once again, why are we doing this? Every other province has a piece of legislation.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would provide measures to assist in the prevention, detection and control of animal diseases and other hazards. This will give government the authority to issue quarantine, surveillance zone and control area orders to help control the spread of any detected diseases and hazards.

I heard from a previous speaker that this is more bureaucracy. If they would look at the piece of legislation, it actually repeals three previous acts and incorporates them into one. What that does—we talk about reducing red tape. We're bringing in one piece of legislation that's going to encompass those three others.

We have worked hard to incorporate these things. There has been an enormous amount of—we had some huge consultations, and I'm going to talk about those partners later on.

The industry partners, which I will talk to more specifically later, have sent us some written support, and I'm going to talk about those in just a minute—the ones that the folks who previously spoke said were totally against this piece of legislation.

1700

There's still work to be done. There's no question about it. They've rolled up their sleeves not only to initiate us to move forward with this but to work with us to get it right. There will be public consultation. This will enhance the ability to work with the cattlemen's association. With the great program they have already for traceability, this will give us another tool to better enhance that.

Our government has been very clear that the federal government would like to move forward on a mandatory traceability system for livestock and poultry, as was announced this summer. The system will have to be supported, of course, by the federal government. Traceability is an important part of containing disease outbreaks and other food safety concerns. It has important economic impacts because processors, retailers and consumers want quality and food safety assurance and standards that show that food is safe.

I'm going to talk about some of those supports that have worked with government to strengthen this bill to move forward. We've heard today that the Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council plays an important role when it comes to food safety in this province. We thank them for their support. I'm going to quote from their letter that was dated July 20, just after this legislation was introduced. And yes, they have some suggestions to further strengthen it.

Let me just tell you what they said: “The Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council ... was formed in 2005 to provide a forum to facilitate the development and co-

ordination of an Ontario strategy to deal with foreign animal disease and other transmissible livestock and poultry diseases. There are currently 28 regular members and five ex-officio members of OLPC, including livestock and poultry groups, farm service, feed, processing and veterinary organizations. The membership list is attached....” That’s the scope of this organization; it really encompasses the agricultural industry.

“The OLPC members were very pleased with the June 18 announcement of the Ontario government plans to move forward on farm animal health and traceability initiatives. We feel provincial animal health legislation would provide ... required tools to manage disease outbreaks and other incidents that threaten the integrity of the food supply, animal and human health....

“We commend the vital role the Minister of Agricultural, Food and Rural Affairs has played in moving this important initiative forward while ensuring agriculture stakeholders were kept informed and provided with an opportunity to provide input.” That’s what, in general, the Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council said.

I have also heard about costs. I’m not sure where the costs come from. As a matter of fact, the legislation is very clear that it provides an opportunity, when there’s loss of animals due to quarantine or destruction for disease not to spread, for a compensation component as part of this legislation. It’s there.

Let me tell you some of the general comments that the OLPC group has put together: “Overall, the OLPC is in agreement with the suggested scope and content of the proposed animal health legislation for Ontario.”

Let me tell you what they say about the mandatory reporting hazards: “Overall, OLPC is very supportive of the outlined purpose and scope of the mandatory reporting component in relation to the designated animal disease.”

I want to be clear: As I mentioned before, they do make suggestions on how to strengthen this through the consultation process.

“OLPC is in general agreement with the response powers outlined in the proposal.”

Let me tell you what they say about disease prevention: “OLPC is very pleased to see disease and risk prevention included as a central component of the act.” These are statements that are not our statements. We were able to work together with these folks.

It doesn’t stop there. When it comes to animal health promotion: “We endorse the inclusion of animal health promotion within the legislation if the intent is to address the issue of animal welfare or humane treatment of animals within the context of an emergency.” This is something that they have asked for.

“OLPC agrees with the premise of this section of the proposal and expects industry consultation in the development of related regulations.” That was in reference to livestock medicine.

When it comes to information collection used in disclosure, one of the things we’ve heard previous members say is that inspectors have arbitrary means to go in and

inspect. Well, “OLPC supports the general statements contained in this section of the proposal: Establish regulations or programs which allow the collection, use and sharing of aggregate disease information from veterinarians and laboratories for the purposes of disease monitoring.”

We’ve heard about the turkey infestation. We didn’t need this piece of legislation because those folks acted responsibly, but we know that in the past, mad cow disease and some others spread because we didn’t have the proper controls in place.

They also suggest that we “develop regulations to provide for a notification system for disease outbreaks or risk incidents and a single provincial source of information on confirmed or suspected incidents that could be used by industry.”

This is what they’ve suggested be in the legislation. We’re proceeding. So when I hear that industry is totally not supportive, I’m not sure where that information is coming from.

