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Monday 2 November 2009

Lundi 2 novembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 November 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 novembre 2009

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm pleased to introduce three guests. They are the relatives of page Elliott Brand, who is acting as a captain today. His father, Sebastian Brand, is here; his grandfather Peter Brand is here; his grandmother Nelly Brand is here; and also, the grandparents from the other side: Charlie Ireton, grandfather; Dorothy Ireton, grandmother; and also, aunt Mary Ireton is here. I want to welcome them to the Legislature.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome to the House today Mrs. Esther Webster, who is the mother of page Jessica Webster from the great riding of Whitby–Oshawa.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce Juan Vasquez, who works at Mount Sinai Hospital and is a member of SEIU.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome the students and teachers from St. Robert Catholic High School in Thornhill who are seated in the Speaker's gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

STANDING ORDERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On Tuesday, October 27, the member for Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Runciman, raised a point of order respecting an announcement made outside this House by the Premier. In doing so, the member brought to the House an issue that has arisen all too frequently over the years, that being the tendency of governments of the day to make announcements of significant public policy outside the Legislative Assembly.

The government House leader, Ms. Smith, responded to the point of order by saying that she was unclear about the announcement being referred to. I would say to the government House leader that I am not sure this should realistically have been the subject of confusion, given the scope and prominence of the Premier's announcement earlier that day.

In any event, the member for Leeds–Grenville rose again the next day to further clarify his point of order, making it clear that his specific complaint related to the

Premier's announcement on October 26, respecting further significant details of the government's previously announced plan to implement all-day kindergarten. I note that the Minister of Education felt these details important enough that she echoed the Premier's announcement last Thursday during ministerial statements.

The government House leader also responded, rather unconstructively, that there was a time when a previous government presented an entire budget off-site. The minister would do well to remind herself of the response to that event by the Speaker of the day.

As I intimated at the outset, nothing about this point of order is new. It is but the latest in a long litany of similar points of order raised over the years by members sincerely frustrated by the ongoing tendency of governments to make announcements outside of the Legislative Assembly in advance of, or instead of, informing the House.

I and my predecessors have repeatedly conveyed our deep concern about how these types of extra-parliamentary announcements erode the stature of Parliament. Speakers have repeatedly implored governments to consider the impact of this erosion and how it damages the reputation of the foundation institution of this province. These pleas go repeatedly unheard and unheeded.

The point of order raised by the member for Leeds–Grenville has merit. In an ideal world where the legitimate and historic role of the Legislative Assembly, and specifically of the loyal opposition, were given first consideration, I expect that what a previous Speaker referred to as these types of “administrative discourtesies” would not arise.

However, Speakers have consistently conceded that they possess no authority to compel ministers to first make their announcement in the Legislative Assembly. I am in no different position today than my predecessors. Earlier, I suggested the government House leader should consider the then Speaker's 2003 response to the so-called Magna budget. I might also suggest the member for Leeds–Grenville likewise consider the response of the House to the Speaker's finding of a prima facie case of contempt of the Legislature. Quite simply, the House did not agree. The House or, more precisely, a majority of the members, defeated a motion that was eloquent in its simplicity—being the proposition that the House ought to be the first in line to receive an announcement as significant as the budget. What could be more relevant to the member's point of order? But the precedent set by the House disagreeing with this certainly leaves the Speaker with little authority, beyond moral suasion, to require anything different.

Though in no position to do anything about it, like my predecessors, I am sympathetic to the grievance these types of activities raise. Nothing about this is new, and similar complaints have risen from all three parties in this House over the years as their roles have changed from government to opposition. The Speaker can only suggest that it falls to the players to heal this syndrome of casual diminishments of the legitimate and key role of the opposition and of this House. In reality, only the government of the day is in a position to lead change on this.

I believe that a strong opposition makes for a strong government. Holding the executive to account is central to our system of government, but this cannot fully take place when the ability to respond to and criticize announcements of government policy is not available because the announcement did not occur during statements by the ministry and responses. Once again, I ask those in positions of influence to seriously consider the legitimate and rightful role of the opposition parties in our parliamentary system.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): In a similar vein, on Wednesday, October 28, the member for Oshawa, Mr. Ouellette, raised a point of order respecting the content of an answer by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to a question in oral questions. The member from Oshawa alleged, as he has on past occasions, that the question-and-answer sequence amounted to a set-up for an announcement of government policy without the opposition parties being afforded the right to reply to such an announcement, as would be the case during statements by the ministry and responses. I took the point of order under advisement, and having reviewed the Hansard of the exchange in question, I am now ready to rule.

In receiving this matter, I also looked at previous rulings and found that one I made on December 13, 2007, is particularly on point. On that point of order, also raised by the member for Oshawa, I ruled that while the Speaker is not in a position to make judgment on answers in order to ascertain whether the contents constitute announcements of new public policy, I'm nevertheless in agreement with the member that such announcements should be made during ministerial statements and not during question period.

I can say that regarding last Wednesday's question period, the matter is a little more definite. In replying both to the main question and the supplementary, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities quite specifically used the opportunities to make announcements regarding his ministry's response to certain problems with a private career college.

The member for Oshawa has a valid point of order and was correct that this is an improper use of question period. There's ample precedent upholding a prohibition against using question period to make announcements of government policy. The proper proceeding for this to occur is during statements by ministries and responses.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Health—and first let me say, on behalf of the PC Party, we thank the nurses, doctors and health professionals for their dedication and hard work under extraordinary pressure in administering the H1N1 flu vaccine. I know my colleague the minister feels the same way. And thank you to families, who are enduring very long wait times, for their patience and perseverance.

Minister, if I could, by way of update, how many people in Ontario have received the H1N1 flu vaccine to date?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to echo what the Leader of the Opposition has said. There are many, many people across this province who are working very, very hard under very challenging circumstances to get as many people immunized as quickly as possible.

We have, to date, received 2.2 million doses of the vaccine. At this point, I cannot tell you how many people have actually been vaccinated, but what I can tell you is that our goal is that, by the end of this week, we will have administered the full 2.1 million doses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: With due respect to the minister, I think it is a very fair expectation that Ontario families would know and MPPs would know how many vaccines have been distributed to date. We understand that 2.2 million have been sent to the province of Ontario, but how many pregnant women, how many children, how many vulnerable people have actually received that inoculation to date?

Last Thursday, my deputy leader and health critic, Christine Elliott, called on the government to keep clinics open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. H1N1 does not work 9-to-5 hours and neither should we.

I ask the minister again: How many people have actually been inoculated, and what's your goal for this week in inoculations for vulnerable people?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me be very, very clear: We have distributed 2.1 million doses of the vaccine to public health units, to doctors' offices, to family health teams, to community health centres, so we are determined to get the vaccine into people as quickly as we possibly can. This is a very challenging process.

As I said earlier, our goal is, by the end of this week, to have the 2.1 million doses that we have in hand in the arms of those high-priority groups.

We heard last week that the supply that we will be receiving from the federal government this week is significantly lower than we had expected, so we are devising the strategy to move forward from that point.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I would expect, quite frankly, that at the end of each and every day, the minister would have an update on how many pregnant women, children and vulnerable Ontario residents have had their shot. We understand you have 2.2 million shots, but how many are actually getting into arms in the province of Ontario?

We've brought forward a number of suggestions to make sure the supply we have gets to people when they need it instead of these sad, sorry sights of pregnant women and children waiting out in the rain for hours and hours and then finding, when they get to the door, that the clinic has closed.

I ask the minister again, for that supply that she says she has distributed: Why don't you open those clinics 24 hours a day and bring in retired nurses and doctors to help make sure more vulnerable Ontarians get those shots immediately?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that everyone in this House is committed to the idea that we get the vaccine out and into the arms of Ontarians as quickly as possible. That is why we are actually doubling the number of clinics across the province. We are extending the hours of clinics. Every public health unit has a strategy to get the vaccines into the arms of people as quickly as possible. It is a big job.

We will be getting the report, but I can tell you right now that my priority is to get the shots in the arms, not to do the paperwork and the administrative work that the member opposite is recommending.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Health: One would expect that you would know, as the Minister of Health, how many vaccines have actually gone into the arms of vulnerable Ontarians—pregnant women and children. I worry, Minister, that this process has gone dangerously off the rails. We need you and the Premier to step up to the plate and show leadership so we don't have those long lines of pregnant women and children waiting for hours in the rain.

Minister, I want to call your attention as well to a very disturbing headline in the Kingston Whig-Standard. It says, "Flu Clinic Going Ahead for Inmates, But No Plan in Place for Guards." Minister, why are inmates being inoculated while pregnant women and children have to wait?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will be very clear about this: No one was happy to see what we all saw on the news last week, which was lineups of people standing in the rain. That is why we are moving to double the number of clinics in the city of Toronto; they have 10 clinics open today. As I said, we're really focusing on our family doctors to get the vaccines out to those who are in those highest priority groups.

I am going to ask the people across the province to respect the priority groups. There are some people in this

province who are at much higher risk of complications due to H1N1. We are determined to focus on those priority groups, and in the supplementary, I will review what those priority groups are.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, with due respect to the minister, I hardly think that Ontario prisoners should be a priority group in the province of Ontario when pregnant women and children are lining up for hours and hours on end. To see a young father arrive at 4 a.m. to save a spot for his pregnant wife and kid, that's wrong. That's wrong in Ontario in 2009. I cannot believe this government would contemplate inoculating prisoners with the H1N1 vaccine while pregnant women and children are waiting in line.

Minister, why is it you're putting clinics into prisons instead of workplaces and schools where they could help vulnerable people in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The groups that we are focused on this week are the priority groups, and I do urge you to listen carefully. Our health care workers—we need our health care workers healthy to respond to this; our health care workers are a priority group. Pregnant women are a priority group. Healthy children between the ages of six months and up to but not including five years of age are a priority group. Household contacts of people who can't be immunized, for example, parents of small babies under six months old, should be immunized this week; also people in remote and isolated communities and anyone under the age of 65 who has a chronic condition. There are prisoners who fall into that priority group, and they are being immunized, as well they should be.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I guess we have a difference of opinion. I do not believe that prisoners in our system today should be a priority group while pregnant women and children are waiting in line for hours and hours on end. I guess—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Only in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario would prisoners be moved to the front of the line while pregnant women and children wait in the rain for hours. Nurses have not been able to get their shots. EMTs have not been able to get their shots. Doctors have not been able to get their shots. Pregnant women and children waited for hours without getting their shots.

I ask the minister once again: What planet is she on where she would prioritize inoculating prisoners while vulnerable patients, front-line workers and even the jail guards cannot get access to their shots?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that the Leader of the Opposition should actually speak to his critic. His critic has said very clearly that we need to listen to our health care experts. We need to rely on those people to do their job.

Now, I understand that some people want to play politics with a pandemic; I am not one of those people. I am determined to get the priority groups inoculated as soon as possible, and that includes healthy people under age 65 with a chronic underlying condition.

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

1050

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to start by saying that New Democrats want to express their appreciation to those health care providers who are stretched to the limit during this crisis as well as to all those people who are extremely frustrated and are doing their best to be patient during this time, because at vaccination clinics around the province confusion and chaos reigns.

This past weekend, parents worried about their children's health—

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Sorry. It's to the Premier, Speaker.

This past weekend, parents worried about their children's health. They were left standing for hours in the rain. The Toronto Star wrote, "Queen's Park has no excuse for the seeming disorganization of the H1N1 vaccination program within Ontario." The government has had months and months to get ready. Why is it so unprepared?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak to a very important issue. The Minister of Health and I have just come from a meeting with our chief medical officer of health, Dr. King. One of the things that we asked a great deal about, of course, is the improvement that we would expect to see this week based on what occurred last week. There were some tremendous successes in some parts of the province, but in others, particularly in Toronto, families were left waiting in line for simply too long a period of time.

We have now learned we're going to go from 50 clinics that were open last week to 100. Here in the city of Toronto, we'll go from two to 10. This week there will be 2,000 doctors' offices and clinics, all told, available. Our intention is to administer 2.1 million doses by this end of this week. I am confident that we have taken a major leap forward in ensuring that we have more people available on the ground delivering these vaccines at a much faster rate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week, Ontario's chief medical officer of health was asked whether clinics would be open to the general public this week and she said, "We will start adding other groups as supply permits ... it's going to be very vaccine-supply dependent." This is the Ontario chief medical officer of health. But the minister's staff, on the other hand, contradicted her and insisted that the clinics would be open to all Ontarians today. My question is this: Is this the kind of clear communication that was called for in the wake of SARS?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I believe that we've been very clear, and I would enlist my colleagues opposite in both opposition parties in this particular cause. We have to place a great deal of reliance on Canada's public health experts and the very best advice that we're getting from them is that it's really important that we proceed to deliver the vaccine to those who are in these high-priority groups because they are simply the most at risk of serious harm. We're going to proceed to deliver the vaccine to those people in the high-priority groups. As soon as we have completed that work, we're going to move along to the rest of the Ontario population, certainly to all those who are seeking to avail themselves of the vaccine. I think we've been very clear from the outset that our shared responsibility is to deliver the vaccine first and foremost to those who find themselves in these high-priority groups.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that parents across Ontario, whether they're waiting for hours at a clinic or waiting at home, just want to keep their children safe. The message should have been clear and it should have been simple. Instead, it seems to change by the day, if not the hour. The SARS expert panel understood the need for a current and transparent communications strategy. Given what we should have learned, why does this government seem to be flying by the seat of its pants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think, in fairness, all provincial public health administrations find themselves somewhat beholden, obviously, to our supplier, which is obtained through the federal government. We just learned at the end of last week—and I know that the Minister of Health contacted my honourable colleague in the NDP as well as my honourable colleague in the Conservative Party to bring them up to date in terms of the dramatic reduction we were informed we would receive by way of supply of vaccine. We've got to make adjustments accordingly.

But what we have asked Dr. King to do is to proceed as quickly as she possibly can to get those vaccines out of our fridges and into the arms of Ontarians. I have assured her that if there's anything she requires in addition, either in terms of finances or additional support of any kind, our government stands four-square behind her and will do whatever is needed to ensure that we deliver this vaccine at the earliest possible opportunity to as many Ontarians as possible.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is back to the Premier. While most families waited in the rain for hours, hoping to vaccinate their children, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario a privileged few got to buy their way to the front of the line. How did a private, for-profit health clinic access vaccine for its elite members while families were forced to wait?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the Minister of Health has indicated that this is a matter that we will

make the subject of a review. But I can say that Toronto Public Health, this time around, in the face of this particular flu, as it has in previous flu seasons, has enlisted the support of Medcan. Toronto Public Health has made that decision in the past; they've made it once again. We don't intend to insinuate ourselves into that right now, because Medcan has undertaken to deliver this vaccine to anybody in a priority group who shows up, whether they are a member of that organization or not. On that understanding, I think the appropriate thing to do is to enable them to continue to deliver that vaccine. But as the Minister of Health has said, we will undertake to review this at the appropriate time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Medcan is one of several private clinics that offer medical care at a hefty fee. In this case, people who could afford to pay \$2,300 for a Medcan membership could get vaccinated on Friday, while those who can't afford it were being turned away at public clinics. Today we phoned the exclusive Cleveland Clinic, and they said that they are hoping to be offering the vaccines by the end of the week.

How many other private clinics are offering people a chance to buy their way to the front of the line?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think the appropriate thing for us to do in the circumstances is not to second-guess the decision made by Toronto Public Health. What we will do is undertake to conduct a review later.

What we have received—in fact, what Dr. McKeown at Toronto Public Health has received—is an assurance that this vaccine will now be made available to all people in priority groups.

I'm not really sure what my honourable colleague is trying to get at, at this point in time. Again, we will conduct a review. But for now the plan is to enlist as many people as we possibly can—experts on the front lines of health care—to deliver to our priority groups as quickly as we can. Medcan happens to be one of those groups at this time. Having said that, we will review this policy going forward.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think the appropriate thing at this time is for the government of Ontario to tell Ontarians that they're committed to a universal public health care system in this province. That's what is appropriate. Instead, worried parents are told that they need to vaccinate their kids, and when they try to do that, they find that they have to wait for hours and even days. Now they learn that some people who have the money at their disposal can buy their way through the process. Is that what \$42 billion in health care buys Ontarians: access for the rich and long lines for everyone else?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think what my colleague is suggesting is that anybody in a priority group who is going to show up at Medcan should be turned away.

I think we should take advantage of as many pathways as we can get our hands on when it comes to delivering

the vaccine to as many as we can, as quickly as we can. That's what is happening right now in the province of Ontario. That's why we're going from 50 to 100 clinics. Here within the city of Toronto, we're going from two to 10. We're going to avail ourselves now of 2,000 delivery sites—doctors' offices, clinics and hospitals—and 2.1 million vaccines will be delivered and administered by the end of this week.

There are a total of 3.4 million in the priority group. We want to get our hands on as much of the vaccine as we can, through the federal government, as quickly as we can. We're going to do everything that we can, working with all of our public health officials in the most co-operative way possible, to get vaccine into the arms of as many Ontarians as we can, as quickly as possible.

1100

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. There are 163 emergency rooms in Ontario. According to a CTV report on October 28, ER visits have already begun to increase. Patients worried about the flu are crowding children's hospitals. Patient volumes have doubled at Sick Kids and at Ottawa's Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Minister, will you issue a call to all trained medical personnel, including available general practitioners, to assist ER triage nurses in dealing with the surge that is expected?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Certainly the anxiety of parents in particular, but also of people in general, about H1N1 is very high, and I understand that. I'm a mom, I'm a grandma, and I understand that parents care about what's happening to their kids.

There are many things that parents can do if they are concerned. We are urging people to go to our website, ontario.ca/flu. We have put a special self-assessment test on that website that will help alleviate some of the pressures on our emergency rooms. We are starting to see that people are using that tool, and they are receiving advice about whether they should seek further attention or what they should do. We also have really ramped up our resources at Telehealth. So we're doing what we can to take the pressure off the emergency rooms. I will continue in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Existing triage tools are clearly not adequate. Telehealth has already buckled under the significant pressure placed on it by taking up to 13,000 calls a day, and frankly, going to a website, if you have a child with an existing high fever, is not going to work. You need to make sure that your child can be seen, and you can't leave it to chance and a website tool.

Minister, why haven't you identified enough volunteers to assist triage nurses, administration staff, ambulatory staff and intake support to ensure that the families who come and need help can get it immediately?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Certainly the demand on our hospitals is something that we took a lot of care of in

preparation for this pandemic that—you're right—we knew was coming. That's why we have the resources in the hospitals. We have more ventilators.

We're actually finding that the demand on our emergency rooms is no greater than what we would expect in a normal flu season. We are dealing with it. The hospitals, the LHINs are working very hard, and we're there to make sure that the hospitals have the resources they need.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Juan Vasquez was in the gallery two weeks ago when I asked the Premier about cuts at Mount Sinai Hospital's housekeeping services. Juan is a front-line worker in housekeeping at that hospital. He was sounding the alarm that his hospital was failing in the fight against infections and was not prepared for H1N1 after cutting 14 housekeeping staff. Lo and behold, less than two weeks later, Juan is back in the gallery after Mount Sinai was the first hospital to report an H1N1 outbreak.

My question is simple: Minister, can you reassure Juan that hospitals are prepared for H1N1?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to infection control in hospitals, this is clearly an issue that has been a very high priority for our government. In fact, we now publicly post on our website infection rates for a number of different infections in each hospital so that the focus really is on bringing down those infection rates to zero, frankly. People can look on the website to see what the infection rates are. We are actually seeing tremendous progress when it comes to reducing those infection rates, and we're going to continue to do what needs to be done to keep our hospitals safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think that hospital administrators are going to fall off their chairs when they hear the minister say "Zero hospital-acquired infections," but I'll let them recover.

Last September, the Auditor General produced a report on hospital-acquired infections, detailing serious concerns with hospital housekeeping and cleanliness. Today, 61 of our 159 hospitals are in deficit and looking at cuts. Unfortunately, the first thing they look at, as with Mount Sinai, is housekeeping, the very people who you say in your H1N1 pamphlet keep commonly touched surfaces clean and disinfected. It's in the pamphlet, and it's what those people do.

Minister, the Auditor General reported that hospital cleanliness was a serious problem. My question is, why is this not a priority of this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would just completely reject the notion that it is not a priority of the government. Clearly, it's something that we are now posting on our website, hospital by hospital, the number of different infections. It's not just we who are interested but the public as well. People have a reasonable expectation that

when they go into a hospital, it is clean. It is a legitimate expectation. We're working as hard as we can to meet that expectation. Our goal is to get to zero. If the member opposite misunderstood that we're at zero, I apologize. We are working toward that.

I can tell you that hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Now all Ontario hospitals are required to report on that hand hygiene program. We're taking a leadership role. There's more to do, and we're committed to doing it.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. With the opening of the first H1N1 clinics last week, we all heard about the long lineups, people being turned away and the limited hours. I've heard from constituents that they're willing to wait a reasonable time, but they need some assurance that they will receive the vaccination when they do line up. They've also told me they want the clinics to be open longer so that they're more accessible to people who may not be able to make it during the workday. I was also disappointed to learn that Ontario will be receiving less vaccine than expected this week.

I'd like to know what the minister can tell us about the steps the government is taking to improve the delivery of the vaccine and how it will cope with the significantly smaller delivery this week.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me start by thanking Ontarians for their patience through the very difficult week that we had last week. We're working very hard to get the vaccine out across the province. It has been difficult and challenging work, and a lot of very fine people have worked very hard.

I've instructed Ontario's chief medical officer of health to use whatever resources are needed to ensure that everyone who wants to be vaccinated will get a shot as quickly as possible. That's why we're doubling the number of clinics offering the vaccine, we are extending the hours, and many doctors are now offering the vaccine in their offices. I would urge people to check with their family doctor to find out whether or not they can receive the vaccine in their office rather than standing at a public clinic.

I've also asked the medical officers of health to learn from each other, to speed up those lines and to let people know if they can expect a vaccine that day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: While there are clinics being hosted by public health and regional clinics, many Ontarians prefer to get their H1N1 shot through their primary care provider, their family physician, as you mentioned earlier. I've heard conflicting reports about whether family physicians will be administering H1N1 vaccines. Over the weekend, I heard about doctors' offices and some clinics ramping up their offer of vaccines to their patients, but I've also heard that some doctors feel that

the requirements for administering the vaccines may be preventing them from offering it.

Our primary care providers are the cornerstone of our system. They deal with patients day in and day out in our communities. It's essential that they're part of our vaccination program. Can the minister please explain how doctors will be involved in any steps our government is taking to make it easier for them to offer the vaccines?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We agree that doctors are an important part of the rollout of the vaccine. That's why we're offering the vaccine through public health clinics, community health centres and doctors' offices.

We heard from the physicians that we need to make it easier for the doctors to be involved, and that's why last week I signed an order to ensure that patients can get access to their doctor through a phone consultation. We've also reduced the paperwork burden on the physicians, and we've reduced the volume requirements so that more doctors can offer the vaccine.