On third party delegation and delivery, and once again I’m quoting from their letter, “OLPC agrees that the legislation should contain the provision for third party administration of certain portions of the act and/or regulations under the oversight of the ministry.” This, once again, is their recommendation.

We talked about the cost. None of the previous members who spoke about this and who oppose this piece of legislation disclosed where these additional costs are. As a matter of fact, they talk about an extra burden, yet entrenched in legislation there is a portion where we talk about compensation being allowed under certain circumstances.

Let me tell you what the Chicken Farmers of Ontario are telling us about this legislation. This is a letter addressed to the minister. It says, “Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs proposed animal health legislation. Chicken Farmers of Ontario congratulates you and your government on this significant milestone.” This is not something that I’m saying and that some of my colleagues are saying—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Read the rest of it.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Yes. They do make good suggestions.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Exactly. Read the rest of it.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me just read something else that they say: “We appreciate that the consuming public looks to government for oversight and welcome this legislation in response to that demand.” So they’re saying that for the betterment of the industry, and certainly consumers are always asking about this—we know that Ontario has one of the safest food chains anywhere probably in the world, but this sort of puts the seal of approval that gives that extra assurance so that we have confidence in the food that we consume every day.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: “But, but, but”—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I make no comment. The member is saying “But, but, but.” I do say that they’ve worked

with us and are willing to continue to work with us. I have never heard this member say anything positive about what these groups have said, so I think they should really—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Oh, no, I said all of those things.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me tell you what the OFA in general, in one sentence, says, and they do make good suggestions. I pre-empt them before I quote them: “The OFA supports the goal of this proposed legislation, ‘to enhance the competitiveness of Ontario’s agriculture-food industry and further safeguard the province from the negative health and economic impacts associated with animal health events.’”

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Are you going to accept the amendments your PA is going to make?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We are listening to them, Madam Speaker, and this bill is going to go to committee, like any other bill.

I can tell you that we have a lot of confidence in that industry. Being parliamentary assistant to the minister for the last three and a half years, I’ve met with a lot of those groups. They’re the hardest-working folks in rural Ontario and work night and day to provide, as I said before, good, sustainable, safe food for us.

I know when I meet with my local federation, my local cattlemen’s association, they’ve always been very, very helpful. I respect them for that assistance that they’ve given us.

1710

“The Ontario Cattlemen’s Association was pleased on June 18 to hear that the Ontario government plans to move forward on farm animal health and traceability initiatives. We support the proposed legislation as a necessary tool for government and industry to manage disease outbreaks that threaten the integrity of the food supply, as well as animal and human health.”

Mr. Jim Wilson: Read the rest of the letter.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I hear my colleague saying, “Read the rest.” As I said before, they do make good comments and they do make some suggestions. This is the time when the bill will go to committee and we’ll get that industry—

Interjections.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: —as we’ve done those things. We appreciate the comments they have given us in writing for the minister and the ministry and the committee to suggest. This is not uncommon, when legislation is introduced and it goes to committee, that different interest groups send the committee members and the minister suggestions and recommendations. We take those very, very seriously.

When I hear that this was sneaked through somehow, well, those folks that I mentioned were all consulted. These are the folks who are in the trenches, on the side roads, on those county roads, on those concession roads in municipalities that I represent and all the members from rural Ontario represent. So the consultation has happened.

When we hear that this has been somehow snuck through the back door, it’s hard to take. I repeat, every province has this piece of legislation. Ontario is the only jurisdiction in this country that doesn’t have such a piece of legislation. We looked very closely, for example, at what Alberta and Quebec have done, and we’ve taken on the good work that they’ve already done, instead of reinventing the wheel.

To say, once again, that this is something out of the blue, that it doesn’t fit what the industry wants—I think industry wants a government that has the proper tools to protect their industry, because God forbid if we have another incident like mad cow or any of those things that happen within the confines of the agricultural industry, and the long-term impacts that they have, and we have known very well that there are tools that we could have implemented to prevent those things from happening, and we haven’t done it.

So it’s a little bit rich to say that this is out of the ordinary, it’s overpowering and it creates more red tape when, as a matter of fact, as I mentioned in one of my opening statements, we’re actually repealing three acts right now—the Bees Act, the Livestock Community Sales Act and the Livestock Medicines Act—because they will be well incorporated in this new piece of legislation under one package with one set of controls, one set of regulations or regulations that we’ll develop in conjunction with our stakeholders.

I’m going to end my remarks by just saying this is an integral part of moving forward. We do have, in general—and I say in general; I want to be fair—from the industry to move forward with this. At the end of the day, by the time we get to the end of the process, I would think that we will have a good solid piece of legislation that our industry can depend on and, most important, that our consumers can depend on. Because as we move forward together with the federal government and new labelling that identifies Canadian products and maybe Ontario products, when people go to the grocery store, regardless of where they are, they’ll be able to identify these foods that they know that the government has taken action on to make sure that they’re safe and protected.

I would encourage all the members of this House, yes, to give us input; yes, to understand that this is something that the industry has been asking for; and yes, that this is something that we consulted with the industry on. I look forward, once again, to going to committee, to have a full, wholesome debate at committee, to hear from those industry stakeholders and move on and get this done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It’s unfortunate that the member from Northumberland–Quinte West didn’t actually read the legislation before he spoke about it. He was saying that there is no red tape, there is no cost. Read section 24. I’ll just read you one little section here under section 24—and there’s a host of them: “Establish restrictions on the possession, storage, transportation, movement or distribution of living or dead animals, animal products,

animal byproducts, inputs, fomites, waste material, conveyances ... including requiring permits to be obtained before any such activity may take place.”

The member for Northumberland should understand that the requirement of permits is itself a cost: a cost in time and a cost in money. Just in that one little example, any movement of any live or dead animal or any product of that live or dead animal is going to require a permit. So there is a cost.

That is their typical Liberal response to anything at all: Apply more costs, more burdens, more red tape, more administration, as a way to solve the problem, without realizing that they are creating a problem. They're looking to improve the health of our animals. Well, why don't you start thinking of improving the health of our farmers? We're going to have a whole lot of healthy animals and a bunch of dead farms under this Liberal administration. That's what we're going to have: dead farms, healthy animals.

Earlier, a member said we have to help stop the spread of disease. Well, I'd like to see us stop the spread of this Liberal disease called red tape and over-restriction and intrusiveness on the people and the farms of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I always love listening to Mr. Hillier, because it's always an interesting perspective that he brings to these debates, and sometimes he's maybe not too far from the mark. I know members at times will say, "Oh, well, you know, he's being a little bit alarmist," but I think the point is well made—and I've raised this earlier: Is food safety important? Absolutely. Should we, as a Legislature, be trying to figure out how to make sure that the public is made safe when it comes to the food chain? Absolutely. Nobody argues that. The issue, however, is, is that all we can say to the farm community? There are plenty of issues that are challenges to the farm community. I guess the point that Mr. Hillier made, and I think I would agree with it, is, where's the rest of the package that's there to assist the farm community? There's nothing wrong with trying to deal with food safety. It's a very important issue. Talk to those people who unfortunately have lost family members and loved ones as a result of the food safety incidents that we had last year. So I'm not arguing that for two seconds. Does this bill do everything it's supposed to do? I'll talk about that later in the debate. But the basic core issue is: Where is the rest of the assistance to the farm community? I don't see any.

I talk to people like Frank Haasen, who has been a farmer in our community for years, along with his family; I talk to John Vanthof, who was our previous candidate in Timiskaming–Cochrane, who is a dairy farmer; I talk to people across my riding who are in the agricultural business, and I'll tell you, a lot of people are hurting. There are huge issues when it comes to debt, and not just because of debt that they've incurred to buy equipment and to pay the mortgage, but debt that they've

got to incur on their lines of credit because commodity prices have gone down, hydro prices have gone up, other inputs have gone up. And they're saying, "We need the provincial government to assist us." If we can assist the automotive sector, certainly to God we can do something to assist the farm community. That's the point that I think we're trying to make.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to make a comment to my colleague and friend from Northumberland–Quinte West.

To be sure, if one raises the decibels and the rhetoric, it must be true. I guess that's the way it works. But the member always approaches in a balanced way the discussion that has been taking place. It's unfortunate that there's this mythical red tape argument that continually kind of weaves its way in and out, in and out. The very careful use of red tape got us fired water inspectors, it got us fired meat inspectors, under the guise of, "It's all a bunch of red tape, and we don't need it."

1720

Quite frankly, the member from Timmins–James Bay does hit the nail right on the head: This is about safety. The rhetoric that's being thrown out there, it's unfortunate that it's not at least balanced. That's why I appreciate the member's comments, because he talked about the balance between the consultations before the bill and during the bill, and indicated clearly that when the committee comes to work, there will be continuation of that consultation with the stakeholders.

As a matter of fact, we've got farmers right here in this House from all sides—from all sides. The discussion has always been about being very proud—and I mentioned this before, in the debates earlier—of Ontario's record when it does come to safety. Food safety is a source of pride for our farmers. They have not indicated that they don't want to work with the government. As a matter of fact, as stated by the member, they are going to go in the other direction: They want to work with the government, and they will work with the government.