I'm happy to report that there will be over 2,000 locations in community settings offering the flu shot, including doctors' offices and community health centres. In Toronto alone, 100,000 vaccines have been sent to hundreds of doctors. Doctors are a critical part of our plan to get the vaccine out. We'll continue to work with them to get this job done.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. A headline in a Toronto Star editorial this past weekend was "Liberal MPPs Cover Up." Even the Toronto Star's editors are questioning how the Premier could say he will take responsibility for the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle then use the Liberals' majority on public accounts to vote down calling Alan Hudson and Sarah Kramer.

Why won't the McGuinty Liberals stop using every dirty trick in the book and start taking responsibility by telling the whole story of who got rich and what rules were broken in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think our responsibility—all of us—is to give expression to the public interest. The question, of course, is, what does the eHealth matter demand when it comes to giving expression to the public health interest? I think what it demanded was that we bring in the Provincial Auditor—we did that. The auditor did a great job. He came up with some specific recommendations, and he was nothing short of his usual thoroughness. We accept all of his findings. We will adopt every single one of his recommendations.

I think that's what Ontarians want us to do: They want us to move forward as quickly as we can and put in place an electronic health record for all Ontario families and all patients. That's what we're devoted to doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters) Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The Premier must have been kidding on Saturday when he told a roomful of Liberal

delegates that no one is shying away from talking about this eHealth scandal. The McGuinty Liberals have blocked a public inquiry, blocked the public agencies from calling Hudson and Kramer this summer, and have now blocked public accounts from hearing them. The Premier must be living in a bubble. Will he stop shying away from the eHealth scandal and call a public inquiry finally?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: What my honourable colleague and her party are having—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague and her party are having difficulty accepting the findings of the Provincial Auditor. Again, they don't like to hear this, but it's important to repeat it because they have yet to accept it. The auditor said, "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work." He went on to say, "We saw no evidence of fraud or criminal activity here."

Notwithstanding those very specific, explicit and incontrovertible findings—my colleagues opposite, of course, prefer to indulge in political gamesmanship—we choose instead to move ahead with electronic health records for Ontarians. That's where we'll remain focused in terms of our effort.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. We're hearing concerns from workers across the province that some employers are penalizing them for taking time off either to get the flu shot or to stay home and recuperate from the flu.

Given the H1N1 pandemic, why hasn't the Minister of Labour instructed employers to loosen their rules so that employees can get the flu shot or stay home when they're sick without financial penalty?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question. Across Ontario, we would hope that employers do recognize the need to get the flu shot and to provide that ability to their employees. Also, employees are covered under the Employment Standards Act across Ontario. If there are any concerns around employment standards, around their protections, they can always call the Ministry of Labour. Our employment standards officers are there to investigate any of these concerns that those employees would provide to the Ministry of Labour.

But again, we ask that employers understand that families, those that are at most risk—as we've heard the Minister of Health speak to those that are at most risk—should get out and get the shot. That's why we're encouraging employers to help with that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: What we're asking for is a simple directive from the Ministry of Labour, and what we're

hearing is that we're getting nothing. Staying away from work when you're sick or taking time to get the flu shot should be a public health priority, but some workers are being forced—and this is a fact—to report to work even when they're sick. Why won't the Minister of Labour take action to stop employers from punishing workers for trying to do the right thing and staying healthy?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I believe that all employers across Ontario understand how important it is, especially for those that are in the high-priority groups, the high-risk groups, to get the H1N1 shot. We are working with employers, with employees, with all Ontario workers and all Ontarians to encourage those who are at high risk to get out and get the shot. This government also, through our Employment Standards Act, has brought in many protections for employees: the ability for employees to take leave while protected for emergency purposes.

We will continue to work with all our hard-working Ontarians so that they know that they are protected and that their health also is being taken care of.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Daily, my office is receiving requests for more information on the Serco/United Steelworkers labour dispute. Not only is this affecting those who wish to test for their first licence, but it is also affecting a number of other individuals and groups.

I understand that the Minister of Transportation has taken what steps he can to reduce the impact on Ontarians. Many of my constituents appreciate the regulation extending the licences of those who require retesting. However, there are two particular groups in my riding who are especially concerned about the validity of their driving privileges: Snowbirds and long-haul truckers, who often must take deliveries and pickups from the United States, are nervous that their licences will expire while they are on vacation or working in the US.

Now that the winter is upon us, Ontario's snowbirds are about to make the trek south. I'm hoping that the Minister of Transportation can share with this House what specific steps will have been taken to help—

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've received inquiries of this kind from the member for Brampton West, the member for Leeds-Grenville, the critic for the opposition and many members of the House. We recognize the strike as an extreme inconvenience for the people of the province. That is why we put in place a temporary regulation to ensure drivers who require a test to renew their licence can continue driving.

I want to assure the House that the licences of both snowbirds and commercial drivers who require a test to renew an Ontario's driver's licence and who will be travelling outside of Ontario will remain valid for the duration of the strike. To make it easier for those travelling outside of Ontario, we've now updated our website to

include a printable letter from the registrar confirming the validity of their licences, with the appropriate contact information for police officers to check. Their licences will continue to be valid until July 1, 2010, based on feedback from the snowbirds' association, in order to allow the drivers to return to Ontario—

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

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Minister. That's very useful information that I'll be sharing with my constituents immediately.

I'd also like to share with this House some of the other concerns I've heard. Another group that I hear from regularly about the Serco/United Steelworkers labour disruption is those who work at or run the driving schools. Because there are not any drive tests taking place, there is less of a need for driver training, which in turn means that there is less of a need for driving instructors and driving schools. This strike has had a negative impact on the driving school industry. With business down, job losses are inevitable and my constituents are asking me if there's anything we can do to help. I'm asking if the Minister of Transportation can please update the House on where Serco and the United Steelworkers are in their negotiations.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, before I do that I want to tell the member that we're also continuing to remind other Canadian and US jurisdictions of the strike and that Ontario's driver's licences have been extended with an original notice to Canadian and US authorities on August 24. A second notice was sent to remind these authorities of the extension of driver's licences on October 23.

There's no question that this strike affects many people. I understand that both parties are working with a mediator from the Ministry of Labour to reach an agreement. I'm hopeful Serco and the United Steelworkers will reach a settlement suitable to both parties and that service will resume shortly.

As the member from Brampton West knows, there is an established collective bargaining relationship between the parties in place. The government does respect that relationship. I can say that for more information and regular updates, we encourage the public to visit the DriveTest website and the MTO website. We're working hard to resolve this, along with the Minister of Labour, in the province of Ontario. We urge the two sides to get together—

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

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TOXICS REDUCTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: A question to the Minister of the Environment: You have just passed the Toxics Reduction Act, and today marks the end of public input into the list of substances your ministry considers toxic, substances you will require industry and business to not only report but also reduce. Can you explain to this House why on

earth you're forcing the food and the feed industry to report as toxic products things like Ontario-grown wheat, soybeans, as well as malted barley, chocolate, sugar and other baking ingredients? These products aren't toxic. Why would you do this, Minister?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, we are intent on taking all toxic materials, as much as possible, out of our environment. We want to become the leading jurisdiction so that the toxic materials do not contaminate our lands or our water supply. I would be more than pleased to meet with the member on these particular issues that he's talking about. I'm not familiar with the exact details as to why those particular materials would be excluded, but I'm quite sure that there's more to it than this member leads us to believe.

We believe that the toxic reduction law that we put forward, and the regulations that come under it, will be the best in Canada and will be the best from a health viewpoint as far as the people of Ontario are concerned. We think that it's the right way to go, and I'd be more than pleased to meet with the member on this particular issue that he mentions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Minister, this is not the first time this has been raised in the House, and you didn't even consider what impact this kind of stigmatization would have on jobs in the food industry and the feed industry and, by extension, agriculture. What do they tell consumers who learn that the products containing common food-based ingredients are, in the eyes of this government, stigmatized as toxic? This will be a public relations nightmare for the industry.

Minister, you've got a note now. Will you admit you've made a mistake? Will you exempt the feed and food production companies from reporting as toxic the most basic of food ingredients? They aren't toxic.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's my understanding—and the list is extensive because we want to get toxic materials out of our environment; that's for everyone's benefit—that there are no food ingredients on the list. So I don't know exactly what this member is talking about.

I would much rather have a situation where he supports the concept and the notion and a law that will really make Ontario a leader in removing toxics from our environment. That's what this is all about, and we are not including any food ingredients on the draft list.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. A provincially appointed supervisor is cutting staff at Cambridge Memorial Hospital in an attempt to balance the hospital's budget. Over time it is being reduced. Early retirement is being encouraged and empty positions are being left unfilled. With Ontario hospitals bursting at the seams due to the H1N1 outbreak, is now really the time to cut staff at Cambridge Memorial Hospital?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me say that our goal is to ensure that the people of Cambridge and, in fact, the whole province continue to receive high-quality health care and to ensure the long-term financial stability of the hospital.

I want to personally assure them that the quality and access of their health care will not be affected. I can tell you that our investments at Cambridge Memorial Hospital have been significant. They've had a more than \$11-million increase in their base funding since 2003-04—that's a 16% increase. In addition, they have received more than \$14 million to reduce wait times. That's over 6,000 more surgeries at Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Cambridge Memorial Hospital is in a very difficult position. It's being forced to cut \$5 million from its budget. But Cambridge is not alone, unfortunately. Four out of every 10 Ontario hospitals are in the very same dire situation: forced to cut staff and services to balance their budgets.

How are these hospitals supposed to provide the care Ontarians need when this government is forcing them to gut their budgets by a further \$200 million next year?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important to think that 60% of the hospitals have in fact balanced their budgets. The others are working hard to do that.

We have increased hospital funding significantly—\$11 billion more going into hospitals than when we took office. That's a 42% increase. That is not a sustainable increase. It is very important that hospitals make the decisions they must make to live within their budgets. We will continue to invest more in hospitals, but we do expect hospitals to live within their budgets.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Education. On October 22, the Minister of Finance's fall economic statement outlined the challenges Ontario is facing due to the global economic recession. My constituents of Mississauga South are concerned about the situation and the impact it may have on their families.

Parents I talk to realize more than ever the importance of teaching children how to be smart about finances. Many are teaching their children the importance of managing personal finances, and some businesses have also created education programs for the benefit of our students, but I suggest that it would benefit the almost one million students in our province's publicly funded education system if they also learned these critical thinking and decision-making skills through our elementary and secondary schools.

Minister, can you tell this House what this government is doing to prepare our young people to take on and understand the complexities of the 21st-century global economy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for Mississauga South for his question and for raising this issue.

We've built a number of opportunities into several areas of our curriculum to help foster an understanding of financial and economic literacy. Starting in grade 1, students learn about coins and money. They're expected to know things like how to identify and know the amounts of different coins, and subtract and add amounts. By grade 8, they are working on more complex problems, calculating the cost of certain items. In high school, there are a lot of courses that explicitly support the development of money management and financial literacy skills, looking at compound interest, studying budgets and simple interest, annuities, mortgages, earnings, paying taxes, purchasing and saving, investing and borrowing, and making personal financial decisions.

It's not just in mathematics courses that students learn about financial literacy. In grade 9 or grade 10, in the individual and family living course, for example, students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of how to make sound decisions and how to make those judgments in a family context.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm glad to hear that the curriculum incorporates some financial literacy components. However, I dare say that not enough is being done to teach kids about financial basics. There's a definite need for greater financial literacy education.

Both the federal government and the government of Manitoba have taken steps towards this goal. Last June, the federal government announced a task force on financial literacy. Manitoba has also been working on this since 2007.

On September 23, I introduced a motion in this House calling for your ministry to help ensure our students are prepared for the global economy by taking steps to include financial literacy in our elementary and secondary school curriculum. The motion has since received unanimous support in the House, and I thank all members for their support. Will the minister commit to responding to the motion of this House and integrate a more comprehensive study of financial literacy in our elementary and secondary school curriculum?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member, I think, has reminded us all why, in these challenging economic times particularly, a strong and relevant publicly funded education system is important as a cornerstone of economic achievement.

I'm pleased to tell him and the members of the House that we already have a partnership with the Investor Education Fund to promote financial literacy in our elementary and secondary schools. Based on that partnership, we'll convene a working group, chaired by my parliamentary assistant, the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, in order to get the best possible advice on financial literacy. This partnership stems from the ongoing work of organizations like the Investor Education Fund and will be supported with funding from the Ontario Securities Commission under the umbrella of the Ministry of Finance. The Ontario Securities Commission is using money from

business fines to help our schools promote financial literacy.

I agree with the member from Mississauga South that preparing our students for the challenges of the 21st-century global economy is one of the most important things we can do, and thank you for raising the issue.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. You're aware of the fatalities and critical injuries that have occurred as a result of fires in retirement homes over the past 18 months: Cavendish Manor in Niagara, Rowanwood in Huntsville and Muskoka Heights in Orillia, where four seniors tragically died. All these homes were built prior to 1998.

Minister, do you support a program that would make it mandatory for retirement homes built pre-1998 to have sprinkler systems installed, and, if so, when can we expect to see legislation?

1130

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It is a very, very important question. That's why I asked the Office of the Fire Marshal to do a comprehensive study with regard to the use of sprinklers. We will look at the results of that study and we will weigh the results of that study with the realities that we have at our disposal today and, obviously, always ensure that we do everything in our power to ensure that everyone in Ontario is as safe as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This issue has been studied to death. It's about community safety and the safety of our seniors.

Fire chiefs and fire services from across the province are outraged with the lack of leadership from you and your ministry. Surely disadvantaged seniors living in retirement homes deserve to have improved fire protection. Even your own colleague from York West put forward a private member's bill, Bill 214, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, with respect to sprinkler retrofittings.

Minister, I ask you again, will you support our fire chiefs, our fire services, your own colleagues and our seniors and support a program to install mandatory sprinklers in retirement homes immediately?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I do take exception to some parts of the member's question, obviously. There is nobody outraged in the fire service in the province of Ontario. Everybody is quite happy that this government invested \$30 million, an unprecedented investment never done by the Tories when they were the government, and certainly slashed by the NDP when they were the government.

We amended the Ontario building code to require sprinklers in all newly constructed residential buildings higher than three storeys. We amended the Ontario fire code to require working smoke alarms on every storey of a home. I have to tell you, we are listening to our partners

in community safety and we will continue to listen to our partners in community safety, because we understand it is a partnership, not a dictatorship.

TERMINATION AND SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. The minister will know that over the last couple of years, almost 2,000 forest sector workers across northwestern Ontario have been laid off by the Buchanan Group of Companies. Under the laws of Ontario, those workers are entitled to severance pay and termination pay. But under the McGuinty government, virtually none of those workers have received the severance pay and termination pay that they are entitled to under the laws of Ontario.

My question is this: You are the minister responsible for the forest sector. Has the McGuinty government done anything, anything at all, to ensure that these workers receive the severance pay and termination pay they're entitled to under the laws of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly I'm very, very conscious of the serious situation that's being faced in terms of the challenges that are happening up at Terrace Bay Pulp in particular. We are working closely with the company and certainly I have been working with the many workers who are in that situation. We are going to continue to work on the basis that the best possible solution, ultimately, will be if the company is able to get their operation back up and running.

We have been working with a number of people as well who were impacted by this. It's an issue that I'm very sensitive to as Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, but also, may I say, as the MPP for Thunder Bay–Superior North. We're going to continue to do what we can to see the best possible solution to the situation and continue to work with the workers, who are hopeful indeed that the operation will be back up and running.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: There's something strange about this, because while almost 2,000 workers have been denied the severance pay and termination pay they're entitled to under Ontario's laws, the Buchanan Group of Companies has done very well under the McGuinty Liberals: more than \$30 million for road building; \$22.5 million for the Buchanan company in Terrace Bay; a further \$4.8 million to Terrace Bay Pulp; \$26 million in deferred stumpage fees; \$600,000 for Long Lake Forest Products. In all, the McGuinty government has handed out \$80 million to the Buchanan Group of Companies.

My question is this: Did anybody—did you—call the Buchanan Group of Companies and say, "Some of this money should go to the workers to ensure that they're treated fairly"?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The fact is that we are working and continue to work closely with the Buchanan Group of Companies. The member from Kenora knows

very, very well that, indeed, this is a company that was one of the largest employers—up to 4,000 people employed in northern Ontario by the Buchanan company.

Indeed, when Neenah Paper shut down their operation in Terrace Bay Pulp, our government worked with Buchanan Forest Products in order to get the Terrace Bay Pulp operation back up and running, which was an extraordinarily positive thing for the people in Terrace Bay and Schreiber, which impacted on the sawmill operations as well.

There is no doubt there are extraordinary challenges faced by the forestry sector, certainly in northern Ontario. We want to continue to work to see the best possible result, which ultimately would be to see the Terrace Bay Pulp operation back up and running, which obviously would benefit the workers. Certainly that's what we're going to continue to try to do to find a positive solution to this very difficult situation.

TOURISM

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. There's no doubt that, this year, the economic downturn has had an impact on tourist operations throughout the province, and I've noticed it first-hand in the riding of Brant. In addition to the economic challenges, the tourism industry has also experienced other factors which have impacted both the province and particularly my riding. Fewer US travellers visited the province because of the economic challenges. Coupled with the fluctuating Canadian dollar and the implementation of passport requirements, it has been difficult.

Can the minister tell us in this House what the Ontario government is planning to do to help this vital industry in Ontario, and in particular the riding of Brant, due to this disaster that has happened in the tourism industry?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I want to thank the member from Brant. As he mentioned, this is a difficult year for tourism across the country and around the world and, of course, here in Ontario. Our government has recognized the significance of tourism to the economy, and we have taken every opportunity to support our tourism sector throughout the province.

I'd like to highlight just one example for the House today of a commitment that we made in the member's riding: the Brantford International Jazz Festival. It took place from September 19 to 20 and provided three stages, showcasing music such as jazz, big band swing, Afro-Cuban jazz, jazz fusion and experimental jazz, all in downtown Brantford.

I'm pleased that the McGuinty government invested \$22,500 to assist in the enhancing of this festival by booking internationally renowned performers, including one of my personal favourites, Canadian jazz singer phenomenon Holly Cole.

Supporting innovative and unique events like the Brantford International Jazz Festival helps bring cultural products to communities and ensures that visitors follow that product—

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

Mr. Dave Levac: The Brantford International Jazz Festival that the minister spoke about is one of the many festivals and events held in the riding of Brant each year. This event has become extremely successful in just a short time thanks to Frank and Nancy DiFelice, the central organizing committee, along with the army of volunteers—so much so that it more than doubled its attendance in 2008, and our statistics show that a very large number of those came from outside of Brant, outside of Ontario, and came actually, indeed, from the United States. It's a substantial tourism draw. It brings music lovers together from all over the province and the US, as I've said.

I have had an opportunity to attend other festivals and events, such as the International Villages Festival, the Bell City car show and the Firefighter Combat Challenge to name just a few. I can see how important these festivals are to our local economy.

Minister, can you comment specifically on how important the Brantford International Jazz Festival is—

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I think all members in this House recognize that festivals and events in their particular ridings are great economic drivers, attract a lot of people to their communities—put heads in beds, as we say in the industry—and ensure that we have a lot of economic activity in our various communities across the province.

As I've noted in this House before, tourists spent over \$22 billion in Ontario in 2007, and tourism is directly or indirectly responsible for about 300,000 jobs.

I'm proud of the Brantford International Jazz Festival, and I, too, want to congratulate the DiFelices and all of the organizers of the festival.

This year, attendance grew at the Brantford International Jazz Festival, from 8,000 in 2008 to—as reported in the Brantford Expositor—25,000 this year. That's an increase of over 200%. That's incredibly exciting.

I want to congratulate all of the organizers and thank all of those people who are attracting more tourists to the region and working very hard—

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

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, last week in my constituency office, I had a gentleman come in; he was 65 years old and a trucker whose job requires that he drive into the United States. He went on to explain to me that he has completed the medical, he has completed the written test, but he of course can't get the road test because of your lack of a plan to resolve that issue.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to you, to the minister, and to all people, that this is an issue where people are losing

their income because there's no plan to resolve this dispute. He's now facing the chance of being laid off. Being 65 years of age, he has no other option but to continue driving, and you have no plan.

In fact, what you said today is not correct. The US jurisdictions are not recognizing the extension, and it seems to me that you have nothing to offer this man except no job because of your lack of action. What are you going to do to help Mr. Kloos solve this problem?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know that it is made difficult by the fact that a number of years ago you signed a contract, your government did, with Serco, the Conservative government did, and it did not necessarily have in that contract the kinds of provisions which would have anticipated this eventuality. You know that the contract goes to the year 2013, your privatization of this particular system, and now we are the ones who have to deal with the situation as it is at the present time.

The Minister of Labour is doing his very best, and the two sides were together with a mediator on the weekend. We recognize that a collective agreement has to be signed; I know you wouldn't want us to favour one side or other in the middle of contract negotiations. What I indicated to the member for Brampton West today is a number of provisions we've put in place to assist those who are confronted with great difficulties as a result of this strike.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment concerning regulations for the food and feed industry under the Toxics Reduction Act. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Frank Klees: The McGuinty government's unwillingness to bring an end to the strike at its DriveTest offices, which is now in its 11th week, demonstrates that this government either doesn't understand the seriousness of the strike or simply doesn't care.

Over the past weeks, I've called on the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Labour to bring an end to this strike, which is causing increasing hardship to Ontarians, and all we've heard in response is rhetoric. We've seen no action.

In a desperate attempt to get the government's attention, the Truck Training Schools Association of Ontario

has planned a truck and bus convoy to a rally here at Queen's Park at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning. Up to 300 truck driver trainees and instructors will plead their case.

In a letter to the Premier, Gus Rahim, the president of the Truck Training Schools Association, said this, "Our programs are now virtually at a standstill, with fully trained students waiting to start on a new career path, employers desperate to fill vacancies and our own employees and staff facing massive layoffs."

The response from the Premier and this government has been a deafening silence. Hopefully, tomorrow's protest will help this government to understand the urgency of the situation and finally motivate them to act.

SIKH COMMUNITY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I rise today to join my Sikh friends to celebrate the birthdate of the founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak Dev Sahib Ji. Guru Nanak Dev Sahib Ji is the first of 10 Sikh gurus. Sikhs believe all subsequent gurus possess Guru Nanak's divinity and religious authority. This celebration usually falls in November, though the date varies from year to year according to the lunar Indian calendar.

Celebrations often last for three days and include the recitation of religious texts in the Gurdwaras, a procession of Sikhs singing hymns, and, of course, my favourite part, the serving of vegetarian food in the Langar Hall at the Gurdwara.

The Gurdwaras are decorated with flowers, flags and lights and are attended by Sikhs who join together for the festivities and eat special food like Karah Parshad, a warm, sweet food that has been blessed.

I'll be honoured this year to celebrate Gurburab with the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, or as we more commonly know it in Mississauga, the Dixie Gurdwara. This is an important date for our Sikh friends. To those Sikhs in western Mississauga, throughout Peel region and across Ontario, I say, "Gurburab di lakh lakh vadhai hove."