One could stand up and raise the decibels and raise the rhetoric, but I think the member has done a good job of a balanced approach, and I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I just wanted to comment on the presentation made by the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. I would say that the Conservative caucus is supportive of food safety. The compendium that came with the bill, which outlined what the intent of the bill was: I think we would all agree with that. But as he was making his presentation, he was reading the comments from a lot of the stakeholders in the agriculture community. But he neglected to mention the "buts" in the letters. He just said, "Well, yes, they have some other good recommendations." I think it would have been helpful in the discussion if those recommendations that they were making—I believe each

and every one of them had a recommendation beyond, "We support this legislation, but we would like to make these changes." Had he put those in there so we could be debating that, with those changes made, the Conservative caucus would likely be supporting this legislation.

So far, we've heard about going to committee with the bill, having discussions about the bill and hearing from everybody, but no one on the government side seems to want to say, "And then we would implement the changes that are recommended. We would support the amendments coming forward to make the bill what all these stakeholders are telling us needs to be done."

As an example, I think it's very important that all the stakeholders' recommendations deal with wanting the food safety bill in place, including traceability. Being able to confine where an outbreak takes place—the member spoke about the BSE problem we had a number of years ago. If you can't identify where the product came from, it doesn't matter how well you confine the area. You can't export any material from anywhere in the country because you can't define where the affected area is. We have to have the traceability in place before this act is going to be beneficial to our agriculture community.

I would like to see something in the bill that does more than say the minister can, by regulation, set up a traceability regime. I'd like to see—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member from Northumberland–Quinte West has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me thank the folks who made comments, with the exception of maybe one. I certainly respect the rest of them, but somebody who believes law and order should be a backhoe at the end of somebody's driveway to stop the police, I don't give a lot of credibility to. But I do appreciate the other members' comments, and they're valid.

I think I made it very, very clear, talking about the bill, that there were a lot of good suggestions. There are a lot of good suggestions. That's when the bill goes to committee.

These letters were written to government after the legislation was passed. They thanked us for letting them give input. That's why we're here today. Basically they said that it's about time this has come forward.

I made no bones about it; I think I said that upfront: We will be listening, and the bill will go to committee. Like normal, there will be amendments, presumably, and we strongly—listen, it is about food safety. But the problem is when I hear, "Well, it's good about food safety, but we have to have a regime in place to make sure we achieve that food safety."

We talked about the farmers needing help; there's no question about it. I'll go as far as saying that the majority of the governments that have been in power have worked with the agricultural community. We've seen the support that this government has given to the agricultural community, and I'm talking financial support. The previous governments have as well. But I would say—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Oh, don't go there. Don't go there.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I will go there. Who closed OMAF offices across this province that were helping farmers? Ernie, you were there. So don't go there. Don't you go there, Ernie.

All I'm saying is, we're listening. We're listening, but we're not listening to them, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's amazing how the Liberal members believe their own rhetoric. I know that support for farmers is at an all-time low in the province. We certainly have hog producers in the province—in my riding, I can think of many families who are personal friends that are bankrupt or are going bankrupt, or their houses are for rent or their farms are for rent up around the Alliston area, the Angus area, and down near Tottenham. It's a terrible time out there and there has been no response to their particular plight from the provincial government, other than to say that they're talking to the federal government. When it's raised in this House, the agriculture minister simply blames the federal government, who have provided at least some cheques to these farmers to help them survive to the extent that they are at this point.

Secondly, \$1 billion at eHealth is a heck of a lot more than you spend on agriculture in this province and it's a heck of a lot more than you've spent since 2003 on agriculture in this province. So to get up and to think you're able to say that you're great supporters of agriculture is a bit of a joke

I do want to talk about Bill 204, though, the Animal Health Act, 2009. I'm going to begin by reiterating what some other members of the PC caucus have said in regard to this bill because it's important for Ontarians to know that we support in principle the protection of our food supply and animal health. The honourable member from Oxford just said that.

Ontario's agricultural industry is among the best in the world, and we should be very proud and supportive of it. We should also be better informed about it. As our friends at the Ontario Federation of Agriculture tell us, the agri-food industry—its farmers, processors, wholesalers and retailers—provided over 752,000 jobs in Ontario in 2006, which are the latest statistics. I would think that there are fewer jobs there now. This translated at the time to 11.6% of Ontario's employment. In 2006, Ontario farmers spent \$7.8 billion to be able to produce food and received \$8.4 billion from the marketplace for their products. Food and beverage products generated \$24.1 billion in annual food store sales. In fact, more than 200 commodities are produced in Ontario, including fruits, vegetables, livestock, honey, dairy, poultry, grains and oilseeds. When it comes to our agricultural industry, we definitely have something to be thankful for and something to be proud of, but they do need our help.