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm proud to rise today on behalf of the leader of the official opposition, Tim Hudak, and the Progressive Conservative caucus to pay tribute to hard-working Legion comrades who are organizing Remembrance Day services and events at cenotaphs and Royal Canadian Legions across Ontario and Canada.

In my riding, a Remembrance Day parade and service in Ayr will be hosted by the Galt Legion Branch 121 on Sunday, November 8. Under the guidance of President Charlie Rose, Branch 121 will also host another parade and wreath-laying ceremony at the Galt cenotaph on Remembrance Day, November 11.

In Hespeler, President Bill Steel and comrades of Legion Branch 272 will host a Remembrance Day banquet on Saturday, November 7. A wreath-laying ceremony will also be held at the Hespeler cenotaph on Remembrance Day.

At the Preston Legion Branch 126, President Peter Gates and comrades will participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at the King Street cenotaph on Remembrance Day.

We thank all Legion comrades in Canada, Ontario and my riding of Cambridge and North Dumfries who work so hard to ensure that those who made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of Canada are not forgotten.

THE SPEAKER

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about your initiative, the Speaker's initiative. I had the opportunity to attend with the Speaker this morning at East York Collegiate Institute in my riding. It was, I understand, one of 12 such events he has so far scheduled and spoken at.

To see the students actually come face to face with the Speaker, to see the questions—I think they all learned a lot; I know I certainly did. I was totally unaware that the three-cornered hat's history, its military usage and its rain-dispelling funnels were of such significance. He brought Queen's Park to that school. Where an education in political life is not always taught, to have someone of the Speaker's magnitude there was truly wonderful.

The students were interested and rapt throughout; in fact, we had to leave while there were, I'm sure, more questions, in order to get back for question period. They asked questions on crime, on the HST, on the salaries that members of the provincial Legislature get, on federal issues and even the role of the media and how the media portrays what is said and what is done around here. There were many discussions of political life, and I think more than a few of them are now interested in one day being members in this House or perhaps municipally, where they would not have been before.

Again, I commend the Speaker for his initiative. It is a truly wonderful thing, and I hope he finds the time to go throughout the province spreading this good word. I was even interested in his own East York roots.

ST. JOSEPH ISLAND PLOWMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I wish to bring to the attention of all members a celebration of rural agriculture, especially northern agriculture. Every year, agricultural fairs in Laird, Bruce Mines, Massey, Assiginack, Wikwemikong and Providence Bay reflect the rural roots of Algoma-Manitoulin. This year one event stands out: the 75th anniversary of the St. Joseph Island Plowmen's Association.

On August 22, plowmen from around St. Joseph Island and along the north shore from as far away as Massey convened on a field outside of Richards Landing. From horse teams to antique tractors, the competitors took to the land and the plowing began after a short bit of speechifying by local officials and organizers. Then it was off to the fields. A crowd of approximately 500

people joined the competitors and volunteers to enjoy a great day in celebration of this last remaining plowing match in Algoma.

On Saturday, October 24, the awards ceremony took place. My congratulations to all the winners and the organizing committee, and in particular, my coaches Perry Coulter and Donna Schell, for an amazing day and a true celebration of what is good, right and important in our rural communities.

SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Mr. John O'Toole: I stand today in the House to pay tribute to local heroes in many of our communities who have participated in some way. Scugog township inducted members to the Sports of Hall of Fame on October 22. The inductees include George Burnett, former NHL coach and champion coach in the OHL and the American Hockey League, who is still involved in hockey today.

Joining Coach Burnett among the 2009 inductees were: Dennis Johnston, a figure-skating champion and figure-skating coach, as well as a skating coach for the NHL. He was also a bronze medalist in the Canadian nationals; Wayne Venning, who was honoured in the "Builder" category for his leadership in softball as an umpire, manager and coach. Wayne is also a keen supporter of ringette, hockey and youth sports in general; the Port Perry Juvenile 'C' hockey team from 1959-60, captained by Doug McMillan. The 1959-60 Juvenile 'C's were the first Port Perry Minor Hockey Association team to win a provincial title.

These athletes and builders are not only champions in Scugog, they are among the elite in Canadian sports. It is my privilege to recognize them. These are people who are models in our communities for an active lifestyle in today's rather sedentary society.

AMIT CHAKMA

Mr. Khalil Ramal: On October 23, I had the pleasure of attending the installation ceremony for Western University's 10th president, Dr. Amit Chakma. He is a good scholar and leader, and I am proud to have him as the president of Ontario's best university. His goal is to make the University of Western Ontario amongst the top institutions in the world.

Dr. Chakma's story is one that Ontarians can take pride in. He was born in Bangladesh and he received his education in Africa and Canada. He worked hard here in Canada and he became an example for many people as a scholar and leader. His gift is astonishing, as many of his goals were achieved in his youth, as he is on the list of the top 40 professors under 40.

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The University of Western Ontario is already known for being a world-class institution. It's in the heart of London, and it is the epicentre for engineering, medicine and biology. There are still many strides to be made, and

Dr. Chakma is the ideal leader to take Western into the future. I am confident that Dr. Chakma and his team will make the University of Western Ontario outshine universities around the world and will continue to innovate and discover to help the people of Ontario, Canada and the world by their discoveries and by their innovations to serve humanity.

THANK-A-VET LUNCHEON

Mr. Dave Levac: It's with great honour I rise today and bring to the attention of the House an annual event held in the riding of Brant for over 20 years that will take place this coming Saturday. It's called the Thank-A-Vet Luncheon.

Since 1998, in its new present format, local veterans, spouses, widows and widowers from Brant, Brantford, Six Nations and New Credit have been invited as honoured guests to enjoy a delicious hot meal, greetings from various dignitaries of all levels, and the sights and sounds of their era. It is a time for them to share stories and renew friendships and lets us all say, in a small way, thank you.

On November 7, this luncheon sees over 675 guests being honoured by their community as a small way of expressing our gratitude for their sacrifices made in past wars and, indeed, the present ones.

I had the honour of chairing the committee from 1998 to 2004. It's hard work, and we say thank you to those who make this event very successful. This year's co-chairs, Heather Gaukel and Grant Philpott, and co-vice-chairs, Tracy Vanderwyk and Liz Ferraccioli, deserve kudos for making sure this event succeeds every year. I trust this year will be no different.

With the assistance and the participation of the private sector, public sector, students and volunteers, enough funds are raised to make this event free to those we cherish—our veterans.

The Thank-A-Vet Luncheon, to our knowledge, is the largest of its kind in Canada. We say to our veterans everywhere: Thank you for your courage. Thank you for your sacrifice. We will remember.

JACOB ZORZELLA

Mr. Mike Colle: Today I rise to bring attention to a remarkable athlete from my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence. His name is Jacob Zorzella, a proud lifelong resident of Lawrence Heights.

Jacob is a world-class triple jumper who entered competitive athletics just over a year and a half ago. Though his career has just started, Jacob has won a silver medal at the Canada Games, a gold medal at the Canadian Track and Field Championships and a gold medal at the junior nationals. Jacob is now on the road to competing in the 2012 Olympics in London, England, for Canada.

He will also be competing in upcoming international matches like the World Indoor Championships in Qatar

and the Commonwealth Games in New Delhi. His hard work and dedication have made him an inspiration to the youth in our community, all across Ontario and at his old high school, the Vaughan Road Academy.

Jacob's motto is "If you can't believe you can do it, you won't." His belief in himself, joined with his determination and commitment, will ensure Jacob great success in the future. Our community believes in Jacob, and we wish him well on his path towards gold in London in 2012.

We ask all other Ontarians to get behind our young athletes so they can make it to the Olympics. I ask everybody to get behind Jacob so he can jump for gold in 2012 in London. Good luck, Jacob.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a Report on Agencies, Boards and Commissions: Ontario Racing Commission from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Yes. As Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies I'm pleased to table this report, our fourth in a series of selected agencies, boards and commissions of Ontario.

In this report, the committee reviews the work of the Ontario Racing Commission and makes some recommendations for improvements. Subjects dealt with in this report include a recommended ministry review of the scope of the ORC's mandate, with attention to industry regulation and adjudication; a recommendation that all racetracks and slots programs provide live horse racing; and financial challenges facing Ontario's racetracks located close to provincial and international borders.

The committee thanks the chair and staff of the Ontario Racing Commission for their assistance in all stages of the review, and also expresses our appreciation to those people who made presentations both in person and in writing.

I also thank committee members for their contributions to the review process, and thanks as well to our researcher officer, Ray McLellan, and the clerk of the committee, Doug Arnott.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to share some important news with my honourable colleagues. This month of November is an important one. This month, we sit on the cusp of the holiday season and the busiest retail time of the year. The people of Ontario prepare for this special time of year by buying gifts, decorating their homes and preparing for festive parties and family get-togethers. As we approach this busy time of the year, I would like to remind my colleagues just how important it is for consumers to know their rights in the marketplace.

I ask my colleagues here today to take the time this month to help us make sure that Ontario consumers are aware of their rights and know where they can turn for help and advice on consumer issues.

As Minister of Consumer Services, my job is to make sure that consumers are well served in our marketplace. They need to know that they have rights. These rights include:

- the right not to suffer the consequences of misrepresentations and other unfair practices by suppliers;
- the right to be informed with clear disclosure in consumer contracts so that people can make informed choices;
- the right to cancel a contract within a 10-day cooling-off period for goods and services such as fitness club memberships, door-to-door sales and time-share agreements;
- the right to cancel a contract if goods or services are not delivered after 30 days from the date they were promised; and
- the right to fair estimates in consumer agreements and the right to refuse to pay any cost more than 10% above the estimate given.

These rights are backed by laws and regulations that have real teeth. When and if businesses break the law, we take action. During the first six months of this year, staff at the Ministry of Consumer Services responded to over 55,000 inquiries from consumers. We investigated complaints and pursued fair resolutions of disputes. In some instances, the investigations led to charges being laid.

During the first six months of this year, the Ministry of Consumer Services got the following results for Ontario consumers: We got almost \$1.5 million in direct refunds, cancelled contracts and court-ordered resolutions; our investigations resulted in almost 2,500 charges being laid; we've obtained over \$500,000 in fines; and we've helped send 17 individuals to jail for failing to comply with our consumer protection laws in this province. Ontario consumers need to know that they are protected and, indeed, Ontario consumers enjoy some of the strongest protections in Canada.

I ask my honourable colleagues today to help me build on the confidence Ontario consumers enjoy in our

marketplace—to help your constituents become smart consumers. For my part, I'm launching a month of events today to help raise awareness among Ontario consumers of their rights and to help educate consumers about where they can turn to for help.

The Ministry of Consumer Services website is ontario.ca/mcs, and it has a tremendous amount of valuable information available for consumers. It contains a range of information to help consumers make informed choices and is very easy to navigate.

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I ask my honourable colleagues to please let their constituents know about this website if they need information about making an important purchase such as buying a gift card, buying a fitness membership or buying a service from a door-to-door salesperson. I am certain that your constituents, honourable colleagues, will be grateful for this information.

I would also like to share with members of the House that later this month my ministry will release the 2010 edition of our “smart consumer” calendar. This is a very popular calendar and it's filled with important consumer facts, tips, and links to other resources. It is also available in seven languages. Last year, we distributed 319,000 copies of the calendar, and thousands more were downloaded from our website.

During the last week of our month-long series of consumer awareness activities this month, I will be meeting with seniors and recent immigrants to help make sure the information is reaching those who are amongst our most vulnerable.

Encouraging people to become smart consumers is good for everyone. It is good for individuals and families because it can save them money and frustration and even the need to pursue legal action in many cases. When consumers know their rights and responsibilities, when consumers know they are protected under law, and when they are assured of a certain level of quality, backed up by laws and regulations, they have the confidence to spend. When consumers spend, businesses flourish and create jobs. This is good for all of us and especially important for our economy.

The best consumer protection comes through education. I challenge my colleagues today to help people across Ontario become educated and smart consumers.

Finally, I want to leave my honourable colleagues with this one last message: We're the Ministry of Consumer Services and we're here to help.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Minister of Consumer Services. I want to begin by saying that I'm very glad that the ministry has both a website and a calendar. I've had occasion to have some of these calendars and have been able to provide them to some of my constituents. But I am also concerned about some of the things that my constituents tell me that are of a consumer nature and that the minister has neglected to mention.

The first one that comes to my mind is the increasing use of illegal tobacco products. There are many people in my riding who are very concerned from a number of perspectives.

First of all, of course, is the plight of those convenience store owners trying to sell legal cigarettes, to make a legal living, and who find themselves in the position of seeing those who provide illegal tobacco, frankly, openly on the sidewalk outside their stores.

I think the Minister of Consumer Services would do Ontarians a great favour if he were to be a little more vocal on this topic, because consumers do not know why there are those significant dangers in buying illegal tobacco. What they do know is that they are getting it at a significantly lower price, and for some, that's being a smart consumer. But a study done earlier this year, the butt study, took the cigarette butts across Ontario from outside schools, which of course, by the way, are part of the Minister of Health Promotion's portfolio in discouraging people from smoking. In some school areas, at least 50% of the cigarette butts came from illegal tobacco.

Now, you might wonder, as I did initially, how anyone would be able to take a cigarette butt and determine whether it came from legal or illegal sources, since obviously it doesn't have the package with it for us to know. The answer is very simple: There are a great many non-tobacco products in illegal tobacco. This could be things that we would, in the most discreet way, refer to as garbage. You can also find mouse droppings and things like that in illegal tobacco. There's a whole range of foreign materials. So I think that as the consumer services minister, it would behoove him to take on a higher profile in the area of illegal tobacco and the kinds of dangers it represents to the consumer in Ontario.

In the moment that remains, I'd suggest that he might also want to consider how he's going to brace consumers for the increase of 8% on goods and services, come July 1. People are only now beginning to understand what this means in relation to perhaps their business and perhaps their household. The reality is that on July 1, 2010—that is, only a few short months away—they're going to see an 8% increase on many of the services that, frankly, most of us would consider to be essential, like putting gas in our cars, heating our homes, being able to go to the sports arenas with our children and so forth. So there's a great deal, I think, that the minister could also include as part of his portfolio in consumer services.

The last one, Bill 187: It obviously took the ministry a year after the propane explosion to bring us a bill to debate in this House now. So there is lots to do in the role of Minister of Consumer Services.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll share my response with my colleague.

I'm glad to see that the minister stood up and said that he's there to protect the consumers of Ontario. That's a good thing. I will give him an example of something that we're failing miserably on, or the government is, in reference to the flooding that just took place in Hamilton.

The minister is from the Hamilton area and is well aware of the damages.

There were, I guess, some unscrupulous contractors who went in to do the repairs in people's flooded basements. The first thing out of some of their mouths was, "Are you insured? For what amount?" Well, the unsuspecting consumer would tell them, and what would happen was that the bill would come in—for example, if it was \$10,000 to do the repairs, the bill would come in at \$9,500.

One guy was a bit of a construction guy himself, and he watched what they did in his basement. All they did was cut the drywall at the bottom, at the half, and replace some rugs—the cost of the rugs—and the trim around the base of the drywall. In my experience, you're looking at maybe 3,000 bucks plus your man-hours. They were there for about a day and a half to do it, and they charged them \$9,500.

When they informed their insurance company, the insurance company didn't really put up a big fuss, because the insurance company obviously will raise their premiums. They also told them that there's a ceiling on how much you can get to replace your damaged material if it should happen again—the second and third time—and your coverage would progressively go down, but your premiums would go up. If that's consumer protection, I'm not quite sure.

I had several complaints in my office about these fly-by-night contractors coming in there, and not only did they come in there—most people ask for maybe two or three different quotes. These guys would come in and they didn't even give them any paperwork. There was no paperwork, no signed contract, no nothing. They went ahead and did the work, and the consumer was obviously put in a position where they weren't sure that it was normal procedure. I said, "Did you sign a contract? Did you sign anything?" They said, "No. The guy told me how much, he asked how much was I insured for, and away they went." That's pretty scary. These things happen on a regular basis in every city in this province.

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I'll be more than happy to share some of the quotes with the minister, and he might want to look into why they're charging maybe double or triple the cost of doing repairs in someone's flooded basement. These guys are getting away with murder here. It's unbelievable what's going on. So I'm very concerned about consumer protection in this province. There are other things I can mention, but I don't have the time. I'll be happy to share with him, and maybe they will take care of the people of Ontario, like he says they're going to do, and he'll be right out there with them.

Go ahead.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's interesting to listen to this particular announcement made by the Minister of Consumer Services. I guess parts of this will be welcomed by some of those in our province, but I think we're missing one pretty basic element of what should be done, and that is the ability to cancel contracts such as energy contracts.

We have all had in our constituencies tens, if not hundreds, of people who contact us on a monthly basis who have been victims of signing energy contracts either with somebody selling natural gas or somebody selling electricity for what turns out to be a much higher price than what the normal utility would sell it at.

Often, they don't even know that they've signed a contract. There have been all kinds of cases in all of our offices where somebody comes in and says, "I was wondering what was going on. My hydro bill has gone up; my gas bill has gone up. I couldn't quite figure out what it was all about, so I finally got the time to look into it, and when I called my utility, I found out I was no longer their customer. I found out that in fact somebody had signed something"—perhaps a tenant who happened to be living in that person's apartment building, or it might have been a person in the household who didn't know what they were signing, be it a child or sometimes a spouse, who thinks they're doing the right thing and doesn't mention anything to the person who pays the bill.

In our constituencies, we have all had to go to bat for these people in order to cancel those energy contracts so that they're not preyed upon by those extra-high prices they're having to pay.

So I welcome this legislation that the minister brings forward in being able to cancel certain types of contracts, but I'll tell you, people in my riding are more worried about cancelling an energy contract than some LCBO card that they can't collect on at the end of the year.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise and present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, one of thousands that I've received. This particular one reads as follows:

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

"Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; health care, home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and," last but not least, "funeral arrangements;

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

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

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

I’m pleased to sign and support this and present it to Katelyn, one of the pages.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have petitions signed by a number of Ontarians from Windsor and Amherstburg and they read as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have petitions provided by Murray Cressman of Kitchener, Mary and Bruce McInnes of Wingham, and C. Connolly of Cambridge, which read:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt regarding PET scans.

“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 as follows: “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 Clerk with page Henry.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable ... workers; and

“Whereas ... workers are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

“Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect ... workers from these abuses; and

“Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government” of Mike Harris “deregulated and eliminated protection for foreign workers; and

“Whereas a great number of workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis” with our elderly and with our children “in their work....; and”

Whereas the federal Tories are no better than the provincial Tories were;

“We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law” so we can undo the damage done by the Harris Tories.

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

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

“Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

“Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would

receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren.”

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Rushabh.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have another petition here from Ontarians from North York. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham, which 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;

“Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep doctors are essential to providing quality front-line health care services, particularly in” small towns and mainly rural Ontario;

“Whereas people across Ontario have been forced to pay Dalton McGuinty’s now-forgotten” dreaded “health tax since 2004,” expecting of course that health care services would be improved rather than cut;

“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” and eHealth scandal;

“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.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and present it to Madeline, one of the pages, on her last week here at Queen’s Park.

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Jeremy.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to thank Marjorie Stewart of the Ontario Genealogical Society for her work in gathering petitions throughout Ontario. This one is from Ontarians in Toronto, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition that reads:

“Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

“Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

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

“(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals as has been done in other Canadian provinces;

“(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital.”

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

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have another petition from the North York Historical Society, signed by a number of members from that society. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontarians who now live in long-term-care homes are increasingly older, frailer and have greater complex care needs;

“Whereas our elder parents, family and friends deserve to live with dignity and respect;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government failed to revolutionize long-term care and broke its promise to seniors to provide \$6,000 in personal care, per resident;

“Whereas five years of Liberal inaction has restricted Ontario’s ability to meet the demands of our aging population;

“Whereas more than 24,000 Ontarians are currently waiting for a long-term-care bed;

“Whereas Ontario funds significantly less resident care than Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick;

“Whereas dedicated long-term-care homes are short-staffed and have not been given resources to hire enough front-line workers to provide the level of care residents require;

“Whereas devoted LTC staff are burdened by cumbersome government regulations;

“Whereas some 35,000 seniors are living in long-term-care beds which do not meet more home-like design standards introduced in 1998 by the former PC government;

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

“That the McGuinty government must enhance long-term care by:

“—initiating a sector-wide staffing increase of 4,500 full-time positions within a year;

“—expediting the redevelopment of Ontario’s 35,000 oldest long-term-care beds by providing adequate support and funding;

“—achieving an average of three worked hours of personal care, per day, within a year;

“—simplifying the regulations which govern nursing homes;

“—producing a comprehensive plan with benchmarks to reduce long-term-care wait lists of more than 24,000 people;

“—addressing inflationary pressures by adequately funding the increased operating costs of long-term-care homes.”

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Henry.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have another petition signed by a number of Ontarians, once again from Toronto. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Bentley moved second 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 Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd ask at the outset that I share my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Willowdale.

I'm pleased to stand and address some general introductory issues with respect to this bill. It is a large piece of legislation, but it should be seen in the context of what it is: It is a bill that will address good government for the province of Ontario and for the people of Ontario. It contains quite a number of amendments, some technical, some improvements in procedures and processes, quite like legislation that has been introduced by previous governments, taking us back to at least 1994.

It's important, from time to time, to update legislation in the province of Ontario. The way we approach our business today is not the same as the way we approached business, well, even five years ago. You could ask a question, when all members are seated during those ceremonial occasions: How many people use a BlackBerry today who didn't use a BlackBerry five years ago? Communications go in an entirely different way. The procedures that were appropriate for government just five years ago are entirely, in some cases, outdated today. Likewise the wording, the technical provisions, their application of legislation, is surpassed by the events of time.

1350

We also have a situation where some acts which look perfectly important on their face have actually been passed by, given legislative changes that this act has enacted, given changes in the law as dictated by the courts, given new ways of approaching issues that the people of Ontario told us we have to use.

Une bonne gouvernance signifie mettre en place des systèmes et des structures adéquats pour exécuter l'intention originale de la loi. Good governance requires that we have the right systems, the right procedures and the right processes in place to enact the original intent of the law.

Now, there are really two very large parts to this piece of legislation. One is the technical procedural changes, sometimes to sections, sometimes to series of sections, some that repeal acts, some that change certain enactments. Just like has happened during previous governments, what happened here is that the ministries got together—in this case there were 22 ministries involved—and they came up with a narrowed list of 600 different provisions. It sounds like a big number, but when you think of the speed of procedures, when you think of the speed with which we move in society, it really isn't. These are technical changes, non-political changes, that will help the existing enactments work better, will help the intent of the Legislature—and it might have been a Legislature from a previous government—be achieved, which will ensure that laws can achieve their purpose, given the requirements of the day.