Having said that, this bill goes beyond the scope of what the farming community has asked for. It creates

additional bureaucratic red tape—the last thing our farmers need more of. This bill started as a traceability bill. As was just said by the member from Oxford, if you have a breakout of BSE or some other horrible disease affecting your livestock, you need to be able to trace back where that stock originated so that the whole problem can be dealt with. There's only one little section in this bill that mentions that the minister will have the authority to put in a traceability system, but when she is asked about it publicly, she says, "We're going to leave it up to the federal government." So there's no leadership from the province on the whole reason that this bill was thought up in the first place.

You'll hear later, when I read some remarks from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, that they didn't want—and the member for Northumberland—Quinte West read a part of a letter from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. I'll read you the other part of the letter, which says, "We didn't want an animal welfare act. That's not what we were told this was going to be." But we have almost 70 pages of an animal welfare act with no mention, or very little mention, of the original intent of the act, which was traceability, to deal with crisis, to make sure we could continue to export our products in the agricultural sector in the international markets and to make sure that other countries, of course, had confidence in our products; if a disease broke out, that we would be able to deal with that emergency.

Instead, we've got huge new costs, a huge amount of new paperwork for farmers. The permit system alone that was mentioned by Mr. Hillier is just mind-boggling. People move their cattle and their chickens and their pigs every day, but apparently you've got to go to the bureaucratic office and get permits now to move things around. The dangers here and the costs here are far more than what the farming community bargained for. So it's nice that you read the first part of every letter, which says, "Thank you for introducing this bill," but you've got to read the other four or five pages of, as Mr. Hardeman, the member for Oxford, said, the "buts." And the butts are significant from the major groups that we're hearing from in agriculture that will be affected by this.

1730

Also, it has been mentioned by many, many colleagues that the timing of this bill couldn't be more harmful in terms of new costs and red tape, which can't be emphasized enough, and just a whole set of new burdens and bureaucracy on top of our farmers, who are not doing very well. You talk about, "Maybe they'll get some compensation for some of the livestock removal they'll have to do, or if they have to kill their entire flock or they have to kill all their livestock because of disease," but there's no mention in this bill.

I don't trust you on the compensation side of it. We had a tornado, as honourable members know because I've raised it in this House several times, that not only devastated Durham and parts of west Grey and Vaughan, but also the Town of the Blue Mountains. I had two ministers come up, the Minister of Natural Resources and

the Minister of Agriculture, eight days after the tornado, which happened on August 20, two months ago. They came up and they toured 14 farms that are majorly affected; they are apple farmers that are affected. Probably close to \$4 million in damage won't be covered by existing programs, so they need disaster relief; they need your government to ask the federal government to open up the cost-shared program called agri-recovery, which would allow some of these farmers to tap into compensation.

So they come up, the ministers go on the evening news, they get interviewed by the local papers, they say all the right things. Three weeks ago I asked Mr. Smitherman, the Deputy Premier, a question. It was for the Premier but he wasn't there that day, so Mr. Smitherman said all the right things. He reminded us that his mother lives in Ravenna, which is right in the middle of the tornado-damaged area, an F2 tornado, in the Town of the Blue Mountains. He says all the right things. I wait three weeks. He has not called me. He has not sent one of his umpteen staff members over to ask, "What can I do? What kind of compensation do these farmers need?" Mrs. Dombrowsky, the Minister of Agriculture, has not called me since she toured almost two months ago. I've had to talk to her deputy. I've had to talk to the principal secretary of cabinet, Shelly Jamieson, whom I've known for a couple of decades, to get any action at all from the government. Ms. Cansfield, the Minister of Natural Resources—very nice people—said all the right things, but again, you don't follow up.

So if there's going to be compensation in this bill, we need to see that up front so that farmers know that if they have to—because this bill requires them to kill their livestock or remove diseased stock. Farmers need to know that the government is going to be there for them.

I will read what the cattlemen's association did say, because the member for Northumberland—Quinte West read a letter. This one is from Gord Hardy, who is president of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, on July 20 of this year. It goes on about traceability, which I'll put on the record in a minute, what they would like to see in this act or in a traceability system.

"Animal health promotion," the point that I was making there in terms of how they didn't really want this act to become one of those: It says that the Ontario Cattlemen's Association "believes that animal welfare practices should not be included in the proposed legislation," which is what everybody has been debating. "How are the little calves going to get looked after, their welfare?" and, "We're going to hire new inspectors to go in and arrest bad farmers." By the way, I've never met a bad farmer in all of my life. I know there are some out there, I guess, but I thought really what you were looking at is more animal welfare like puppy mills and stuff like that. The vast majority of farmers are not bad farmers. It's not in their interests to be cruel to their animals, because animals that are under threat or distress don't produce very well. They don't taste very good and they tend to toughen up a little bit, as members would know.

So it's not in anyone's interest to go around being mean to their animals.