There are also, within the four corners of this bill, several changes to procedure and process. So they are a little different than technical amendments, but they are changes to procedure and process which I hope all members of the House, after the very complete debate, will agree are not only necessary but are appropriate and entirely within keeping of good, effective government. After all, what we wish to achieve are the right accountability mechanisms, the right mechanisms to ensure transparency, and the most effective procedures and processes for achieving governance in the province of Ontario.

I would say in advance that technical briefings have been offered to all members of the House, and that will continue. Should there be issues with respect to certain procedures, certain amendments, certain items in here, that certainly will continue. From our perspective, we want to make sure that there is a complete understanding of what's here.

I can also say that I'm sure we will benefit, all of us, from the debate within this House. Somebody picking up the very large piece of material may say, "Well, what's in here? What's in here that I haven't yet read?" I simply offer at the outset to the members what has already been offered, what has been taken up, I understand, on some occasions, and what will continue to be taken up, I'm sure: an offer to sit down and explain exactly what's there, why it's there and how we got there.

I would like to just address two separate changes to process and procedure, the first with respect to jury verification. Now, in the course of a criminal trial that involves the selection of a jury, the issue might arise, how do you ensure that the requirements of either the Criminal Code or the Juries Act—that people with criminal records don't end up on juries—are achieved? I'm using a little non-technical language here. How do you ensure that that is achieved? Unfortunately, there has not been a consistent procedure or approach to achieving the very important policy objective.

Recently, we benefited from the very extensive report, examination, discussion and review by the privacy commissioner—a very important document, a very extensive document that provided some guidance on how to ensure that we could achieve the policy objective and safeguard and protect the privacy of Ontarians, both to the greatest extent possible. The changes to the approach to the selection of juries speak to the issues raised by the privacy commissioner and speak to her specific suggestions in a number of material respects. One is that the identification, the checking and the selection process be taken out of the hands of the direct courtroom participants and put into the hands of the jury centre—there's one of those located in London, Ontario, that has been spearheading the compilation of the lists—that those checks be done independent of the participants in the courtroom. That's what we're going to be doing. That's at the heart of her recommendations.

Another part of the legislative changes is that these checks could be made and the lists amended before they

are given to the lawyers who are the courtroom participants about to choose the jury, so nobody would know; nobody in the courtroom will know who had a criminal record and who did not—again, a very clear determination that we want to safeguard the privacy of Ontarians.

It's essential that we do these checks independently, according to the privacy commissioner. It's essential that we have a recognized, coordinated structure within which to do them, as I say, so that we can achieve both the policy objective and the protection and privacy of all Ontarians.

I want to very briefly address one other area that is within the bill, and that's the whole issue of public inquiries. From time to time, people call for public inquiries. Sometimes they call for them quite often. But the legislation which supports the calling of public inquiries has not received the necessary update because when a government decides when a public inquiry is going to be called, what you're looking for are a series of recommendations to address specific issues that can be received in time to be of benefit to society, to the government, to the Legislature. There needs to be a connection between the calling and the receipt of the recommendations in order for them to be beneficial. Some inquiries should be, of their nature, long and extensive. Others should be capable of being completed in a much shorter period of time.

Recognizing the essential independence of the commission, which would not, cannot and should not be in any way, shape or form compromised, it is important to give the necessary tools to ensure that, where appropriate, inquiries can benefit from well-accepted information and material that's already out there—it doesn't have to be re-created—that expertise that's already out there can be adopted. Just as in the best courtroom management techniques, sometimes instead of calling witnesses one after the other, you can call panels of witnesses, you can have accepted facts. You can scope and shape an inquiry in order to achieve its objective. This not only helps manage the time, it helps manage the cost; but it ensures there is the type of essential rational connection between the calling and the reason for calling of the inquiry, and the receipt of the recommendations so that they can benefit the society—the Legislature—that has called for them.

1400

Just before I turn my time over to my colleague, I want to re-emphasize that we're very anxious to hear what the suggestions and comments will be with respect to what's in here. There has been a very extensive amount of work done by the people in the various ministries to compile these very important sections and amendments, and with respect to the more substantive pieces, it's a matter of updating procedures and processes to ensure that they benefit and serve the people of this great province.

With that, I'm pleased to turn my time over to my colleague the MPP for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very pleased to participate in this debate and speak in support of the proposed Good Government Act, 2009. Bill 212 reflects this government's commitment to making sure that Ontario's statutes are up to date and effective. As the Attorney General said, the right systems and the right structures must be in place in order for legislation to serve its intended purpose.

To this end, Bill 212 includes many technical changes as well as changes to some of our systems and processes. The bill is comprehensive; comprehensive because we have been diligent about making sure that the laws of this province are up to date, accurate and in line with the needs of Ontarians.

You've heard from the Attorney General, who briefly outlined some of the changes proposed in Bill 212. What I'd like to do now is take a minute to highlight some of the changes that are being proposed and how they will improve clarity, increase transparency and enhance accountability in the province's laws, regulations and systems. Let me say a few words about some general changes.

Bill 212 would, if passed, help to streamline processes and ensure Ontario's laws are clear, current and relevant. There are over 600 items in this legislation, and that's why we've provided members on all sides of this House the opportunity to be briefed on these items. We wanted to give all members a better sense of the amendments, some of which can be very, very technical in nature.

The Ministry of the Attorney General has a number of items that our ministry has included. For instance, a proposed amendment to the Evidence Act would allow witnesses to affirm, rather than swear, to the truth of their testimony. This change would acknowledge the multitude of religious views in Ontario and prevent any inquiries into why a person of a particular faith wishes to affirm rather than swear.

Sometimes it's necessary to update statutes to incorporate new processes or tools that were not used previously. The seven proposed amendments to the Bail Act would, if passed, serve to update language in the act to account for the new province-wide electronic writs database. This is a leading-edge tool to speed up and facilitate the judicial process. That's good for the accused, that's good for victims, and that's good for government expenditures.

These changes would remove outdated references to various manual requirements that are in fact no longer in practice. We've moved beyond that. These technical amendments are catching up to the de facto situation we find ourselves in.

Other amendments would reconcile statutes, update translation services and generally improve clarity.

Let me say something about the Provincial Offences Act. This bill makes changes to legislation that will mean more effective service for Ontarians. To further support this goal, the Good Government Act includes proposed changes to the Provincial Offences Act. Municipalities are currently responsible for administering the courts that

hear provincial offence matters and for prosecuting offences under that act, such as parking tickets and various bylaw offences. Most of the proposed reforms included in this bill reflect the recommendations of a municipal and provincial working group that put forward ways to simplify court procedures and to improve services to the public.

The bill proposes a series of very practical changes, such as allowing for quicker and more efficient filing of tickets and the ability to hold routine court proceedings via teleconference or video. The bill would also permit out-of-court settlements for a wide range of minor offences, which would help to focus the court and enforcement resources on the most serious offences. Many people in Ontario now charged with a minor offence want their side of the story to be heard, and to do that now necessitates a formal court appearance and all of the technical things that are included in a formal court proceeding. This procedure allows for out-of-court settlement of a variety of issues. Sometimes the person who has been charged with a technical offence really wants to talk the thing through and resolve it without having to go through the formal court process. That's the kind of practical amendment we're talking about in this legislation.

These changes would balance the need for significant improvements to our very, very busy municipal courts with the rights and protections of Ontarians who are accused of provincial offences. Everybody is going to benefit from these procedures, particularly the out-of-court settlement procedures.

Let me say a few words about the Municipal Elections Act changes, because I know that's a subject that is close to all members' hearts when they are explaining this legislation to their local municipalities, local councillors and local media. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing reviews the municipal elections process and the Municipal Elections Act after every municipal election. The proposed changes to the Municipal Elections Act included in Bill 212 stem directly from those consultations with the public, with the municipalities, and with organizations such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. If passed, these measures would respond to issues identified by municipal candidates, voters and election administrators, and would make the municipal election process more accessible, transparent and fair. There again we have a reference to the overarching theme of this Good Government Act: improving accessibility, increasing transparency, and, above all, fairness: fairness in the technical sense and fairness in the common sense idea of fairness.

Proposed amendments to the Municipal Elections Act would, if passed, enhance the integrity of the local elections in municipalities by creating a new contribution limit of \$5,000 per contributor in each jurisdiction, in addition to the existing limit of \$750 per candidate. It will also, in this regard, clarify the campaign spending limits. Those of you who are following the press arising out of a number of municipal elections here in Ontario

know it is always and consistently in various jurisdictions an issue that plays out in the media in the year or two following a municipal election.

1410

Bill 212 is intended to deal with those difficulties, and it deals with those difficulties, again, by transparency, accessibility and fairness. Those are the overarching themes that underpin this legislation.

In addition, the proposed reforms would, if passed, eliminate the carrying forward of surplus campaign funds by candidates from one municipal election to the next municipal election while, at the same time, strengthening compliance and enforcement measures through firm deadlines for submitting financial statements and harmonized various penalties that may arise as a result of breaches. Other changes include moving the election date forward to the fourth Monday of October, beginning October 25, 2010; an improved voters list; and requiring voters to provide proof of identity and proof of residency.

I would like to particularly recognize the work of Minister Watson and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for all of their very hard work in bringing these amendments forward. A part of that exercise in bringing these amendments forward was the very extensive consultation process that the minister undertook with the various stakeholders in the municipal world.

As the Attorney General has said, Bill 212 is designed to strengthen statutes and systems that support the services the Ontario government provides to its citizens. The bill includes changes that will improve clarity, increase transparency and enhance accountability. These are changes that will ensure that the government, the laws and the regulations of this province are truly reflective of the needs of today's Ontario.

I call on all members to support these proposed amendments. Do keep in mind, again, that the proposed amendments are something that it's necessary to do from time to time to ensure that Ontario is the leading jurisdiction in the way it conducts, enforces and reviews its provincial legislation.

All governments—there have been, I think, about 16 of these omnibus-type bills that review and make technical amendments and bring needed changes to make sure that the application, interpretation and expectations of Ontario's provincial laws are very, very modern. By "modern" I mean that they meet the needs of all of the stakeholders in our province, that they meet the needs of our citizens and, indeed, that they meet the needs of our government, our bureaucracies, in ensuring that Ontario is always at the leading edge of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'll be having an opportunity in a few minutes to speak to this bill myself. I guess the first thing I want to really put on the record here is this consultation that everyone is referring to. I don't know what I missed out on here, but I haven't seen this consultation. I haven't heard from my stakeholders in my critic's portfolio or any of my municipalities about the

consultation that has taken place to get to this particular point today.

I look at a bill like this, and I acknowledge that many, many governments have passed omnibus bills, and you need these sorts of pieces of legislation to clean up a lot of outstanding problems in the different ministries. As we move forward with this, I think there's a bit of a problem with people not being aware of these changes and how they will have an opportunity to raise their concerns at the committee level. I'll be looking forward to hearing some responses from the minister on how we handle a bill like this at the committee level, when there are 22 ministries affected, and on how people will get a fair chance to voice their particular concerns on the legislation.

I will be speaking in a few minutes, and I look forward to bringing my points forward and commenting on the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I had an opportunity to listen to the minister and his parliamentary assistant, and they kept talking about the openness of the bill and the consultations on the bill and all of that stuff. I'm a little perplexed by those statements. I am perplexed because when this bill was introduced in this House last week, the opposition was not given any indication whatsoever about what was contained in the bill. We were asking, from the morning that we heard that the minister was going to make his statement until the time the bill was passed across the House and put on the desk, what was in the bill. Nary a word was said; nary a word about anything. If that is consultation, then I am really afraid.

I do acknowledge that I have had an opportunity to sit down with ministerial staff for about half an hour. They came but they were only prepared to brief me on one section of the act and then they were going off to brief other people on other sections of the act. I chose to go to those elements that dealt with municipal affairs.

I was really saddened, though, when I started to ask questions about what was contained in the bill, and even more so when I asked about what was not contained in the bill and the rationale for not including other provisions along with those that had been suggested. I was told time and time again by a staffer that that was a political question and it would not be answered. Even though it was a technical briefing, on such things as whether or not the loopholes were being closed—I like to call it the Volpe amendment—so that five-year-olds can't make donations, I was told, "That's a political matter. That's not a technical briefing of the act." They would not answer any questions as to whether or not that could be included.

I don't know, when the minister and the parliamentary assistant talk about being open and forthcoming to the opposition and others, that it in fact actually happens.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Brant.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'd like to take just a moment to express my gratitude to the Attorney General, Minister Bentley, for the work that he has to do to oversee this particular act, the Good Government Act, and to the parliamentary assistant, who, time after time, when challenged with coverage of a bill, does an exemplary job. The member from Willowdale and the Attorney General will be doing a very good job of bringing this bill forward.

Let's be clear in terms of the difference between staff and the minister's offer to have a discussion with elected members. The members opposite know that staff at the ministry levels are trained to identify a question that could be considered to be political and not to answer it, because the government and governance are the responsibility of the elected members. Let's make sure we understand the differential between the two.

If he were to ask a specific technical question and it were not classified as being political, then he would get an answer from staff. I would respectfully suggest that that is why the AG and the parliamentary assistant have made their offers to talk to the members in person.

Since 1997 there have been 16 good-government bills passed by the Legislature. The first of its kind was passed under the NDP government in 1994. The most recent bill, in 2006, contained nearly 550 technical amendments from 16 different ministries.

This is a technique that has been adopted over the decades by all stripes of government at all levels in order to clean up some of the stuff that, through modern technology or different verbiage, needs to be corrected. We assume that everyone understands that those are the processes we need to go through in order to improve our legislation. That's the intent here.

I recall reading a book that outlined some of the legislation that still existed at the municipal level that said you had to tie up your horses in front of the store at the stump post. Quite frankly, this is the kind of thing that we're doing with this piece of legislation.

1420

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I was interested in hearing the member from Beaches–East York talk about the consultation, or the attempt at consultation, with regard to an omnibus bill. An omnibus bill covers many, many different acts. I think there are 60 different acts in this particular case.

The previous member, from Brantford, just talked about the fact that there had been omnibus, or large, acts before. But there's a difference in the process that your government is taking and that our government took. When our government was there, we went to the opposition benches and said, "Are there any sections that you object to?" And if there were sections that the opposition objected to, we withdrew them from the bill. We did that before we tabled the bill in this Legislature, so we actually gave the opposition parties a real opportunity to have a say with regard to an omnibus bill. We didn't

want to sneak anything in, under the carpet, when there are so many sections to deal with, so many acts to deal with. We wanted to be fair with the opposition, and we were fair.

Mr. Mike Colle: Ha.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Well, we were, quite frankly, in the process. Why don't you come forward to us, the opposition, with this bill and say that you, the government, will withdraw any sections which we object to? Will you do that? If you don't do it, then you are not as open as we were when we were in power.

It's unfortunate that this government continues to try to ram legislation through, and in this case, a huge omnibus bill. There is a great danger that when an omnibus bill is introduced and passed in this Legislature, some significant change in the law will take place without adequate notice to the public.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Attorney General has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I would like to thank the members from Simcoe North, Beaches–East York, Brant and Carleton–Mississippi Mills for their comments and observations. We will, of course, have the chance to debate these issues.

Technical briefings have already been offered, undertaken, and are ongoing. I would say to the member from Beaches–East York, I know he was in attendance at a technical briefing; the technical briefing continued after, without the member present, I understand, for some several hours, and will continue to the extent that he requires it.

I say that to all members. Of course there's a lot here. We want to make sure that everybody understands exactly what is here. It's interesting that the comments so far are about the process and not the substance. I'm sure we'll get into the substance at some point.

I would say with respect to consultation and the issue about changes to the municipal elections, I remember that we started a consultative process that has AMO involved at every level. With respect to the provincial offence matters, I would remind people that we have had a working group with municipalities for some period of time. I would say with respect to the general consultative process—and this is the difference between a political and a public service or ministry issue—you will find inherent in the suggestions and changes that are part of the 600-odd that some of these issues have been around for years, but they just never found their way into the appropriate technical briefing. They have to be done. They need to be done. Everybody agrees that they need to be done.

With respect to the Carleton–Mississippi Mills member's remembrance of the omnibus bills they introduced and the consultation, I would say that differs greatly from that of many members of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm asking for unanimous consent of the House to defer the lead of the PC caucus until a later date.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Dunlop asked for unanimous consent to stand down the lead for the Progressive Conservatives, the loyal opposition. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts. I think it goes by the name of the Good Government Act, 2009. I understand it was introduced in the House last Wednesday afternoon. This is the first time—I myself just got a copy of the bill this morning. When I came to my desk there was one in my folder here. I can tell you right now that although some of the things have been on the Web and I understand that there have been technical briefings offered to members of the House, we really haven't had a chance to caucus this or even look at any of the details in the bill.

Apparently, the minister said that there were 22 ministries affected, some 600 amendments or corrections to make. I know that although that seems like a lot, he sort of downplayed the fact that there were 600, and he didn't feel it was a major concern. That is a lot of information for a caucus like the Progressive Conservative caucus or the New Democratic caucus to look at.

We talked about the consultation that has taken place with this legislation. Again, I wouldn't have known until I read the bill that there was a good government bill coming down at all. Obviously we have omnibus bills around, and we've had a number of them in this House. I understand all the different parties have passed them. However, this has been quite a surprise to us. We won't even have an opportunity to discuss this as a caucus until tomorrow afternoon, when we meet and decide how we will approach our stakeholders. I think it's important.

When you have 22 ministries affected and this many changes, a "shall" or a "may" in any particular amendment can have a major effect on a lot of different stakeholders. That's my concern. What is in here may be well-intentioned as far as the ministries are concerned but may have a negative impact or a positive impact on someone else when the amendments are made, and could have a financial impact or whatever.

I don't know; I'm hoping that no ministry would want to sneak in some phrase that they would like to have seen for years. I'm not so sure that that type of thing happens in an omnibus bill. However, I want to make sure, particularly in my portfolio—and I'm going to go through the points in my portfolio here in a moment—that all of the stakeholders I deal with in community safety and correctional services know, each and every step of the way, what changes have been made.

You know yourself, Madam Speaker, that quite often when we have committee hearings on any bill—we had a subcommittee meeting here a little bit earlier on Bill 203, the interprovincial policing bill. It doesn't look like a very complex bill right now; in fact, it could probably fit in any one or two pages of this omnibus bill.

Even with this bill, it doesn't appear to be complex; however, we have to look forward and make sure we

notify all of our stakeholders so that they know what the impacts are and whether or not there will be an impact on their particular organization, association or on the individuals, whatever it may be.

As we move towards that, although the minister said that there's been a lot of consultation on this legislation, I'm concerned that there has not been enough consultation, and each and every one of us in our critic portfolios will have to go out and approach a lot of people to see if they have any concerns with it, get it on the website, send them copies etc., so that as we move forward, we'll know that they have been adequately served by this House, even with what the minister would refer to as these housekeeping types of corrections to the legislation.

I wanted to take a few minutes to talk about the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, in my particular case, which is schedule 9. There are a number of changes here, and a lot of them will have an impact.

"Ammunition Regulation Act, 1994

"The act is updated to reflect changes in the related federal legislation."

1430

For that particular amendment right there, I would want to contact all of my hunters' and anglers' organizations within my riding to make sure they know that this has changed and it's not going to have any kind of a negative impact on how they do business in their particular association.

It was the same thing when we moved forward with Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry) 2000. Corrections are made to the French version of this act. That seems fairly reasonable.

The Coroners Act: "Under current subsection 40(3) of the act, a judge may issue a bench warrant directed to a sheriff or police officer; this is amended so that the bench warrant is directed only to a police officer. Current clause 56(1)(c) of the act allows for regulations prescribing the composition of the oversight council; this is re-enacted to allow the regulations to also prescribe the composition of the complaints committee of the oversight council."

Unless I'm mistaken, I thought that's what Bill 115 was all about. We just finished passing Bill 115 in this House, and I thought we would have made those types of corrections on Bill 115. Correct me if I'm wrong on how we're actually going about this, but the Coroners Act was quite controversial. It goes back to Justice LeSage's report. I'm curious how we're now making an amendment to an act that we just amended just within the last year.

The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act: "Section 10 of the act is amended to exempt operations or service continuity plans from the requirement that emergency plans be made publicly available." Again, this affects every municipality in the province of Ontario. Although it seems like a minor amendment, I want to make sure that our stakeholders and our municipalities are aware of that.

The next section is the Mandatory Blood Testing Act, 2006. "The definition of 'analyst' is re-enacted to reflect

the current name of the central public health laboratory and to allow for other laboratories to be prescribed by regulation. The French version of the definition of 'listed communicable disease' is corrected."

I just want to double-check on this one. This is one that I go back to my Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association—they were all people who had major concerns with the Mandatory Blood Testing Act, both my private member's bill that was passed in this House and the updated version of 2006. Again, we have concerns with that, and although they might be minor, they may have a major impact.

The Ministry of Correctional Services Act: "A number of obsolete references are deleted: the definitions of 'provincial director' and 'young person,' references to a place of open custody, secure custody or temporary detention and the Custody Review Board, references to the repealed Parole Act ... and Penitentiary Act ..., which are replaced with a reference to the current federal act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.... Clause 58(c) of the act is repealed since it applied to a provision of the act that was itself previously repealed."

There are a number of those here: "Amendments are made throughout the act to change the name of the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board." That would seem to be insignificant.

"Subsection 10(2) of the act currently provides that personal information about an individual may be disclosed by a person designated by the regulations. This is re-enacted to permit such disclosure by a person employed by the ministry and designated by the deputy minister....

"Subsection 34.1(2) of the act, which currently provides that the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board has exclusive jurisdiction in prescribed circumstances to determine whether an inmate has earned remission, is repealed." I know that this appears to be strictly a housekeeping portion of the act. However, again, I've been dealing with OPSEU recently and people on the parole board and probation board, and they've got some concerns with the government and how they've handled some of the human resource issues etc. Again, I'd want to make sure that everybody was happy with that, although that part does seem fairly reasonable.

The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act: "A definition of the term 'business day' is added to the act." When we did the OSPCA Act a year ago—I think that was Bill 105, if I'm not mistaken. We had a lot of interest and concern around that bill. Again, this wasn't brought up at that point, and I'm curious why we wouldn't have made those amendments when we did the Bill 105 hearings. As you know, there was controversy around the OSPCA and the Toronto Humane Society. I think, Madam Speaker, you were actually on that committee. Again, we would like to have a peek at that and the French-version changes as well.

The Police Services Act: "Subsection 18(4) ... which authorizes the commissioner of the Ontario Provincial

Police to appoint employees of the force, is repealed,” and “Clause 57(7)(c.1) of the act provides that an employee of the Ontario Provincial Police is not a member of the public and cannot make a complaint against a member of the force. This clause is repealed; since ‘member of a police force’ is defined to include an employee of the Ontario Provincial Police, the content of clause (c.1) is captured by clause 57(7)(c) of the act.”

Again, I would like to take that particular one to Karl Walsh and Jim Christie, from the Ontario Provincial Police, and let them run it by their legal people in the OPPA to make sure that there’s not some hidden clause that they have concerns with. I think that’s only fair, and it’s all part of the work we have to do as critics. I’m not 100% sure they all understand that, the members of the government.

Finally there’s the Private Security and Investigative Services Act, 2005. You talk about your transparency. As we move forward, this is a brand new bill, and still there are all kinds of portions of that bill that haven’t been enacted. I don’t know why that was not corrected at the amendment stage during the reading of the bill and the committee hearings on that bill. The reality is that I’m getting a lot of concerns now from people who think that this bill is nothing more than a cash cow for the government. For example, people have walked in—one journalist did a story on going into the ministry offices and just getting a licence to be a security guard without any type of training whatsoever. He just gave the money, and they gave him the licence. These are the types of things that you come back to, that you worry about when you hear these weaknesses in the bill. All of a sudden, we’re here making these sort of transparent types of changes that everybody apparently has been consulted on.

As we move forward, I also wanted to talk a little bit about municipal affairs. There seems to be all kinds of applause for Minister Watson and all the consultation he has done on it. I guess I have a couple of questions I would like to have someone answer for me. First of all, the changing of the municipal election date: I’m wondering where that really came from. I deal with nine municipalities, I’m a former municipal councillor myself, and I’ve never yet had anyone ask me to change the date to the fourth Monday in October. I’m curious as to why that was done. It would be interesting to hear the reasons behind it as we move forward. Again, I don’t think it’s going to be something that everybody would jump and yell and scream at. The second Monday in November, I believe, is the date today. However, maybe it’s something to do with Halloween; maybe it’s something to do with Remembrance Day. I’m not really 100% sure of that, but it is interesting why that was brought up as a major change. Quite frankly, I’ve heard a number of members of the government, both in media interviews and in this House, mention that this was the kind of change that was needed. I was just wondering where that actually came from.

It was interesting that a government that has a group supporting them called Ontario’s Working Families

Coalition would worry about election spending. I didn’t see anything in there that would stop an organization like Ontario’s Working Families Coalition from supporting a political party at the provincial level, but there seems to be lots of changes made that would help municipalities and people running for municipal elections with their funding. I know in my years on municipal council, coming from a small part of rural Ontario, we never got any support. We never asked for any money, and we never got any money from our constituents. We just financed our own campaigns, and there certainly wasn’t anybody dropping \$750 or \$5,000 off at our council chambers to help with our campaigns.

1440

It was also interesting to hear the Attorney General speak for quite a while in his opening remarks about the reasons to have a public inquiry. This is something that, on this side of the House, we’re really quite concerned about. This government, when they were in opposition, called for an inquiry almost every day into whatever was happening. One of the major ones that comes to my mind was of course the Walkerton inquiry, when people lost their lives. At that time, the government called an inquiry. They stalled for a couple of days, maybe two or three days, but then the government thought that was the right thing to do. People had lost their lives and there was a reason to have a public inquiry.

We feel very much that way today about the eHealth scandal. We think that is something that calls for a public inquiry, and I was really interested to hear the Attorney General’s remarks on that. I’d like to take it out of Hansard a little later on to see exactly what he meant by that. According to the Auditor General, there was almost \$1 billion at stake in the eHealth program, and we feel that when you’re talking about inquiries and you’re bringing in the reasons for an inquiry, in the opening remarks on Bill 212, it really does flag the reasons why, on this side of the House, we did ask for an inquiry. We will continue to ask for that inquiry right up until the time of the next provincial election, because, as I said earlier, when they were in opposition, they asked for an inquiry almost every day. You can go into Hansard and read it—an inquiry on this, an inquiry on this. Now, when there’s \$1 billion at stake, when there are concerns about how transparent the government is, when there are concerns about where \$1 billion went, especially at a time when we’re running almost a \$25-billion deficit, I think the general public has the right to know. Based on the fact that the previous government opened up an inquiry on Walkerton—Justice Dennis O’Connor’s report—I believe the right thing to do to be transparent and forthright with the citizens of Ontario is to actually call for an inquiry on what we call the eHealth \$1-billion boondoggle.

As we move forward, again, this is a completely new omnibus bill. As far as we’re concerned, there’s a lot of consultation that has to be done. I have no idea—and it would be interesting to hear from the Attorney General and the minister and any of the comments coming from

the members in the House—how much time they expect to have for committee hearings on this. Is this the type of thing that we're going to have half a day on, or will people from all walks of life who have a concern with these 600 amendments have an opportunity to come forward and propose their amendments and changes?

As the minister said earlier, it seems like a house-keeping bill. He talked about how we're all on BlackBerry now, how changes are made etc. But you know what? Everyone doesn't have a BlackBerry and everyone doesn't have a computer. Some people like to know exactly what changes are being made and some people like to follow the proceedings of this House very carefully.

It will be interesting to watch the amount of time that's dedicated to committee hearings on this. Is this the type of bill we're going to see rushed through before Christmas? Is that what the intention of the government is? Or is it something that we will have committee hearings on in the winter months and then move forward to debating for third reading in the spring session?

With that, I am pleased to speak to this bill this afternoon, and I look forward to a lot of debate on the legislation. Thank you very much for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Simcoe North and to what he had to say. Of course, this is a huge bill. This is a bill of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pages. He touched on some of the aspects of the bill which I have not yet had a chance to consider, but when he focused in at the end on municipal affairs, my ears pricked up. He started to talk about municipal affairs and how he believes that this government is going to rush through the bill, ostensibly in order to meet the time frame of January 4, that being the date by which any changes must be made in order to have them within the full purview of the election year which starts on that day.

He talked about looking forward to debate in committee and the like. I can only echo his concerns when he talks about sending this to committee, because, quite frankly, this bill has not had much public attention.

As I started to say in the last two-minute go-round—and which I want to embellish and talk a bit more about when I have an opportunity to speak—this bill was brought forward, or at least the minister stood in his place and talked about the bill, on Wednesday afternoon. No advance notice was given to any members of the Legislature, at least not on the opposition side, on what the bill would contain. The 500 or 600 pages were passed across as he was speaking, and we feverishly tried to find out.

But what is even more important than that is that the bill was not generally printed and made available to the public until today, this morning. I'm waiting to hear from a whole broad group of stakeholders throughout the 22 ministries that are affected, about the hundreds of bills that are affected by the changes, because I do believe that this is something which ought not to be rushed through.

I don't know—the speed is positively dazzling to this point: Speak about the bill on Wednesday, print it on Monday morning, have it debated today and send it to committee as rapidly as you can, with the goal of having it finished before Christmas. I hope that's not the case.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to have a few minutes to comment on this bill. It is a large bill but I think it's important to note that many of the amendments—I have been sitting here, flipping through it—are to correct the French translation of something; to change the name of the ministry so it's currently accurate; to reflect some change that has been made in another act and make the two acts consistent. So while there are many amendments, a lot of them are truly technical in nature and really wouldn't be of any interest to the public.

I noticed that there are some substantive changes to the Municipal Elections Act. There has been some comment on changing the municipal and school board elections from the second Monday in November to the fourth Monday in October. My understanding is that that is because a number of candidates—as somebody who used to campaign in municipal elections—have noted that a lot of the campaigning you did in November was after the fall-back calendar change that we just went through and you end up canvassing in the dark. By moving the election date forward a little bit, the campaigning is done early. That may not be of any concern to the gentlemen in the crowd but it certainly is of concern to many women candidates that you're not trotting around in the dark.

The issue around the voters list for municipal elections: People may not realize that the process is different for federal and provincial elections versus municipal. For the first time this would allow municipalities to use information from the Registrar General, which includes who is dead—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen intently to the member from Simcoe North, who dealt with section 9. I think the most important thing that he said was, in a précis here: The devil is in the details here. When you change the subtlety of words from "may" to "shall" and other legal terms, it's something that should be a wake-up call.

This actually comes down to whether or not you trust the Premier. If you promise one thing and you do another, you often lose the trust of the people of Ontario. That's really what's at score here.

There are some 26 sections in this and each of us, as critics, has a portion of the bill. I think there are 22 different ministries involved as well.

I'll just read the subtlety of one little section in the brief. It relates to the observation by the member from Simcoe North. This is in schedule number 16. It's the Perpetuities Act: "The rules of law and statutory enactments relating to perpetuities do not apply and are deemed never to have applied to a trust fund required by

subsection 9(1) of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act...”—what does that mean? Nuclear fuels—in my riding of Durham, the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act is a huge, ongoing, forward-moving liability, because there is no solution for nuclear waste. But that Perpetuities Act changes a word, which could be tested in the courts. That is just one example of one very small section in a 300-page piece of legislation.

The very next section deals with the Taxation Act. This one here is also a very important subliminal change of taxation. Schedule 17, which we've gone over, talks about subordinate pension funds for the public sector. So all this language is the issue, and I'm curious as to why they're putting this huge legal bill into such a big document.

1450

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I wanted to comment on the presentation just made and say that the member from Durham mentioned 26 sections of this bill, and it brought back nightmarish memories of an infamous bill here called Bill 26, which was the mother of all omnibus bills. It changed the whole health care system; it changed the municipal system. It was an incredible bill. If you want to see how this is so different from that incredible nightmare, Bill 26, and how it was rammed through and probably made the most significant changes in Ontario history—it was considered the biggest omnibus bill in Ontario history. So Bill 26—look it up.

Anyway, just to this bill, I think there are rational things done here to improve some of the technical aspects of government and also to refine some changes that have taken place, because as legislation is written—in Ontario, the tradition is to write it in both French and English—there have to be changes in both official languages. So that is one technicality.

But there are some areas that the Attorney General mentioned that he wants feedback on from the opposition. He's willing to listen and he's offered all kinds of opportunities for technical briefings. So I hope the members of the opposition will do that, and I hope the stakeholders in the general public will forward any questions they have about the impact of this bill in their general area, and that's legitimate and fair. Hopefully we can get that feedback in place and make this good governance bill one that essentially makes government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Beaches–East York, Guelph, Durham and Eglinton–Lawrence for their comments.

I really just want to say, as I mentioned a number of times during my comments earlier, that this is a complex bill. It's not that a lot of these amendments aren't necessary. I think that's a foregone conclusion; there are omnibus bills around and have been in the past. But I am concerned about how many people—although they say there's been a lot of consultation on this piece of

legislation, it's the first I've heard about it. Okay? The first I heard about it was last Wednesday. I normally understand this type of legislation when it's coming forward or know something is actually happening, like the Barrie–Innisfil act or even the cross-border policing act. With these types of things, your mind is sort of waiting for them to take place. This one we didn't expect.

There are amendments to the City of Toronto Act—there are a couple here—not major amendments like the member from Eglinton–Lawrence was expecting. I think he wanted to go back and reverse the whole City of Toronto Act, and I'm amazed that it wasn't in it. The reality is, you have an opportunity to put a private member's bill through. Why—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence, please.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: If the City of Toronto Act was so bad, can you tell me why they haven't reversed it or revoked it? We hit a nerve there, eh? The reality is, you can talk and babble on all you want, but the bill was what everyone wants today.

So we look forward to extensive committee hearings on this. I think it's important that all stakeholders that are affected by these 600-some amendments actually have an opportunity to know that they are taking place. Whether small amendments or large amendments, they need to know that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Just by way of comment before I get into the meat of the bill are a few questions and a few statements about the bill itself. When we were told there was going to be a bill brought forward and it was going to be a “good government” bill, of course we were wondering what that could potentially or possibly mean, because anyone who understands good government, or the origins of that phrase, would of course go back to the constitution of Canada, the British North America Act of 1867. The whole *raison d'être* of our parliamentary system was to provide peace, order and good government. So I was wondering whether this was a constitutional bill at all and whether or not that's what was going to come about, as such.

Then my mind strayed a little and thought about how other jurisdictions applied good governance. The United Nations defines it as “participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law”—eight things for good governance. I thought that maybe this bill was going to be a little bit of that.

You can imagine my surprise when it was none of the above. In fact, this is a housekeeping bill. In fact, if you look at the purport at the beginning of the bill, and if you look at what is contained therein, it doesn't talk about good governance at all in the paragraph saying what the bill is about. I don't know who thought up the title, but certainly this is not a bill about good governance. This is a housekeeping bill and in fact, within the body of the

paragraph explaining the nature of the bill, it's quite clear that this is a housekeeping bill.

I am wondering why the government insists on calling this bill something that it is not. I think what they are trying to do is to convince people that they are a good government, or that they are governing properly, or that this bill is just something in a long continuum of government bills to do very little but to highlight various ministries.

When I think of good governance, I do not think of what is happening here in this Legislature. I do not look in terms of what this government is attempting to do, in terms of its lack of accountability, its transparency, its efficiency, its effectiveness around the whole issue—like the eHealth scandal. If this is a bill that is intended to make the government more efficient and effective and transparent and accountable, I would suggest this bill has failed.

I also look at this government in terms of its lack of success in increasing equity and inclusiveness in Ontario because I know the government has said many times that they want to do things about poverty and food bank use and the gap between the rich and the poor. Potentially that's going to be exacerbated by the HST. If that is the intention of this bill, I think this government has failed.

In terms of their good governance around the lack of broad participation in government decision-making, I go back some time now to when I was summarily removed from each and every poverty discussion that took place around Ontario because it was for invited guests and Liberal members only. I'm just wondering, is this the government coming to the conclusion that democracy should be participatory? If it is, I don't know why they took so long in consulting with people or letting the facts come out about this bill.

Then there's also the lack of responsiveness which the United Nations said has to be done for good governance. I give but one example, and that's dump site 41. To those who are opposed to the Clarkson gas plant and even those concerned about the health impact of wind turbines, it doesn't seem that ordinary people are being consulted or are being given all of the information that they need to come to rational and good decisions.

It's very important to examine this bill. Will it enhance participation? Will it increase transparency by making information about government decisions more freely available? Will it ensure that government serves all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame? Will it help to mediate the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus that is in the best interests of the whole community? Will it promote equity? Will it encourage effectiveness and efficiency? Will it promote accountability? Or is this bill, as I suspect and as the minister finally got around to saying, merely a housekeeping bill? It's changing a few little words, it's fixing up a mistranslation, it's tinkering around the edges, and it's really much ado about nothing.

1500

This is an omnibus bill. It's 300-plus pages—I think it's more than that, but I'm just going to err on the side of

caution and say it's about 300-plus pages—26 schedules, hundreds of sections of acts. It was introduced for first reading last week. What is contained in the bill was not posted on the website until Thursday. Second reading is being held today—Monday—and is going to continue on Tuesday and Wednesday. Think about how fast this has happened: It's introduced last week, it's put on the website on Thursday, it's printed today. Second reading starts today, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Now, it's very difficult for members in this House to get a handle on what is happening, but it is even more difficult for even the best-resourced stakeholders to understand and comment on this bill, not to mention those who don't have policy staff available to review the bill.

When I stood in this House last week to respond to the minister, I was at some considerable disadvantage. The minister, of course, is not at a disadvantage. The government members are not at a disadvantage. Most of them have had an opportunity to be briefed on the bill, to talk to the minister about the bill, to cheer on the minister, who reads his prepared speech made by his political staff on the wonders of the bill. Those of us on the opposition side scrambled, in the five minutes or so that we had to look at the bill, to try to come to some kind of conclusion on what was contained therein. It is a very difficult process, and I rather enjoyed the humour the next day when I commented on the possibility of municipal election day occurring on Halloween. I was chided by the Minister of Municipal Affairs in his most inimitable way; he talked about how I should go out and buy a calendar and other kinds of, I think, silly statements.

He was asked questions by the member from Huron—Bruce, but I would ask either of them to ever try to respond to a 600-page bill in five minutes, because I doubt very much that they could do it. It's very easy to sit there having all of the knowledge and to protect it and not tell anybody what's there, and then pretend that you are the fount of all that knowledge. The reality is that it doesn't happen, and the reality is that if I had a 100-year calendar in my pocket, I would have pulled it out. It's pretty simple. I'm waiting for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to tell me at what bank he gets one of those, because I've been looking for one for a long time. They used to be in the phone book; they were very handy. I used to use them a lot when I worked in the immigration department to try to determine dates, when things actually occurred and the days on which they occurred, but I haven't seen one for a long time.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: BlackBerry may have one, but I am one of those people who refuses to bring a BlackBerry into this House because I believe that the BlackBerry ought not to be in this House; in fact, that is the rule of this House, although I know that many members are sitting there texting as I watch. I know that that happens, but I believe this Legislature is a place for debate, a reasonable and rational debate.

It's difficult, as I said, for even the most resourced people to have that information right on the tip of their

tongue. So I have taken the opportunity over the last number of days to read the bill, sections of the bill, and to be briefed by people from the department. I would commend the minister for sending over his staff to talk about the bill, but they made it very clear to me that the section of the bill that would be of the most interest to me as the municipal affairs critic revolved around those sections dealing with municipalities, and I agreed. I came for the section to which I was invited, which was a round at municipalities. I do admit, due to the traffic problems in Toronto, that I was about three minutes late, but I was there for the entire balance of the presentation. I was very disappointed, with the questions that I asked, that they were all deemed to be political in nature and would not be responded to by the staff. Even though the staff seemed more than willing to answer them, the person from the minister's office made it quite clear that they would not be allowed to answer them.

I started to study some more, and I started to wonder why the government is proceeding at such a lightning pace. What is the impetus? Now, I do acknowledge that some of the changes to the Municipal Act and the Elections Act will have to be made in pretty short order. I understand that. But most of the other bills are of very limited consequence. Whether they take place before we break for the fall session or whether they're still around when we come back in February or March, I think, is of very little consequence.

It's not a good omen, I would suggest, for accountability, transparency and participation. The press release that the government put out talked about improving clarity, transparency and accountability. I fail to see, with anything that has been done so far, any reading of the bill, how that is going to be accomplished.

The explanatory note, as I said, to the bill stated, "The bill is part of the government initiative to promote good government," but the bill itself mentions housekeeping in its preamble and not good government.

So we have to look to each of the component parts, and I'm going to confine myself, now that I've prefaced my remarks with the whole process by which everything is hidden and is secret around here until the last minute, to what is actually contained within the body of the bill. The first thing is the provisions, and I'm going to talk only about two things: the provisions of the Municipal Elections Act changes and the Ontario Municipal Board, both of which come in the ambit of one of my critic portfolios. I'm going to leave the discussions of other sections of the bill and other ministries to other members of the caucus.

In terms of the Municipal Elections Act changes, there are some changes; some of them are welcome, and I want to talk about those welcome changes. But I also want to talk about things that are not in the bill that should be in the bill and to encourage the minister to make substantive changes when this goes to committee or before it goes to committee.

Some of the things that are in there: There is a new contribution limit of \$5,000 per donor per electoral

jurisdiction, and within that donation, there remains the \$750 limit per candidate. The second thing that I noticed in reading in there is that there is the elimination of the ability to carry forward surplus campaign funds from one election to another, starting after this election—I'm going to get back to why that's not good enough; starting with this election—and to have the surpluses turned over to the municipality. The third thing that we found that was in there is that there is a clearer definition of what constitutes expenses for fundraising. The fourth thing was that voting stations are going to be accessible, which is a good thing. The next one is that there are going to be changes to the voting process to require that all electors show ID, and I want to talk about that a little more later, too. The next one is improved tracking and updating of voters lists. And last but not least is moving the election date to the fourth Monday of October.

Now, in terms of these, the new contribution limit of \$5,000, I would welcome that, except that there is no teeth to it at all. The second one, the elimination of the ability to carry forward surplus campaign funds: I would support that, except it's not retroactive. There are people who are carrying forth campaign funds from the municipal election in 1999. There are others who have not been a candidate for years but have used a little-known loophole in the extant law to register for one day and withdraw and have that money go forward. None of that is going to be touched. There is a clearer definition of expenses for fundraising so that these cannot be excluded from campaign expense limits, except that there is no teeth to enforce it. Everyone must show ID. I mean, I'm in favour of everyone showing identification when they vote. I think it's absolutely necessary. There was some existence of election fraud uncovered in the past election and in elections that went before that. But I also want to ask the members, what about places where it's difficult to get identification?

1510

Some of you have travelled up and around James Bay and Hudson Bay and into remote reserves of First Nations communities where there are no birth certificates; there are no driver's licences, because there are no roads; there are no health cards. I've gone with Gilles Bisson up to his riding, and there are lineups of people trying to get health cards; it's very difficult to get those in the absence of information.

In most cases, they have no identification at all. Identification is the fact that they are known by their communities. They are known by the chief and the band council. They are known to live there. When they show up to vote, everyone in the town will know who they are, and will know if that is the guy he says he is or if he's from somewhere else—the towns are small. I don't know whether there is any provision here for people in First Nations communities who have difficulty getting identification, particularly young people who have not had a lifetime to obtain the necessary documentation, who simply have grown up, gone to school, unfortunately quit school all too early and are known only by their local community.

In terms of the fourth Monday of October, I welcome that change. I remember when I was a municipal councillor and later a mayor, we kept sending letters to the province, when they were asking for election changes, and we kept saying we didn't like the fact that the election was in December, and later that it was in November. Now, into October, it starts to make sense. The rationale we were given was that this dated back as long ago as Confederation. It was felt to be a good thing—municipal elections used to take place on January 1—because nobody was out working the fields. All the harvesting had been done, and everything that was necessary to be done could be done. Then they moved it to December, using the same argument, and to November, again using the same argument that most of the farm work had been done.

But the reality is that we are an urbanized society, and in most places, people who are running for elected office—they can be farmers too—are mechanized and have made the kinds of inroads that we can now afford to have the election in October. It makes sense to me that it takes place before daylight savings time ends and certainly before it gets cold, and potentially before some of the damage that is done on Halloween.

Just to reiterate and perhaps expand about the legislation and why I think it doesn't go far enough, I have to question—I questioned the staff and they wouldn't answer this, so perhaps the minister or the parliamentary assistant will answer—why donations from unions and corporations aren't banned outright. That would be the easiest possible thing to enforce. It's not here in this legislation. Instead, you have a \$5,000 limit.

We all know what has happened with that limit in the past. I asked earlier about, and gave the example of, the Joe Volpe scenario. You will all remember that he was running for the leadership of the federal Liberal Party, and on his list of donors were five-year-old children. He had to send the money back, but it was impossible to say where those five-year-old children got the money and why, having that amount of money, they determined they needed to give it to Joe Volpe. It boggles my mind.

I asked the staff when they were there, "Is there any provision, or are you contemplating any provision, whatsoever that would put an end to that?" They told me no. They told me that, under this law, five-year-old children will continue to be allowed to make political contributions in municipal elections. I asked the parliamentary assistant, "Is that what you want in the law? Do you want that?" If you don't want that, please do something about it.

The next thing: Why not ban the carry-overs of surpluses from pre-2007 elections to candidates who didn't even run in the 2007 election? We have people who have done that. One is a former member of this Legislature. I remember asking questions in this Legislature when he was sitting here. He registered to be a municipal candidate. We asked, "Is he a municipal candidate and doesn't he have to resign?" By the next day, of course, he had withdrawn his nomination, but the purpose was not

that he wanted to run; the purpose was not to embarrass himself, I'm sure, in this House; the purpose was to secure that money for a subsequent election. All of the rumours circulating around Vaughan are that he will be a candidate in this election, and he has that money that has been carried over. I wonder: Is that what we intend? Sure, you can ban it in the future, but why didn't you ban the practice? Why didn't you say, "You can't use those monies"?