But anyway, you're going to bring in a whole new bureaucracy. As my colleague behind me said, there already is a federal bureaucracy whose whole job it is, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, to do exactly this, and by international standards they do a good job.

The Ontario Cattlemen's Association said that, in their view, the OSPCA Act, which was recently updated, "has ample authority to deal with animal welfare issues. The beef industry also has a code of practice for the care and handling of beef cattle, a joint effort between industry and agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. We feel these policy tools provide adequate care and handling standards during normal business. Should the legislation focus specifically on the care and handling of animals during a declared emergency, we request these standards be science-based, and correspond to already existing protocols. The Ontario Farm Animal Council should be consulted regarding animal welfare and animal health promotion." I have a letter from the Ontario Farm Animal Council that I should also read.

"Compensation and Indemnification Policies" is part 7 of this letter from Mr. Hardy. It says:

"We request the development of a regulation relating to fair compensation or indemnification policies for direct and specified indirect losses for any producers whose animals have been ordered destroyed by government, or whose income has suffered as a result of a disease outbreak. This could include losses from quarantine, extra-feeding costs, lost market value due to weight or age discounts, testing costs and disposal costs. Adequate compensation for producers who experience ongoing prevention and detection costs that cannot be recovered from the marketplace as well as for quick response costs are essential to keeping the Ontario cattle industry competitive."

I also want to go back to section 4 of this July 20 letter from Mr. Hardy and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, a section called "Disease Prevention, Control and Monitoring." It says:

"OCA, OVA, OSMA and the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-Operative have recently embarked upon a project to identify the biosecurity gaps along the supply chain of each commodity, from farm to retail. Only once these gaps are identified will these industries be able to move forward with implementation. We request that any biosecurity standards are determined by the commodity groups in conjunction with government and other industry stakeholders. The standards should be science-based and consider the economic impact on the industry, and must not result in the industry becoming non-competitive when compared with other jurisdictions.

"OCA"—the cattlemen's association—"also believes that the legislation needs to facilitate access to farm veterinary services in underserved areas of the province, including financial support where necessary," and we've seen those requests come recently from parts of northern Ontario, where they don't have vets and they

have to fly in vets, and we've not seen a good response from the government on that front.

They also want the province to "have an adequate veterinary disease surveillance network ... so that producers have access to pharmaceuticals for animal health. OCA initiated a meeting of stakeholders in February" of this year "to discuss the regional large animal veterinary shortage, with financial support from OMAFRA." They didn't get it too much for the vets, but they got a bit of money to have a meeting.

They are calling upon the government to deal with some of these issues that are not dealt with and that they thought would be dealt with when this legislation was being talked about and drafted.

I also wanted to just put on the record, because I told them I would, some comments from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in a letter dated July 17, 2009, from Bette Jean Crews, the president. Under a section called "Mandatory Reporting," which deals with red tape, she writes:

"The OFA recognizes that immediate reporting of certain animal health hazards is a crucial first step to organizing a response to an emergency and minimizing the negative impacts to the agricultural sector.

"Producers, however, are already subject to considerable administrative and reporting responsibilities. These administrative responsibilities impose considerable costs that are not necessarily reflected in the price received by the producer. As such, any reporting may be seen as a potential and significant burden.

"The OFA strongly recommends that the ministry establish a mechanism for mandatory reporting that does not invoke significant additional costs and does not contribute to further burden. To do so, a comprehensive mechanism for compensation should be developed and readily available."

Again, you're going down a road with this legislation with no assurances that costs are going to be covered or recoverable. As another one of the livestock groups has said, "We're going to do all this for the public good, and we don't mind doing it, but we're not going to get paid for it. The public isn't going to be paying us in an increase at the wholesale level to help compensate us for all this new red tape and new costs that will have to be put in place for reporting and surveillance and removal of dead animals."

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Going on with the OFA letter, "Costs in need of compensation would include all direct costs (destruction of animals) and indirect costs such as the implicit costs of quarantine, testing, animal disposal and clean-up of facilities." How can they trust you when you guys took away, not too long ago, the fee for the disposal of dead cattle? Farmers used to be compensated. For some unknown reason, because it's not a huge budget item in the overall scheme of things, you decided to pick on farmers. You've made no other significant cuts to deal with the deficit, but you took away—what do we call it, Ernie?—the animal disposal fee and the cattle disposal fee in most cases.

Speaker, I will get through this.

They don't have much faith in the Liberal government that they're going to be compensated for any of the new costs since some of their old regular costs you're no longer covering under a program that was in place for probably 75 to 100 years.

Anyway, "Rates for compensation must be realistic with regard to animal value and must include provisions to cover non-traditional livestock, such as farmed deer and elk.