The next election will be an unfair election. All of the people who have carried money over by any means at all from one election or five elections ago are going to have an advantage over every other person who is seeking elective office. That may not be true four years hence. That may not be true in 2014, but why have that continue today? Why is it important to this government that this unfair practice be continued? All of the money could be taken by the municipalities and put into a general revenue fund—heaven knows, the municipalities need the money—and if a candidate is that good, they can go out and get their own money. Some of them already have more money sitting in the municipal bank than they need to run in the election. Then you wonder why incumbents are re-elected and you wonder why ordinary, good citizens who want to participate in the democratic life of the municipality are scared off. I'm saying, if it's good enough for four years from now, it should be good enough now.

There is a great deal of difficulty in monitoring donations from multiple-link companies concerning the \$5,000 limit. People have, we all know, numbered companies; people own shares in companies; people are on boards of directors of companies. When you see company after company making a donation, whether it be \$750 or \$5,000, in a municipality, you have to know that some people are able to flout the law. There is nothing in here that will make that possible. An outright ban on corporate and union donations would make it nearly impossible to carry out that same rate.

Municipal election financing is overdue for reform. One need only look at the domination of municipal councils and some of the studies that have been done. I want to give special credibility to Professor Robert MacDermid. He shows that corporate donations form a significant percentage of donations in many municipalities and that at least 50% of the 2006 municipal election donations in the cities of Pickering, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Brampton, Oshawa, Whitby and Mississauga came from corporations and developers. Does that scare this government? I think not, because they took not one bit of action against this. Does it scare people who are democrats at heart—and notice that I didn't say "New Democrats"—who want to have a fair system where ordinary people can participate in the process? I would say, very much so. Deep-pocketed real estate developers have too much influence over municipal election outcomes.

In the 2006 municipal elections, winning candidates received 54% of their funding from developers, whereas

the losers only got 35%. Councillors then vote on development proposals from the very people who funded their election. Is anyone surprised how they vote? Professor MacDermid did a detailed analysis of Vaughan, the place that likes to call itself “the city above Toronto” but which many of their residents refer to disparagingly as “the city above the law.” They do so because of all of the shenanigans.

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When I had an opportunity in estimates to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs about shenanigans, he was taken aback and said, “What do you mean by that?” So I detailed a great many of the 200 outstanding charges that are pending against three members of council. He said, “That’s okay; the courts will decide about that.” Then I told him about some of the other things, and ordinary citizens being forced to take huge court action. We read on Friday that an ordinary citizen has charged a fourth councillor with breaches of the Municipal Act and influence.

I asked the minister too: Did he make a statement, which is quoted in most of the Vaughan periodicals and the things put out by the city of Vaughan, that the city of Vaughan is a well-run council and a well-run municipality? He shocked the entire world by making that statement. I asked him about all of the changes that might be made, and he was not forthcoming.

Professor MacDermid’s detailed analysis of Vaughan council decision-making between 2006 and 2009 shows that the council approved almost every single development proposal, usually without even having a recorded vote.

If you think ordinary people are not worried about this in the city of Vaughan, then I think you’re mistaken. There are a whole bunch of people out there in the city of Vaughan who care passionately about their community, their municipality and election laws that are almost impossible to enforce. All Ontarians have the right to fair and unbiased municipal election results that serve the interests of communities and not private interests.

Election financing laws: When the Minister of Municipal Affairs was asked last week why he didn’t take this extraordinary step, why the legislation is silent on this, he said it was because this isn’t the law that we have in the province of Ontario, and we don’t want to tell the municipalities that they should have one law when we in fact have another.

Well, there’s a solution for that. It’s not to go out and say, “Do as I say, not as I do.” What is the right thing to ask, is it right in Ontario that we continue to have laws that allow for corporate and union donations?

I would suggest to the parliamentary assistant, who heckled me on this, that I would gladly do away with union donations if we do away with corporate ones too. Although union donations in a place like the city of Toronto constitute 2% versus 35% for corporate donations, they are still not what we want to see. We want to see a law where ordinary citizens raise the funds, put forward their candidates, vote and have control of the

outcome, rather than have big, high-priced financing taking place. It is wrong.

The governments of Manitoba and Quebec already ban union and corporate donations while providing political parties with modest financial compensation. The government of Canada does exactly the same thing. The government of Nova Scotia, this past week, the brand new elected government, moved in exactly the same direction, and that will be the last unfair election, the one that just happened there, in terms of corporate and union donations, because if the bill is passed there, they will join the ever-increasing ranks of people who see democracy as not beholden to corporate and union interests but to ordinary people.

After seeing this bill last week, Professor MacDermid said, “I had hoped for something more, such as a ban on corporate or trade union donations.” As I said, Minister Watson said it would be hypocritical to ban these, because they are allowed at the provincial level; in other words, because corporations are able to exert undue influence at the provincial level, they should be allowed to do so at the municipal level as well. That’s another way of looking at his words.

The bill limits how much can be spent to \$5,000 per jurisdiction. In a place like the city of Toronto, where we are now, where I come from, where I represent, \$5,000 is pretty hard to spread around amongst 44 incumbent councillors and one mayor. Spreading \$5,000 45 ways is pretty small potatoes—it’s less than 100 bucks.

But what about in other jurisdictions? There are 444 municipalities in the province of Ontario. Toronto is huge in comparison to any of the others. But in local municipalities across this province, in rural and northern areas, the norm is to have five councillors and a mayor or a reeve. That’s the norm. That’s what they have, that’s what there is there. When you have five councillors and a reeve, then you have six people. You spread that \$5,000, and you can literally—you can’t even do it; you’re only allowed \$750 per person. You’ll still have money left over. So I have to question, outside of Toronto, whether this limit is appropriate, because in the majority of towns in Ontario, it remains too high.

According, again, to Professor MacDermid, “Disclosure and campaign contribution limits [are] difficult to enforce” because the true ownership or control of private corporations cannot be known. The same individual can make numerous \$5,000 donations through associated or numbered companies, and that’s just, unfortunately, the way it is.

In 2006, corporate donations in the GTA municipal elections exceeded 75% of total donations in Oshawa, Pickering, Whitby, Richmond Hill, Brampton and Vaughan, and not a single word is contained in the bill on this. This is the most egregious practice—not a single word. In Minister Watson’s opinion, we can’t go there because, in Ontario, we take that kind of money.

There is an opportunity and there would be an opportunity for a rebate program. Rebates now exist in Markham, Oakville, Ottawa and Toronto, and you will note

that none of these four municipalities that offer rebates get most of their donations from corporations. They give rebates. The City of Toronto Act allows for the city of Toronto to effect change around corporate and union donations, but also allows them and other municipalities like Markham, Oakville and Ottawa to have a rebate program. So if an ordinary individual and citizen sees fit to give \$100, \$200 or \$300 to their favourite municipal candidate, they can get a portion of that back, in exactly the same way that people who give to political parties, both provincially and federally, can get some of their money back at income tax time. The cities, in fact, that participate give a portion of the money back to those who participate in the election process, thereby taking away the influence of corporations and unions. So there is an option available, but this government has not seen fit to do it.

Second, the bill does not take measures to allow all municipalities to ban corporate donations. As I said, the City of Toronto Act allows the city of Toronto to ban corporate donations, and I believe that debate will be coming before Toronto council in the coming weeks. I can only encourage the councillors to vote for it. I have spoken to my own local councillor about the need to do so.

I would suggest that other municipalities be allowed the same degree of freedom, because only the city of Toronto alone of the 444 municipalities has that right. Other municipalities like Hamilton have asked for that right and have asked for the province to move on this accord, but of course the province has not. If the province is unwilling to move forward on this issue, then let the municipalities at least have that option, because I believe that the majority of them will struggle with it, but will see the right: that they don't want to be beholden to corporate and union interests.

The next thing that I found rather shocking in the last election was that the Liberals made an election promise, which they reiterated in 2004, that they would form a citizens' jury to make recommendations to the government regarding changes in how provincial political parties and election campaigns are financed. There is nothing in here—they've never done it. They did form a type of jury to look at proportional representation, but nothing whatsoever in terms of how provincial political parties in election campaigns are financed. They never set up the jury, and the only recommendation that ever came about donations was that they be disclosed within 10 days. It is clear that this remains a problem to many people.

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Donation limits as well are too high at \$8,400 annually to parties, doubling to \$16,800 during election years, with a combined total of \$5,600 annually to each party's riding association or election candidates. I would suggest we should follow the federal rules and lower that to \$1,100. Then and only then will we have the moral authority, the moral suasion to go to the municipalities and suggest that they too can act in that way.

The changes to the Municipal Elections Act are welcome—those that are there—but this is a very timid approach that will be nearly impossible to carry out. People in the city of Vaughan, particularly, write to me a lot because they're frustrated with this government. They're frustrated that they're trying to do something, that there are court cases—200 outstanding charges against the mayor and two of the councillors, more outstanding charges that were laid last week against a third councillor, and nothing seems to be happening. They write to me and they ask about this act, because they believe that this act in its present form, as put forward in this House, is unenforceable. There are approximately, they've said, 200 contraventions of the elections act between three sitting members of council in Vaughan, and all three members are still there voting, three years after the election, because the process is not a good process.

Then the government talks about setting up a mandatory committee that council will establish to review audit requests. How is that going to be set up? It's going to be set up by the council following the election. They're going to set it up, I think, with people who are known to the council—the councillors and the mayor—without checking; there is no requirement to check on their reliability, their thoughts. It's not like the process that goes on here at Queen's Park. The citizens of Vaughan are worried that should such an audit committee be set up, it's going to do exactly the same thing as councils.

I remember my frustration at the megacity. Following that election in which the municipalities of Toronto were formed into one large megacity the citizens did not want, still don't want, still don't need, they set it up. There were 57 of us, 57 people in that council. I remember in that council the debate that went on in that election and the subsequent election about people flouting the rules, particularly in the subsequent one.

There were two egregious examples where it was brought forward to council, and what was council going to do about it? One of the examples was extremely well documented. One of the losing candidates had affidavits; he had pictures showing that the winning candidate had put up signs illegally, had put them up in advance of the time, had taken contributions illegally. It was extremely well documented. He brought forward the case to the council and the mayor. The majority of council said, "No, we're not going to investigate this because if we investigate this councillor, then who is to say that we ourselves could not be investigated?"—the exact words coming from the then mayor, Mayor Lastman.

The other egregious example that happened during the same election involved Mayor Lastman himself, because he had a huge amount of money. You have to remember, in the second campaign he was running unopposed, or virtually unopposed. He had huge amounts of donated capital that he didn't need to spend in order to win. So what he did is, he farmed some of that money out so that people that he was supporting would do a mayoral piece in which they were included with their arm around the

mayor, that it would only be put out in their prospective municipal wards, and that it was entirely paid for by the mayor. These councillors who were on the mayor's team were given the gift of free literature which they could pass out, pretending it was a mayoral campaign. When this was brought to people's attention, the mayor told the council that it should not be investigated—because he didn't want to be investigated either—and that, in fact, it was all well and good and the mayor should be allowed to support those candidates that the mayor wanted to. Council, in its wisdom, again, voted not to enforce the law and not to ask for a review, and didn't do it.

I am afraid that this same kind of thing is going to happen here with what is being suggested, because this group of citizens appointed by council and known by council may take the same way. The only fair thing that can be done—and I've talked about it in this Legislature before—is to have the electoral authorities who work for the province of Ontario also monitor those things that happen in the municipalities. I would agree that it may take a few additional staff, but they are staggered at different times so that there would be the opportunity to look at whether there were other egregious examples, whether there were other fall-downs in the law, and have something done about it. But there is nothing contained in this bill. There is nothing at all. I think the provincial body needs to oversee the audits of these elections.

With the few minutes I have left, I want to switch gears. I've talked enough about municipalities. I think this government needs to have tougher legislation. We know the problems that exist in some places. We know that whole gut-wrenching situation in Vaughan particularly, with everybody being charged and in court and a municipal council that I would suggest, with the greatest of respect to Minister Watson, is not working well. We need to make sure that the people have the best representation possible. But I would like to turn my attention now to the Ontario Municipal Board Act changes.

This was one of the ones that I saw right away, because it was of interest to me when I opened up that bill in my five minutes. It took away the rights of ordinary citizens to appeal decisions from the Ontario Municipal Board to the cabinet. Now, this has been a right that has existed in Ontario for absolute decades, and this right has been taken away.

But over the weekend I had an opportunity to read in more depth about the Ontario Municipal Board Act changes, and another thing came out. The thing that came out was that it removes the restrictions on members of the Ontario Municipal Board relating to investments or employment in municipalities, railways, and public utility companies. I have to question why. Why does this government want to remove those restrictions? In the past, OMB members could not be employed by municipalities, railways and public utility companies, for a very good reason: because they are there to pass decisions on land use planning matters, the land use planning of the municipality, the railways and the utility companies that own the transmission lines, the railway tracks

and the municipal land. So they could not be seen to be beholden to the municipality or to act against the municipal interest when an ordinary citizen came forward.

This is being changed. Can any government member tell me why you are going to allow OMB members to be employed by municipalities, railways or public utilities? It makes absolutely no sense to me, and I think we need an answer to that.

The second thing, and back to the first point that I saw: It ends the petitions to cabinet on decisions by the board. The cabinet has been a safeguard. Although the appeal process is poor and the entire appeals process for a generation has been cloaked in secrecy, and some have said it is biased against ordinary people with fewer resources who lack access to decision-makers, it has been a safeguard. I have seen it used twice in the former borough of East York. It was used once when True Davidson was the reeve and subsequently became the mayor, so this would have been back in the 1960s, on that building which stood on the Bayview extension that became known as the Bayview ghost. Anybody who ever drove by it—it was an apartment building that they started. They put it up, but before they could put the wiring inside, before they could do anything—the Ontario Municipal Board had approved it—cabinet came along and said no, it wasn't appropriate and good land use planning.

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The owner of that building had it there for many years and subsequently and fortunately, while I was mayor, sought permission to tear it down. It was there as an eyesore on the Bayview extension for all to see how land use planning and the Ontario Municipal Board did not do the right thing. It was cabinet that determined that that was not an appropriate use under the act, and it was cabinet that stopped it cold. It was cabinet that also set out what was appropriate on that land so that at the time when I was mayor, it was a fairly easy decision when the developer sold the interest and a gentleman came forward and said, "I've bought this land." We said, "Well, don't come to us. This is already the subject of a cabinet order, and this is what you can build on this land: You can build houses. You can't build multi-residential, you can't build commercial, you can't build industrial, but you can build houses." He went away and he determined—what else could he do? But I think the decision that was made by the cabinet was a good one. It was a decision that the OMB would not make, and it was a decision that the municipalities would not have gone ahead and fought through the courts because that is a huge and expensive proposition.

The second example is a much better one—much, much better. I was a wannabe councillor. I was running in the municipal election; I ran three times municipally before I won. But I do remember the first election in which I was running, and I remember that the whole debate was what to do with the Brickworks, again on Bayview Avenue. The Brickworks had been sold to a development interest, and the people who lived in the

immediate proximity and, in fact, most East Yorkers wanted the Brickworks to be kept for public use. They wanted it to be a type of park; it is in the flood plain of the Don Valley.

The development interests, of course, got hold of it, and they went to the Ontario Municipal Board. Of course, to nobody's surprise, the big deep pockets and the lawyers and the planners and everybody else they had won. But the Ontario government was then asked to intervene and, I think to the everlasting credit of the Peterson government and particularly to the minister at that time, Lily Munro, they stepped in, and they stopped the decision. They stopped the OMB decision cold, and they substituted the decision that it was to be made for public use.

I invite anybody who has not been there to come by the Brickworks and see what is happening. It has been taken over by a group called Evergreen, which has a lot of federal and provincial money. They are restoring the majority of the buildings that were once used to make bricks, the bricks that helped to build literally all of the major buildings in Toronto, including this one. The bricks came from the Don Valley Brickworks. They saved it. It is a park. It is filled with ponds. It's almost a complete little piece of wilderness, with fish and birds chirping and frogs and everything else when you go in there. It is just amazing, plus the industrial heritage, and it's there.

I think this was an excellent and a brilliant idea on behalf of the government of the day and the cabinet. Again, it was a Liberal government. It was the Peterson government and Lily Munro who stepped in and who saved that for all Torontonians.

I think that we need to keep that option open. This bill does away with that option. I don't know why the government wants to do away with that option. It may be cumbersome and it may be difficult for governments from time to time to step in and have to overrule the Ontario Municipal Board, but when it needs to be done, it needs to be done.

These are only two examples in my community. I'm sure there are examples in a great many others. I know that down around St. Catharines there was a whole debate about the minister intervening to save the historical properties in Port Colborne. There's a whole debate taking place around that, asking the minister to intervene. The people from Port Colborne wrote to me last week and said, "Will you help us get the minister and the cabinet to look at this," in terms of an override of the Ontario Municipal Board decision, which freely acknowledged that this is going to destroy many of the heritage properties, should the developer get what he wants—the board has already ruled in the developer's favour. I had the sad duty of writing back informing them of the provision in this bill that is going to take away that right, and that I'm sure everybody on the government side of this House is going to vote for that provision, although I don't know why. The cabinet should have the final say in preserving some of our historical and heritage properties and in looking at land use planning matters where the

environment is involved, as it was in the Brickworks and to a lesser extent, but somewhat, with the Bayview ghost.

It is a safety valve. The one advantage of cabinet appeals is that they ensure accountability by the government for what are genuine and generally policy decisions by administrative tribunals. The decisions made by the OMB are essentially policy decisions in the land use context, and it is difficult for them to be judicially reviewed by a divisional court. Cabinet appeals do provide the safety valve when the tribunal's decision is reached largely on the basis of facts or policy considerations that do not favour public interest clients.

We need the reforms, but the reforms need to be set out in statute, as in Quebec, so they cannot be readily overridden by future governments. There is the whole question around the appointments process; there is another question around the process of ensuring that people at the OMB possess the expertise they are deemed to have, free of patronage considerations; there is the whole question, too, of intervener funding. None of these things are contained within the bill. The only two things that are contained are both problematic to me; that is, that citizens lose the right of appeal to cabinet, and the whole difficulty of Ontario Municipal Board people being allowed to work for municipalities, railways and utility companies.

In a nutshell, we have some considerable difficulty with these two sections of the bill, the only two to which I'm going to speak. They were given to us in a rush. They were given to us, and copies were not made available to the general public until this morning. We are now faced with three days of hearings completely in a row, and I can only assume that the government is intent on pushing this through as rapidly as possible.

I would concur that there is a need for rapidity on the section dealing with the Municipal Act and Municipal Elections Act, and I would concur that if the government wants to carve this section out and deal with it quickly so that it can be the law and the changes that are necessary can be the law by January 4, we would do everything in our power to facilitate that. Although we do have concerns and we do want a stronger bill and we do want changes made to that, this can be accomplished, with goodwill on all sides, by January 4.

I fail to see, though, why the other sections of this bill have to be dealt with in such rapidity. If they are merely housekeeping—the combining of acts, the changing of legislation, changes of titles, changes of mistranslations from French and a whole plethora of other things—and not to do with good governance, then let us take our time to do it right. It is 600 pages. Let us do it right. I am asking that this bill go to committee, and I am asking that people be consulted. But I am also asking that the government consider severing the bill in two parts: those that are essential and have to be done quickly, and those which are not essential and that we can take our good and marked time to do right.

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Those would be my comments on this bill. I await my colleagues; I hope they've been listening and will

provide some input on what I had to say. I think that for this bill to be successful, for this bill to truly meet the standards that we expect, to truly be open and transparent and part of everyday people coming forward to talk about what is necessary and what can be done, we have to do it right, we have to do it as slowly and as carefully as possible, and I'm asking this government to consider exactly that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I just want to make a few comments about the Public Inquiries Act, because that has come up.

Over many years, there have been a number of public inquiries here in Ontario. Some of the public inquiries have been lengthy and complex, and media reports in the paper were indicating that they were convoluted and perhaps from time to time had lost their sense of direction.

What we've done in coming up with these amendments is, we have taken the advice of people who are close to these public inquiries, who have given us advice about what worked well, what didn't work so well and what perhaps caused some of the difficulties, the unnecessary complexity and costs of these public inquiries.

There have been some recent public inquiries that indeed have been models of efficiency in terms of dealing on a very timely basis with the heart of the issue at hand, preparing their report and delivering that report to the appropriate ministry. We've consulted with the participants of those public inquiries, people who were close to them. Again, they gave us their best advice on what worked well, what didn't work so well, various improvements and so on.

We have taken that advice and incorporated that advice into, and it forms the basis of, the amendments and the changes to the Public Inquiries Act. Again, the motive behind this was efficiency, transparency and effectiveness. Public Inquiries Act amendments—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was pleased to hear that tour de force from the member for Beaches–East York. He's a well-known epicure; I know that. I know him quite well. On Sundays, he spends most of his day preparing meals, cooking and baking for the week ahead. Obviously he spent a lot of time studying Bill 212 on Sunday as well, given the information that he imparted to the House today, and I want to compliment him for that.

I haven't had the chance to consult with my constituents on Bill 212 to the extent that I normally would want to. Obviously, on October 27 this bill was introduced in the Legislature. Our caucus has not yet had a chance to even discuss it, to determine what our position is going to be, yet the government has called it for debate. It makes you wonder what is buried in these 288 pages.

I've had a chance to have a cursory review of it. This bill opens up I don't know how many acts in almost every ministry in the government. The government

would lead us to believe that it's all good stuff, it's all brought forward in a collegial manner to improve—they call it the Good Government Act. I have my suspicions that there's a lot in here that needs to be studied in great detail. I've asked for the advice of the municipal politicians in my riding about the changes to the Municipal Act. I have not yet received a great deal of feedback from them.

I would hope that the government is going to give us an indication soon that this bill will in fact be sent to a committee for public hearings, because I think that we need to have an extensive review of all of the provisions in Bill 212.

Without question, the government is wanting to move forward, to turn the channel on some of the scandals that we've talked about in the Legislature in the last few months. But at the same time, I think that it is incumbent upon the government to ensure that Bill 212 receives its fair hearing.

Again, I want to congratulate and commend the member for Beaches–East York for the information that he provided to the House this afternoon. I look forward to continued debate on Bill 212 as this unfolds.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes this afternoon to speak, respond and make comments on what we heard across the aisle on Bill 212.

I would like to make a comment first about the aspect of technical briefings. The member did talk about the technical briefings and what he perceived as being a little bit different than what actually happened. He noted that his questions were not answered because they were of a political nature and not technical. Well, I think the technical briefings are just that: to go through this bill, to give the member an understanding of what's in the bill, and what is covered in those, I believe, 22 ministries that are affected by this bill. I did go through, and I believe I did count up 22 different ministries that are impacted by aspects of the bill. It is not a briefing to debate what was not included or what the member believes should have been included.

That discussion is something that happens here in this Legislature during, first of all, debate, when you can give your ideas and thoughts, and also during question period. Question period is that time when you give political questions, when you throw those political questions across the aisle. That's where it's done. It's not for the officials who engage in those briefings to take part in the debate. They're there to give the ideas, to give an understanding of what is covered in this bill.

I think, too, that the member was just recently—it was not very long ago that the member did have a question that he asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the Municipal Elections Act, and I think that's where that dialogue can happen—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I do appreciate an opportunity to make comment on the leadoff speech from the member

from Beaches–East York. I think he reminded me before that there was a difference between “Beach” and “Beaches,” and I know that there has been a discussion going on. I think it’s still Beaches–East York, right?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is.

Mr. Dave Levac: Yes, thank you. He nods yes.

His concern laid out with regards to the breadth of coverage in the bill acknowledged that a very large portion of it—and he can confirm whether I’m right or wrong on this—is indeed technical in nature, and that probably one of those bills inside of this has these requirements that need to be changed, modernized and updated. I referenced this earlier in the debate that I was having about other levels of government still having hitching post laws still attached to their bylaws in city councils, where you can’t hitch your horse up to the post outside of a store, and you have to sweep the wooden sidewalks—that kind of stuff.

But having seriousness to what his concerns are, the one concern that I do have is his implication, and maybe he can correct me if I’m wrong, that if any member votes against a certain portion or votes for a certain portion of the bill, they’re wrong, they’re making a mistake. I think somewhere in there he implied—there was a section that he referenced where, in his interpretation, if the back benchers support the legislation, then they’re most definitely wrong and shouldn’t be doing so. Having said that, I’m curious as to whether he could correct that for me, because I know the member, in debate, does not impugn anyone’s desire to vote for or against the bill. He’s just sharing his opinion as to whether or not he would support it, but I’m sure he’s not saying that we are wrong if we do vote for the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Beaches–East York has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to thank the members from Wellington–Halton Hills, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Brant for their comments.

I am perplexed, though, by the member from Willowdale. I didn’t talk about what he had to talk about at all. I never mentioned one thing, so I don’t know what he was listening to or why he made his comment.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills correctly pointed out that I believe that there should be an opportunity to review and to consult, and I’m looking forward, if this bill does go to committee, to exactly that happening. I don’t think that the time frame to date has allowed for any review or consultation, certainly not with members in this House, and the broader public has only had the copy of the bill available to them since this morning.

1600

The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry talked about a technical briefing, yes, and I do know some of the people—even the staff within the technical briefing were willing to answer my questions; however, the person in charge was not allowing them to do so, and that was quite clear.

For the member from Brant, I’m perplexed and I am puzzled. I think every member in this House needs to vote for what they believe is correct. Whether they be on the government side or on the opposition side, they need to vote for what they believe is correct. I was talking about the municipal elections. The only time that I remember talking at all about voting was those people in the city of Vaughan who are municipal councillors and the mayor continuing to vote on every single aspect, although there are 200 outstanding charges against them. The city and the residents of the city of Vaughan do not think that the law as it currently exists is correct, and this law certainly will not help to end that practice. If people have broken the law, they ought not to be there, in positions of public trust, voting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I’m pleased to recognize the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And francophone affairs. Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président.

I am honoured to rise in the House today to speak on our Good Government Act, 2009. As honourable members know, my ministry has submitted a number of proposed housekeeping amendments to several acts that are administered by the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

La plupart des amendements proposés par mon ministère sont secondaires. Ils sont faits avec l’intention de continuer à offrir aux citoyens de l’Ontario un gouvernement fort et efficace.

La responsabilité législative de mon ministère est vaste et englobe la législation concernant l’amélioration de l’accessibilité, la prestation des services sociaux aux personnes vulnérables, et le soutien communautaire aux personnes qui ont une déficience intellectuelle.

Our ministry focuses on people, on helping vulnerable individuals and families who comprise Ontario’s strong and thriving communities, and my ministry’s legislation reflects that. Under the Good Government Act, 2009, my ministry has proposed amendments to our landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. This groundbreaking legislation is helping to improve accessibility in all walks of life. This legislation will continue to guide us in our journey towards an accessible province by 2025.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all honourable members for unanimously passing this legislation more than four years ago. That support has helped to propel our accessibility goals, and we are well on our way to reaching our goals. We are also proposing amendments to our social services legislation and to one of my ministry’s newest pieces of legislation, the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008.

La nouvelle loi de l’Ontario sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, adoptée en septembre dernier, est le fondement de notre travail qui consiste à créer des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle qui sont modernes, équitables et

durables. Cette nouvelle législation aide les personnes qui ont une déficience intellectuelle à obtenir les services et les soutiens appropriés et ainsi à participer pleinement à la vie de leur collectivité.

The new act replaces the 34-year-old Developmental Services Act, written when services were provided mainly for people living in government-run institutions. As honourable members know, our government last year closed the remaining three provincial institutions that had housed nearly 1,000 people with developmental disabilities. Our new legislation helps us build a modern, sustainable developmental services system that reflects how people live today—in communities, not in institutions. For people with a developmental disability and their families, it means better service, more choice and fairness.

We have also proposed changes to legislation that impacts our Family Responsibility Office. The Family Responsibility Office deals with one of the most difficult, emotional and adversarial issues individuals can face: the breakdown of the family. In recent years, our government championed strong legislation that gave the Family Responsibility Office new enforcement tools. With our proposed amendments, we intend to ensure that legislation continues to support the strong enforcement of court orders so that Ontario families, and especially the children, get the money they are entitled to.

We are also proposing amendments to a lesser-known piece of legislation that my ministry is responsible for: the Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998.

Vous n'êtes pas sans savoir, chers collègues, qu'un ministère tel que le nôtre ne peut offrir tous ces services sans la collaboration de nombreux partenaires. Ce n'est possible que grâce aux milliers de femmes et d'hommes dans les différents ministères, les municipalités, les agences et les organismes communautaires qui travaillent sans relâche et avec dévouement à la mise en œuvre de nos programmes.

Often at the front line, you will find a social worker or a social service worker offering a critical lifeline to an individual or a family in need. The regulation and professional designation for social workers and social service workers is handled by the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, which operates under this legislation.

As part of my ministry's 2006 report on the five-year review of the Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998, we agreed to the proposed amendments included in this omnibus bill, as requested by the college. I am proud to support these proposed amendments because, as a member of provincial Parliament, I see first-hand the positive difference that social workers make in the lives of so many people. I am humbled by the personal commitment and the caring that social workers demonstrate amid intense pressures and competing demands. Social workers are critical to all of our cherished social institutions. They provide essential services to women and children who are victims of abuse, people who are homeless, and those who are facing difficult times. I am

proud to put forward these requested amendments that will help the college do its job better.

J'espère poursuivre mon travail en collaboration avec tous mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative afin d'apporter un soutien aux Ontariennes et Ontariens qui sont dans le besoin. Je compte sur la qualité et la durabilité de nos programmes et services afin de protéger les citoyens de notre province, renforcer nos collectivités et donner aux familles toute l'assistance dont elles ont besoin pour améliorer leurs conditions de vie.

I call on all members to support this proposed legislation and to support our government's continuing efforts to provide good government to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very surprised that the minister spoke so briefly, yet so eloquently, on the institutional changes in Ontario. I think that all members of all parties support that.

I think what I most want to hear in her rebuttal on this thing is, what is she doing to make things more transparent, open and accountable? If I think of the adoption changes, they're still not working exactly the way they should.

1610

There are other issues, certainly with children with special needs. It's my understanding that the money is being put back and there's no money for them in the ministry. I know this doesn't specifically apply to the bill, but what we're trying to do here is sell this as good government. It's a good government bill, but it's by a bad government right now; they're in the penalty box. It's a good government bill by a bad government.

Look at the polls. I'm not trying to be provocative here; I'm just reading the media.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I'm reading the media here, and the compliments they gave our leader. Jim Coyle's article in the Toronto Star is worth reading.

The government really isn't doing exactly as it is says, and the bill itself—good government? Good gracious. If the minister really had something to say on this bill: 300 pages, and you speak for less than your allotted time, Minister. I have the greatest respect for the work you're doing, but it's not enough. I'm going to speak briefly—I think I may be forced to. I wanted to speak more thoroughly in the time allotted to me, but they've rammed this thing through. Madam Speaker, you would know. On October 27, just last week, they introduced it. We haven't even had briefings on it yet and we haven't caucused it is yet, and she's throwing this at us as if we know what the heck is going on. I'm sure she doesn't know.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: First of all, I congratulate the minister for what she had to say on the bill. It reminds

me a little bit of what happened many, many years ago when, after the battle of Gettysburg, someone came to preach, and preached for two hours about the battle, the significance of the battle and why it was important to keep the country together. After that, Abraham Lincoln stood up and spoke for two minutes and sat down. The preacher afterwards said that Lincoln had accomplished more in those two minutes than the preacher had accomplished in two hours.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It wasn't a preacher.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: All right. Fine, I don't know my history exactly. The member across the aisle is trying to remind me that it was a speaker who was invited. I don't know my American history to the last detail, but the bottom line is that everybody knows that the Gettysburg address only took two minutes.

The minister has managed to bring forward and speak about some very important changes that are occurring here. We could talk for hours about this, but at least we talk about it. This government talks about it, and this government sends these things to committee, unlike the previous government, where committee meetings and the majority of bills were time-allocated. There wasn't time to speak on bills. Here, we allow time to speak and allow debate. The member across can get up and speak himself if he wants to. He can speak about this in committee as well, and he's allowed to speak to it on third reading.

When I watched this Legislature—I wasn't a member back in the Mike Harris days—I don't recall too much debate going on during third reading; maybe someone can correct me. But we have debate on third reading and in committee, and we hear from deputations there. There's ample opportunity to hear and speak on those items. The minister decided to pick on various sections that affect her ministry and spoke well on them. I congratulate her for doing so, and I wish others would stand up and do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I was pleased to see the minister speak on her particular section of Bill 212. I had a little bit of time this morning and this afternoon to go over it, and I want to specifically raise something the minister did not talk much about.

Section 3, on the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, says, "The act is amended to allow the director to establish policies and procedures that must be considered in the exercise of the director's powers and duties relating to enforcement in section 6 and in the exercise," and here's the important part, "of the director's discretion to refuse to enforce a support order or support deduction order in section 7."

I have a lot of concerns with that, and I would like the minister to explain why we are giving discretion to the director of FRO to refuse to enforce a support order. Of course, support orders are put in through our court system. We have a court order system now where you have to go to court and plead your case, and a judge decides the value of money that needs to be given to

make that family survive, and yet now with the proposal in Bill 212, we are saying the director's discretion at FRO "to refuse to enforce a support order." I would really like the minister to take her two minutes to explain—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Etobicoke North, member from Timmins—James Bay—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: —to justify why we would override a current court system and a current court order that is in place, because we're essentially saying judges would—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a minute. I'm having trouble hearing the member speak. I would just point to the member from Etobicoke North and the member from Timmins—James Bay to let the member from Dufferin—Caledon have her full two minutes.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'd like the minister to take her two minutes to explain why we are overriding in legislation what the judges have put in place in our court system. I think it would be a very unfortunate waste of our current court system to say the director can overrule what the courts and judges are placing—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments? The member from Eglinton—Lawrence—sorry. The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My, my, Madam Speaker, I am just absolutely—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence was up first, but due to rotation, I will acknowledge the member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I want to, first of all, clarify for the record for my good friend across the way: It turns out that little dispute that we were having about who gave that speech—I was saying it was a senator; he was saying it was a minister of the cloth. Turns out we were both right. It was Senator Everett from Massachusetts, who was also a minister, so I guess we were both right. Anyways, the point was well made. I wouldn't want to be accused of being unfair, and when you call a spade a spade and it's a diamond, you better say it was a diamond. So there we go.

I just want to say to the government—we'll have a chance to speak to this bill a little bit more fully later—that the problem with these types of bills is that you bring in omnibus bills that change a whole raft of legislation, some of which is good. I've seen some in this legislation, some of the stuff that you're wanting to change, that I would support. But there are certainly parts of that legislation that leave a little bit to be desired when it comes to the ability to appeal to the OMB, how far you're not going when it comes to changes of the Municipal Act—there's a debate there: Should we go further? It's probably a step in the right direction, but certainly there are some changes to be made.

It leads to us this problem: How do we do the right thing when it comes to the legislation so that we make a product at the end that is acceptable to all and that serves Ontario citizens well? I have a problem that we're going to get into a piece of legislation where there's going to be particular parts to it that I'm going to have a hard time trying to support, and I'm sure other members of the opposition will as well. The government's going to stand there and say, "Look at that. They're being oppositional. They don't want to support municipal election reform." Of course I support municipal election reform, but when you have a bill and you add into the bill a whole bunch of other things other than municipal election reform—OMB reform and a whole bunch of other things; there are even changes to how we deal with elk under the MNR—it is very hard to pass it as a package. It's a bit sad that the government doesn't find a way sometimes to take out those pieces of the legislation that we find offensive so that we can go back—you'll still get your bill in the end, but that we have an opportunity to give it good public scrutiny.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Community and Social Services has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to thank the members from Durham, Scarborough Southwest, Dufferin-Caledon and Timmins-James Bay for their comments.

I'm not going to comment on the comment from the member from Durham about the length of my intervention. I think that quality over the length of the speech is often appreciated. But I am going to comment on the adoption act, the amendment to that act that we just passed not that long ago. How wonderful the comments are that I get from the people who have found either their birth parents or their children that they gave up for adoption. We are overwhelmed with the requests for information, and I'm very pleased to say that this amendment was long overdue. We had a lot of happy Ontarians and Canadians after we amended this act.

As for the comments from the member from Dufferin-Caledon about the Family Responsibility Office—

Interjection.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: When we came into power, there was a lot of improvement.

1620

Mr. Mike Colle: There was a mess. It was a disaster—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, the member said that it was a mess. It was a mess, and thanks to my colleague Minister Papatello, who did a lot of good work when she was there, the Family Responsibility Office, we have asked the office to bring change that will help this function to allow—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to start with simple clarification. Why are they doing this? When I look at this bill—I've been here about 15 years, and I would

challenge anyone, and this is not a confrontational challenge—it's almost impossible to read a bill without also having a compendium with the bill it's actually amending. When you change the language, you change the intent, and I don't think that, retroactively, you should be able to change legislation by amending it. You should not be able to change the intent of the legislation by changing certain sections or subsections, because that bill would have gone through consultation, regardless of the political affiliation, and that's the problem here.

We all could be criticized for trying to houseclean, as was said by one minister, but there are two completely new bills buried in this legislation. If you look at the preamble—and for those at home, without being too strident about this, there's usually a purpose clause which defines what the intent of the bill is. This may have been developed through a policy conference; from the suggestion of a constituent; stakeholders, be it doctors, teachers, other professionals—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Or lobbyists.

Mr. John O'Toole: Indeed, lobbyists.

When I look at it, it says here, "The bill amends or repeals a number of acts and enacts two new acts. For convenience, the amendments, repeals and new acts are set out in separate schedules. Schedules with the names of ministries include amendments to and repeals of acts that are administered by the ministry involved or that affect that ministry. The commencement provisions for each of the schedules are set out" below. If you read just that section alone, it is fairly comprehensive and not a casual read.

We as members, on all sides of the House, really did not get copies of this for any great, thorough review. In fact, there is no caucus here—and I would put to you, including the government—which has actually caucused this bill, because it was introduced Wednesday last week, and most caucuses are held on Tuesday. Tomorrow, being Tuesday, is the first Tuesday after the bill was introduced.

We know that the government members, with all due respect, will be voting yes, like this. They'll be like the three monkeys, actually. There's more than three of them, but they will be voting the way Premier McGuinty tells them, period.

Here's our problem: There will be, no doubt, some good and valuable sections within the legislation. Often governments bury in those things that we all, in common, want, but then there's the poison pill argument. They often do this—Madam Speaker, you would know this—in the budget.

When I look at this, and I look at some of it in detail, there's a section that I have, under my critic file, some responsibility for. Over the weekend, through the Internet and other sources, I was able to actually provide for our caucus meeting tomorrow—each of our critics are required to inform the caucus group of what our concerns are. My concern is what isn't obvious. That's when you get into it. Why are they doing—what are they—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Why?

Mr. John O'Toole: My good friend from Sarnia-Lambton said to me, "Why are they doing this?" In all genuine sincerity, why didn't they break this big, huge cookie into several little cookies and let us chew on them for a while?

They said they had public consultations. With whom?

Actually, what they've done here is they're trying to change the channel from a \$25-billion deficit. They're trying to change the channel from a minister's resignation and more to follow. They're trying to change the channel from million-dollar consultants to \$1 billion wasted in eHealth. There are serious troubles going on. What this bill is, respectfully, is about changing the channel. This bill is like cobbling together a bunch of phraseology changes, which they tell me is some of what it's about.

I read earlier one little section because my section is section 17; that's the Ministry of Government Services. Now, it sort of sounds innocuous enough: government services. ServiceOntario—they closed a whole bunch of driver licence issuing offices, putting a whole bunch of small business people out of work, and now they're going to have ServiceOntario, a fancy new government-run expensive model, Monday to Friday, and if you can't get from there 8 to 4, you're out of luck. It's like the H1N1 vaccine. Everybody's working during the week. Well, not in Ontario; most people are laid off. But those who are working can't get there during the business day. So when do they have this? They have it at some arcane hour or location that no one can get to.

They talk about public transit, for instance.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Can't get there from here.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Sarnia-Lambton has very good quips; I must compliment him. You can't get there from here. In fact, this bill does not get us anywhere in a hurry.

I was forced to intercede this afternoon, and because of the timing—I won't go into any extra detail. I would have liked more time to prepare; we'll say that. My prepared notes are rather scant, if you will.

My friend from Sarnia-Lambton asked, "Why are they doing this?" I really do think the Attorney General is a very decent, intelligent, capable fellow. In fact, I think he's the heir apparent for Premier Dalton McGuinty. I would say the member from London and some other jurisdiction down there has a lot to offer. But I would say that if he was to do the honourable thing here today, he would just say, "Look, we're going to take a deep breath here."

I know his parliamentary assistant, the member from Willowdale, to be a good friend. Last week, I enjoyed some off-business time with him and some of his colleagues. In that respect, they're honourable gentlemen. I would say that they're honourable gentlemen. But the real purpose here—why are they doing it? All members, both sides, all sides, should be asking, "What's the purpose here?"

I said section 17 is mine. I should get to it in the limited time—in fact, they've limited the time I can speak on this bill.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, it's unfair.

Mr. John O'Toole: I should have unlimited time. I would suggest somebody should move for unanimous consent that I can speak for as long as it takes.

Prior to getting to section 17, I had to read section 16. I thought I'd just read the concluding page. There's one act here; it's quite good. Madam Speaker, you'd enjoy this as an intelligent preacher in your own right—minister, if you will, in your own right. You're already a minister; why would you want to be in government?

Section 11 in schedule 16 says this, "Section 18 of the Perpetuities Act is amended by adding the following subsection:

"Rules not applicable to certain trust funds"—listen up. I'm begging, urging the members on the government side to listen. Please. What is it that you're opposed to listening to here?

It says, "The rules of law and statutory enactments relating to perpetuities do not apply and are deemed never to have applied to a trust fund required by subsection 9(1) of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act (Canada)."

It would sound like the original bill, which I haven't read, that it's amending—the Perpetuities Act is what it's amending. I would have to have that compendium with me to know the intent of that.

1630

What it means here is this: Nuclear waste in this particular reference would last thousands of years; the radioactive life of nuclear waste is thousands of years, maybe hundreds of thousands of years—radioactive life, okay? The duty to protect nuclear waste is in perpetuity—I'm thinking that's what it meant. Now they're saying it's "deemed never to have applied." There it is, if we can zoom the camera in here. That's the section. It's about four lines long. That section has a profound implication for my riding and for Wesleyville, where they stored the low-level nuclear waste. They've been fighting about moving that waste for 40 or 50 years. The federal government has responsibility in this area as well. They have spent literally \$50 million and haven't relocated one teaspoon of low-level nuclear waste.

Right now, we're talking about the nuclear waste thing. Did you know that there really is no solution for handling it? They have a report out—it's a federal report—and it says that there's the short-term solution, which means stabilize it where it is; the medium-term solution, which is, "We'll have a look at it"; and the long-term solution is, "We're working on it." Seriously. It's a huge report like that. I had a look through it and had a little conversation with people who knew more about it than I did.

The big plan there, as you would all know, is to drill a great big hole into the Precambrian Shield, the Laurentian Mountains, drill it through the rock thousands of feet down—this is impermeable rock. That's why they're choosing that. It's like the tunnel they're building, the Beck tunnel, costing billions of dollars, and it will never be finished. I put to you it will collapse before it's done.

That's only one little section. Can you imagine 400 pages of this drivel? It is just unconscionable that they would be trying to shuffle this by to change the channel. That's all they're doing. Viewers, be prepared: This is another sham by them, I'm telling you.

In my section here—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Some of the members on the other side—I don't want to name them—are saying I'm wrong. Well, stand in your place in the two minutes and demonstrate to me that you, first of all, have even read it, because I put to you, you cannot read this bill in isolation. You have to have a stack of 22 pieces of legislation to examine what is changing. If you're changing it from "thou shalt not" or "thou shall not do it" or "maybe you can do it" or "will do it" or "shall do it"—these are all words. I put to you without being challenging, you certainly have to look at it.

In the few seconds that I've been given in the overall compass of time here, the Business Corporations Act—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is the Business Corporations Act. This is just coming out of Small Business Month. "Paragraphs 22 and 28 and section 272 of the Business Corporations Act are repealed." What does that section say? You cannot know what it says unless you have the bill with you. The next is, "Clause 273(1)(a) of the act is amended by striking out 'an incorporator' and substituting 'all incorporators'." I think I have established conclusively that you cannot read this bill, 400 pages, without a whole stack of bills with you.

I go back to my original premise: Why are they doing this? What's the purpose in having a choking omnibus bill loaded with all sorts of intents and no description of what they're intending to do, really, even in the small section I stumbled on?

I'm going to mention a couple of sections here. "The Certificate of Titles Act is repealed." This has to do with property registrations, I am imagining, because you have to look at the Certificate of Titles Act. "Ontario regulation 514/93"—that's a regulation that was passed in 1993 under the Bob Rae government—"made under the act is revoked." What did that regulation say? Does anyone know? There isn't a soul in this House who knows, not one, not the minister, I'm telling you. Don't try to slip it by us here. This is a big bill, and don't expect it to be swallowed as comfortably as the Liberal members—they'll all vote yes because they won't even have a clue what's going on.

The Certification of Titles Act is repealed, as I said. Here's another one, the Change of Name Act: "The following provisions of the Change of Name Act are amended by striking out 'Ministry of the Solicitor General' wherever that expression appears and substituting in each case 'Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.'" Yes, that's an administrative change. Yes, I get it; they're just changing the ministry reference.