"Response to animal health events," in the three minutes I have left: "The OFA agrees that a rapid response to an animal health emergency is essential to protecting human health, maintaining economic stability within the agricultural sector and ensuring consumer confidence in Ontario's food supplies.

"It is essential that any new legislation recognize the Office of the Chief Veterinarian of Ontario ... as a definitive authority during an animal health emergency. The OCVO must be given equal consideration, along with officials such as the emergency management coordinator and the Ontario medical officer of health, as part of any coordinated response to a disease outbreak or other animal health emergency."

Then, "Traceability: The OFA insists that farmers not be forced to bear the cost of regulations that result in a public benefit. Although we are not aware of a definitive cost-benefit analysis, we believe trace-back systems will provide more benefit to the consumer than the farmer. Costs associated with introducing traceability must have a mechanism to enable implementation costs to be transmitted down the market chain to be absorbed by the consumer or otherwise covered by government assistance programs.

"Traceability initiatives should be specific to and designed compatibly with individual commodity circumstances. They should move forward so as to not put Ontario animal producers at a competitive disadvantage relative to other national or international producers. Legislation must recognize only certain sectors will benefit from provincial-level traceability programs, while other sectors would benefit from being organized under national and perhaps international traceability programs. Traceability initiatives should be driven by demand and should be reflective of each commodity group's capacity to adopt best practices and standards.

"Should regulations governing traceability become mandatory, any proposed traceability systems must be flexible to accommodate existing programs and any programs currently being proposed by commodity groups."

I have much, much more that I wanted to put on the record for some of these great farm groups that we have, but I'm not only running out of voice; I'm running out of time.

We want to keep our farmers or at least bring them back to the days when we had sustainable farming and we had prosperous farmers. We have always said on environmental fronts that prosperous farmers will keep

farmland in production and prosperous farmers will look after their animals well and have the means to do so, so animal welfare—all of this depends on making sure that the government is there to support and not hinder our farming community.

From what I've read, and I've read quite a bit from agricultural groups with respect to this legislation, they're very uncertain about what the government's true intentions are. They're very worried that this is another Big Brother bill from the Liberal government of Ontario that deals with issues that are not a significant problem in the farming community and that the OSPCA and other policing agencies have the ability to deal with now.

I'd say that the farmers I've talked to—those who are still in business—are really worried about the costs and the red tape, and they don't feel that the government really understands what they're going through now and the new burdens that are being placed upon them, should this legislation pass.

So I would ask the government, as other honourable members have, to make sure that this gets a full hearing. I would hope you would come to the riding of Simcoe-Grey and not just go to Barrie or whatever, which you often do up my way. I'd like you to come to Collingwood or Creemore or Stayner or Alliston, the potato capital of Ontario, and actually hear from the people who will be forced to deal with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to just make a couple of comments to the member from Simcoe-Grey. He raises, I think, what is essential to part of this debate, and that is, there are those who may not be enamoured with this legislation, as far as food safety, but I think most members in this House would agree that we need to have some regime in order to toughen up food safety rules so that we don't have a repeat of what we've seen in the listeriosis cases of last year and some of the other cases that we've seen as of late in regard to the whole issue of food handling and the dangers that exist to the public when it comes to consuming some of the processed foods that we eat in our food chain, and obviously a big part of that is what happens on the farm. But I think the point that he makes is a good one, and that is, there's a whole lot of hurting going on in the farm community. There are a lot of people struggling to keep the farm gates open. There are family farms that have been in the families for two, three, four generations that are in danger of closing down, and those families are looking to this Legislature and this province for some assistance. They're not asking that we throw oodles of money out the back of the truck and throw money at the problem. They want the provincial government and this Legislature to address the very serious concerns that the farm community is facing. There is the whole issue of supply management that we need to make sure we deal with when it comes to some of the concerns around supply management that need to be strengthened. There's the whole issue of inputs, as far as costs that affect the operation of a farm, which people are

really worried about. There's the whole issue of what has happened to the market in many cases, especially in the hog industry. This government is not seen as responding to those crises, so a lot of people in the farm community are saying, "Okay, this is fine, but what about all the other stuff?" I think that's the point he was trying to make.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I would like to thank the member from Simcoe–Grey and the member from Timmins–James Bay for providing further insight into this. Once again, I am taking notes and trying to keep up with things.

A lot has been talked about. It would seem, from some of the comments that were made throughout this afternoon, that this government has done little for farmers, but I'd just like to remind people that since 2003, the government has provided over \$1.5 billion in farm income support programs; our government has committed more than \$50 million to its Pick Ontario Freshness strategy; we have increased the number of meat inspectors from 10 to 170. In 2007, the McGuinty government announced a three-year risk management program to support the grain and oilseed sector. Through this program, \$50 million has been provided to farmers to date. Since 2003, through the rural economic development program, 240 projects have been approved, for a total provincial commitment of over \$77.5 million. We signed a new 10-year agreement with the University of Guelph in the spring of 2008 to provide \$300 million over the next five years to help it continue its top-notch agri-food and rural research development programs.

We talked about consultation, and comments have been made this afternoon that this has been rushed through. Consultations on this were first begun in 2006, with consultations with the industry and looking for what the industry was looking for. We've done a lot of work on this. Further consultations came forward in the spring. I have a list of the agricultural organizations that were consulted: Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council, Association of Ontario Chicken Processors, Chicken Farmers of Ontario, Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals, Canadians for Ethical Treatment of Food Animals, Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, College of Veterinarians of Ontario. These are just a few of the organizations that we have spoken to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments?

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Mr. Randy Hillier: We see all these little letters trumped up here; I want to give you a personal story of a neighbour of mine. His name is Larry Robinson; unfortunately he passed away about a year or so ago. Larry Robinson and his wife have a poultry farm and they ship chicks across the country. I sat in with Larry one day. He was very annoyed and stressed about the mandatory reporting requirements for selling eggs and day-old chicks across this country. He told me that 50%

of his day is spent doing paperwork for some level of government or for some level of farm organization; 50% of every hour of every day on that farm was spent doing mandatory reporting. Is there a cost? Absolutely, there is a cost.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Give me a break, Randy.

Mr. Randy Hillier: There is a cost—listen, this is truthful. He had to list down the individual's name, where the individual lived, identification to prove where he lived—on and on it went with—between the CFIA, the Egg Farmers of Ontario, the borders, there are all kind of levels. Now what is the solution? "Let's add a little bit more." Add some more. Come on: 50%—one day, just one day. I'm sure there's somebody on the Liberal side who has some clarity of thought who can come up with a piece of legislation that is not going to add cost, time and money, and invade the privacy of people. Surely you can come up with some legislation that will be good.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I just want to commend the member from Simcoe–Grey for his presentation. Just from my comments to the previous speaker, I was happy to see that the member from Simcoe–Grey did look at the letters that came from stakeholders that pointed out the amendments that were required in order to make this bill acceptable to the stakeholders. So I thank him for doing that.

I also wanted to talk to the issue of the costs that the government side was purporting didn't exist. In the presentation that I made to this Legislature last week when this bill was introduced, it dealt with the section that my colleague was mentioning, about the issuing of permits and licences; I think that's the word for fees and charges to the farmers who have to apply for these things. It wasn't bad enough that the section is there for the licences and fees, but then in the warrantless entry section of the bill, it also gives the inspectors the ability to go into the premises just to inspect to make sure that proper licences are posted. If we look at other areas in our society where we have licences posted, when the government inspector comes in he usually comes in to check to make sure all the facilities are in order and then he issues a bill for the service having been provided. They inspect to make sure that all the licences are on the wall without a warrant. I think that's another area that really needs amendment. As we go to committee, we hope that the government would consider amendments to those parts of the bill that are not going to work and are going to create more red tape and cost to farmers that they do not need.

Again, I want to reiterate that the issue of food safety and the health and welfare of our animals and our people—there is nothing more important than that, but there is no need to add a whole host of new licence fees and inspection fees in order to make that work. I think we need to make sure that the job is done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Simcoe–Grey has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank the honourable members who did respond to my comments: Timmins–James Bay, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and Oxford. I just caution the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock: I know that, post-Walkerton and listeriosis, your intention, when you said you’ve gone from 10 meat inspectors to 120 or whatever it was, was good, but that’s not what farmers want to hear. That actually is a whole new burden. You put so many butchers and—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Closed up 100 abattoirs.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —abattoirs out of business, and you don’t even seem to apologize for it. There were four abattoirs in my riding. These were great family businesses, not only taking down the livestock and slaughtering it, but then making great cold cuts and the best sausages in the world and all that, all put out of business.

There’s a lot of that in this bill, where Big Brother is going to come in and not even warn you—you have warrantless entry—and go running through your barn. I

hope no government inspector gets shot being mistaken for somebody who has broken into the barn.

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, some of these barns have several million dollars worth of equipment in them, if you’re a dairy barn or something. It’s as bad as breaking into your house for some of these farmers.

The member for Oxford is absolutely right. Again, the Ontario Farm Animal Council—I recommend members read their letter of July 20, 2009, from John Maaskant, their chairman. He says very clearly that the proposed legislation oversteps its mandate. Again, they thought they were getting a traceability system. You’re bringing in a whole animal welfare act that duplicates both federal initiatives and OSPCA initiatives.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 6 of the clock, the House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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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	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
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Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Yasir Naqvi, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
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Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
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Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
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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

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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

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spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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