Would business go on as usual without this? Of course it would. They've changed ministry names. They've got

a new Ministry of Revenue whose primary job, with staff, is to sell the HST. He's not the Minister of Revenue; he's the minister of communication. He's out there preaching to every Rotary Club and service club that will even listen to him, and I heard that attendance is down, that attendance is way down. In fact, we'll see the real attendance at election day in 2011.

However, I'll go on here and say there are a bunch of sections under that that are changed—and there's no one here.

Here's another interesting one. The member from Willowdale would like this because he did practise law at one time, I'm sure. He had to write the bar exam, so he must have practised, at least. Here it is, the Condominium Act, 1998. I had the privilege to be the parliamentary assistant when this bill, under Jim Flaherty, was initially passed. I did meet with the condominium associations, the condominium owners and the groups as well. This is a disclosure legislation. There are two parties to the contract: There's the condominium corporation and there's the condominium owners. The condominium corporation makes a disclosure to the person who's purchasing the property, being the condominium owner.

Here it is: "The Condominium Act"—it says—"is amended by adding 'as that Act read immediately before subsection 2(1) of Schedule 17 to the Good Government Act, 2009 came into force' after 'the Certification of Titles Act.'" So I gather this is about the registration. The property titles act is titles registration. I still say that I'm not sure, after reading what's here as well as the preamble, what, in fact, it's doing, and I leave it for the two-minute hits that are going to be forthcoming, I hope.

There's a section here, the Land Titles Act, a very big deal. You start tinkering with property rights, and you have an issue. I want a full disclosure of what you mean. It's talking about notice of hearings. These are dispute resolution mechanisms, primarily.

"Section 19 of the act is repealed and the following substituted:

"Examination of witnesses."

So I think we've established conclusively that my argument stands. It probably stands for the day and will rule the day because you can't possibly read this act, not with bad intent or malicious intent, but without reading the parent act that it's intended to change. By law, you cannot change the intent of the original legislation by an amendment, the initial legislation on the titles act or whatever act it is.

There's a section here on the Marriage Act for instance, what they call marriage practitioners, that's repealing a bill that's already passed but not proclaimed. I am so disappointed. I say, why are they doing this? We should leave here today, when they're trying to rush this bill through—last Wednesday; it's not been caucused; it's so big you'd have to have a truck go round with you with all the paper that it's amending, and then you couldn't read it. We have, in our caucus, some very qualified people who have practised law, practised engineering, been ministers of the crown, and would know.

I'm waiting for the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, because he's the dean who is highly regarded here, and he's been the minister over most of these ministries and probably could shed some light on this. It would be a compliment if he stood—I'm not ordering him to but I'm sort of hoping he will. I'm hoping that he'll get up and validate some of the observations I've made.

Failing that, I've said, in the limited time—I could seek unanimous consent right now that I can continue to speak for a considerable length of time. I seek unanimous consent, Madam Speaker.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham has sought unanimous consent to continue speaking. Is it the pleasure of the House that he do so?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I don't hear a warrant for that. Thank you. You still have 26 seconds left, though.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Community and Social Services has confronted me by saying, no, I'm not entitled to my time to debate a 400-page bill—and others as well. In fact, I think she's the whip today. I think she's acting as the whip and she's whipping them all into order. They're going to shut me down, and it's a shame. It's a shame. An omnibus bill and they won't allow me to vocalize some of the concerns that my constituents—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Durham for his point of view.

I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, since I've been here at Queen's Park, I see the government constantly standing up, especially the Minister of Finance, and saying, "You voted against this; you voted against the budget." Well, what they don't tell you is that they don't break down the budget to vote on each amendment or each part of the budget. What you do is you either accept the whole budget or you don't. Really, the public should know, when they stand up and say, "Your party voted against the budget," that we did not vote against the entire budget. There's lots of things in that budget that we like.

How does that pertain to this? It pertains to this the same way. If you're not given the information, if you don't have time to digest what's going on in the bill—they hand it to you a week before and take you through it without any consultation, without any input, and they expect you to ram it through again. On committee, they have five members, with two Conservatives and one NDP, and they shove things through once again. The public should know that really the opposition has good amendments, good ideas, and they fall on deaf ears. They just follow their marching orders and push it through, the same as a budget. I'm so sick and tired of people standing up in this House and saying, "Your party voted against the budget." Naturally there are things in that budget we didn't like and didn't want. "You voted against the budget." We're going to accept things we

don't think are right for the people of Ontario? But you either accept everything in the budget or none of it. So obviously we have to go with none of it because we don't like much of it.

That's what the people of this province never understand. They say, "Well, why would they vote against that?" Because there are 50 things in it that we didn't like. It's unbelievable that the general public really doesn't have the opportunity to understand what goes on in here.

My biggest frustration is at committee, when sometimes we don't even get to address it, and when we do, it doesn't even get read and it falls on deaf ears. They may take one amendment every six months just to say they did something. But we have a lot of good ideas on this side of the House, a lot of good stuff to put in, and we never get the opportunity because they just follow marching orders; they just do as they're told. Even if they think our idea is good, even if they agree with us, they don't dare stand up and vote against the Premier.

It's absolutely unacceptable, and the people of Ontario should know what really goes on in here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I have to say it's getting late in the afternoon and, for recreational purposes, I certainly enjoyed Mr. O'Toole's comments. They were entertaining; they were playful; they were colourful; they were rambling. They were also erratic and made no constitutional, legislative, statutory sense at all.

I jotted down a comment that Mr. O'Toole made as he got carried away with his piece of entertainment this afternoon. Here's what Mr. O'Toole said. Now, this comes from, as he reminds me from time to time, an experienced legislator who has served as parliamentary assistant to a number of distinguished parliamentarians, albeit in his party. He said at some point in his remarks—and this is his constitutional position, so law professors and the media and political scientists are going to be, I expect, right now in a state of complete shock. This is what the member said, and this is after years of experience here. His position is, you should not be able to change legislation by amending it.

I ask members, does that make any sense at all? Legislation comes before this body in two ways: It's introduced as a bill and eventually becomes an act, or there is a bill that eventually becomes an act to amend a piece of legislation. The statement, "You should not be able to change legislation by amending it," is bizarre. It's also playful and entertaining, but I think it's bizarre more than anything else.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'm going to say about my friend from Willowdale that he may be a little disingenuous—a word he uses quite often in this place—with regard to my friend from Durham.

My friend from Durham, when he was making those comments, was talking about making amendments in an

omnibus bill that is some 600 pages long, which change the original intent of the legislation that was debated in this Legislature. That is the great concern of our caucus. We have a number of amendments in here that are not housekeeping. In fact, I just came across one about the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act while I was listening to my disingenuous friend. This change to this act, according to my notes, permits the addition of lands to the Niagara Escarpment planning area by regulation, by the cabinet, without talking about what kind of process you would go through.

My friend from Orangeville represents an area that includes much of the Niagara Escarpment and would know that if you include a person's land in the planning area—I had a great deal of experience with this, as I brought forward the first plan by the Davis government—you restrict his or her rights significantly. And you give the cabinet this carte blanche without any kind of process required before they do it?

This bill has some very strong sections in it, and this is not the way to change legislation in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hear what the member from Durham is saying in the sense that it's a huge bill and there is a lot to be said about this particular bill, and it's fairly difficult to try to say what you have to say within a 20-minute period. I have the same concerns as him. I think it's too bad that the process does not lend itself well to what we're trying to do. I'm sure that there are parts of this bill that he would support, as there are parts of this bill that I would support. But here is the problem: How do you vote for a bill that has things in it—it could be a third or a half—that are not supportable from our particular positions and perspectives?

You need to have a process that allows us to separate out those things that are more contentious and allow those things we have agreement on to move forward, and then spend a little bit of time on those things where there is no agreement so we can try to find some consensus. At the end of that, I'll say to the government, "The government has a majority; it can do what it has to do."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I do want to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—I took his reference to the difficulty with these omnibus bills, with the poison-pill function within them—and the always disingenuous member from Willowdale, as he has been described very eloquently by the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the longest-serving member here. He has actually been the minister on some of these bills that are being amended, so more could be said. In fact, I expect he will probably be speaking on this bill at some length in the next few days.

The member from Timmins–James Bay, who is also an experienced member here, would know that it's very difficult to reach consensus on all parts of even a small

bill, let alone an omnibus bill. The foregone conclusion here is that we cannot support the question: Why are they doing it this way; what's in here that we aren't being told about?

Even if you go to a briefing, you have to know what questions to ask to get answers. With respect to what I said that the member from Willowdale commented on, what I said was that you cannot change the intent of legislation by a simple amendment. If the bill is to allow property rights or entitlements and you're amending it with a slight amendment that says that no longer applies, that simply is not how it happens. You can actually rescind the bill, which they've done—under the Family Law Act, they have rescinded a bill. They've actually, in law, cancelled that legislation. That's appropriate, to do it that way. But to change entitlements under the bill by a simple amendment, I would say that's not appropriate.

1650

Again, there are good portions of amendments within this bill, and I did outline a couple of them, but for the most part I'll wait for further debate on this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm privileged and honoured to stand up in my place and speak in support of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain acts and by enacting two new acts. I listened to many different speakers who spoke before me from both sides of the House talking about the importance of transforming many different acts and many different ministries to create some kind of accessibility for the people of Ontario to be governed by a good government, to give them some kind of access to many different rules and regulations and to learn about our government and to have access to the government without any problems, without any hesitation.

I listened to the member from Durham, who spoke for about 20 minutes a few minutes ago about the bill. All of his concentration was on how the bill's too thick and too big and nobody read it. That's what he focused on. He never mentioned the content of the bill and why we're bringing this bill to the people of Ontario and why we're bringing this bill before us in this Legislature to be passed and to be discussed and to be debated.

I was listening to my colleague the member from Scarborough Southwest, and he was mentioning the importance of this bill and why the Good Government Act should be implemented to create accessibility and understanding and clean it up in a format that people can understand and be able to use. Also, he talked about modern history and the modern time we're living in. Technology is speeding up like crazy, by the day, by the minute, by the second.

I remember that not a long time ago, we used to have a telephone. It was huge. It was a big phone. You were able to dial all sorts of numbers. You had to boost it every half an hour. Now we've advanced through technology. We have a BlackBerry, which has the format of a small computer. We can navigate the system, and we can

know what's going on around the globe within a second, from any corner of this globe. This is part of technology. We can also store all the information in that small machine.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I will caution the member not to use that as a prop in the House. Thank you.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It was not a prop; I was giving an example of technology and the advantages of technology. That's what we're talking about.

Also, you can store information on small chips. You don't need papers to be put on the shelf. To have access to those papers and records, you can push a button or a code, and you can go into those records in detail.

That's why we try to revisit those bills and acts from time to time: to create some kind of accessibility, to clean them up and keep them up to date with modern technology, modern issues and modern life.

Also, when I was reading the briefing on this bill and discussing it with my colleagues and my friends and with the Attorney General, who introduced this bill, you know what I discovered? We're not the only government throughout the history of this place to introduce a big, thick bill that created or handled a lot of amendments.

I know that we're doing 600 amendments. Before that, with Bill 190, the Good Government Act of 2006, we did 550 amendments. Also, the Government Efficiency Act was done by the PC Party. It had 713 amendments with 268 pages. The NDP also did one, a bill that had 756 amendments in 1994.

I know it's not just the Liberal Party of Ontario, not this current government, doing this to create some kind of a problem. The people know that every government, when they take office and discover and review all the bills and all the acts, feels over a period of time that they should change the acts to keep up with technology, with modern issues, with life. As you know, life changes from time to time. Circumstances change from time to time.

The most important thing—I listened to many speakers who spoke before me talk about two important things.

The Municipal Act: We gave it a lot of good deals. I remember when we got elected in 2003, in that period of time—we put a fixed time for elections for the Municipal Act, because back then it was every two years, and before that it was every year. We wanted to give municipalities the chance to propose laws and changes and be able to see the changes in their one mandate, which we thought—four years—is important enough and good enough to give them the chance to implement what they think is good for the municipalities.

Besides that, as a result of the elections, we have learned from many different experiences. As we go, with technology progressing, we are trying to implement new changes, especially for the Municipal Act; for instance, to simplify the elections calendar, to make it easier for the people to go and vote.

The accuracy of information on voting lists—to allow the people to access those lists. Also, the candidates use

these lists in a professional manner, to allow them to send their message and ideas to their constituents and have the chance to be voted for. Many people mentioned that it's good stuff, because now, according to the circumstance at the present time—in the past, if you didn't have a lot of money, you couldn't run for office because it required a lot of financial expense. You could not do it because you didn't have the money, because it takes a lot of effort, takes a lot of resources. That's why the incumbent in municipal-level politics sits there forever. It would be difficult for the newcomer to politics to vote out the person who has been sitting there, because they have the advantage of the power or access to media, access to records, access to many different things, their friends etc.

Also, we learned from the last elections about accessibility to those polling stations, and the Minister of Community and Social Services outlined the importance of allowing people with disabilities to participate in elections, to be able to vote and to be voted for. By creating accessible polling stations, by creating ways and avenues for the people living with disabilities to be able to participate in our daily life—because as we know, all of us know, people with disabilities have the chance and the ability and the intellectual capacity like every one of us to be able to vote and also to be voted for. This is a part of our transformation of those laws.

I talk a lot also about transparency, the voting process and about the campaign, the cost of the campaign, the finances of the campaign, and how we can enforce some clarity to those finances and make sure all people are using the laws which already exist in a professional manner and give everyone a chance to compete on the same level, with the same ability and the same opportunity, because we want to have new blood come to politics, want to have new blood participate in politics, and let the people who have a lot of ideas participate without worrying about financing, without worrying about popularity. As I mentioned, it's important stuff.

Besides that, everybody talks about MPAC. MPAC is the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. As you know, everyone complains about it because they don't have some kind of understanding of what's going on. This is a very complex issue. I know many governments came to this place and many parties with many ideologies, many different directions. Every one of them came and tried to fix this issue and failed, to date, to reform and transform this issue.

We talk about tribunals, how we can make sure that tribunals are accessible and also fair to all the people. That's what this bill concentrates on, as a good government bill, in order to allow people to have a chance to eliminate lots of bureaucracy which exists behind many different issues. In this compendium act, it's a process that every tribunal be required to develop a public accountability document, and I think it's a very important step.

Regulation or directive to the Management Board of Cabinet—all these elements, I think, give us the chance

to have a good government and the goal of increasing transparency and accountability.

1700

The act would also regulate the tribunal appointment process. Members would be selected by a competitive process, applying criteria established in the act and any qualifications required by any other act.

All these transformations we are trying to create in order to have good government, to have a good accessibility mechanism in many different acts, and all the ministers from different ministries will work together in order to create access to the government system and allow the people to participate, allow the people to understand in a simple way.

We don't describe this bill by the thickness or by the number of amendments; we describe it by the intent of the bill, which means to have good government by allowing people to have access to information and to believe in the government, and also to have rules and regulations that people can utilize without any troubles.

Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to stand up in my place and speak in support. Hopefully, the other members will understand the importance of this bill and come forward and support us in order to create good government and good legislation in order to allow people to participate widely and without any hesitation in the government process.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to stand and respond to the member from London–Fanshawe. When he finishes his dissertation with a comment on good government, I must question why, then, in Bill 212, there is no longer going to be the ability for Ontario residents to petition the Lieutenant Governor in Council to review any order or direction of the Minister of Health, any order of the Minister of Natural Resources, any Ontario Energy Board decision, any Ontario Municipal Board decision and any Environmental Review Tribunal decision. Most disturbing, even then, they aren't allowed to appeal to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

The bill is written in such a way that any outstanding appeals or petitions would retroactively be struck. When we talk about good governance, I don't believe there is a single Ontario resident who believes that they get better governance and more transparent government when they aren't allowed to appeal decisions made by the Ministry of Health, natural resources, the Ontario Energy Board, the Ontario Municipal Board or the Environmental Review Tribunal.

Instead of talking in platitudes about good government, about what Bill 212 is supposed to be about, how about you actually explain to the residents of Ontario why they are no longer going to appeal those decisions? Because I personally think that's what they'd like to know about, and why you're putting that in Bill 212.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hear partly what the member from London–Fanshawe across the way is saying. We were just having a chat here in the opposition with the Conservatives, and we agree that there are some things in this bill that, quite frankly, we can support, but there are some real big questions as to what some of this bill is all about.

First of all, the government introduced this bill, and has it here for debate on the Monday. Our research staff are still going through the omnibus bill; it's about this thick, so people have got to read the various sections in order to clearly understand what's in the bill. Because we've learned over the years that with omnibus bills, you've got to be careful, because that's normally when things slip through that you may not be aware of, so you really have to take time to look at this in some detail.

We're saying to you: Listen, there are probably some things in here we can support, and maybe we can come to an agreement about expediting those things that we support, but there are things in here, like the member from Durham was saying, in regard to nuclear waste—I don't pretend to understand what that section says, but he seems to have some concerns about it, and I haven't had a chance to read that section of bill. How do I, as a legislator, make an informed decision unless I've got proper time to look at the bill and, number two, to deal with those things that we agree on and take those other things and allow the public to have their say?

So I say, across the way, we're not trying to be deleterious here. All we're trying to do is have a bit of time to be able to look at this bill and give it justice.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I just wanted to comment again about the Family Responsibility Office. You know, these good people working in the Family Responsibility Office see things that are in the act or in the procedure that are not efficient and are not conducive to providing good service to people who need the services. And if it's not contentious, these changes are in the Good Government Act.

Just as an example, if one of the children dies, the enforcement staff of the Family Responsibility Office will remove the requirement of the payer to pay for the child, because they have all the information in front of them, instead of going back to court, frustrating everybody and it's very costly for the payer.

What I have asked of the Family Responsibility Office is to bring changes that are agreeable, that are not contentious and that will improve the efficiency of the Family Responsibility Office. It's frustrating for those we're trying to serve and frustrating for the staff who are working there and want to do a good job.

There is nothing in what we have introduced in my ministry that is contentious. I'm very pleased that we are able, once a year, to bring about these changes for the best of everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: With regard to the last speaker's comments with regard to the Family Responsibility Office, the public accounts committee reviewed that office a couple of years ago. I would have welcomed a debate on a major overhaul of their function and what they're doing, because they haven't been functioning very well for the last 15 or 20 years, quite frankly, and I don't think one change is going to remedy the problem.

Notwithstanding that, another part of the act on which I would like a direct answer, in a political sense, would be that under a number of divisions of the consumer services act, they're taking away the director's responsibility for the registrar of the Collection Agencies Act and the registrar of the Consumer Reporting Act, the registrar of the Film Classification Act, the registrar of the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, and the director's responsibility for the registrars of the motor vehicles act, the Payday Loans Act, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act and the Travel Industry Act. They're decoupling the director's responsibility and supervision of the registrar.

I'm very reluctant to give away carte blanche to anyone in our system, and I think there still should be some political accountability. However, I know this government's penchant for trying to get rid of responsibility. Hive it off to the LHINs, and you don't have any responsibility anymore; hive it off to eHealth, and you don't have any responsibility any more.

I think that a lot of this bill requires a lot of answers and explanations as to why they're making changes, and we're not getting that. We're getting surprised with a lot of changes that simply don't seem to make sense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from London-Fanshawe has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I thank all the people who commented on my speech.

I want to say that it's important to all the members from both sides of the House to understand this bill. That's why the debate is wide open and everyone has a right to participate and give his or her opinions and comments on this bill.

I know the member opposite mentioned the petition to cabinet. I want to say that for the last 15 years, really, anyone could write a petition to the cabinet.

Sometimes there are many different rules and regulations in place and nobody uses them. That's why this bill came: to clean up a lot of acts and sections that haven't been used for many, many years.

I would say that the majority of this bill is house-keeping. It changes terminology to be updated with modern life and also changes many rules and regulations that are no longer related to the present time. That's why this bill came: to update the system, update many different ministries and update regulations that were in existence for many, many years for some reason, and that reason does not exist.

That's why the debate is wide open. The member from the third party mentioned that he was in discussion with

the Conservatives and might support part of it. I welcome his comments. We welcome his comments always. We open this place for debate and open the committee for debate and suggestions. I'm looking forward to seeing more debate to understand it even better myself, because you know what? This is the democratic way. When the opposition members get up, propose, reject and explain why, I guess we in the government learn. Myself, I learn a lot when a member from the opposition stands up in his place or her place and tells me why he or she is opposing such a bill or a section of the bill.

You're welcome to debate because it's part of the democratic process. Thank you again to the people who spoke on this—

1710

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was looking forward to having this opportunity, and I appreciate the Conservatives helping me out in this.

I've been saying this in the comments that I've made so far on the two-minute hits on this particular legislation. I just want to say up front that there are things in this bill that we probably can support. There are things in here that, in the end, probably make some sense and things that I think the opposition parties and the general public can support. But does it mean that everything inside this omnibus bill, which is about this thick, is things that the public and the opposition will be able to support in its entirety? The answer is no.

In what I've read of the bill so far, there are sections in that bill that, quite frankly, I have some problems with. Some of it I support. For example, you're making changes to the Municipal Act, which I can support. Does it go far enough? It's probably not as far as I want to go on municipal expenses, but it is going in the right direction. I understand the timeliness of needing to be able to do this, and we certainly don't want to slow that down. We understand that that's important.

But there are other sections of the bill that are, quite frankly, problematic. We're going to restrict the ability of the public to appeal certain cases before the Ontario Municipal Board? Is that something that's desirable? I can understand why you're doing that from the perspective of developers, but I can tell you from the perspective of homeowners and people who may be concerned about some process of planning or zoning that's going on in their municipality, there are going to be all kinds of people who are going to have a problem with not being able to go to the Ontario Municipal Board in certain cases. Is that something this Legislature should be doing?

Since I've been here in 1990, we have constantly, under the Conservative government and now under you, limited the ability of people to get before the OMB because a lot of people see the OMB as a bit of a hindrance to development. Let's say that you buy that argument, because I know certain people do. Does that mean to say you throw the baby out with the bathwater?

Does it mean to say you extinguish the rights of an individual to go before the Ontario Municipal Board in order to have better government, have better development, take the roadblocks out and let those developments go forward? Well, there are reasons why people go before the OMB. I think the OMB is sophisticated enough to understand that either it is yes or it is no when it comes to the issue of being able to accept a case as having merit or not having merit.

So I say to my friends across the way, what we would like to do is have a situation where we are able to pass those sections of the bill that we can have some understanding and agreement on, and on those parts of the bill where we don't have agreement, we're able to move that over and not deal with that in this session, but wait until we send it to committee in the intersession.

I say to the government across the way, you're treading a really fine line here. We in the opposition, both the Conservatives and New Democrats, have been fairly good when it comes to trying to work with the government and be able to acquiesce to trying to pass legislation through this House in a way that is conducive to your agenda, as far as timing.

But listen, I'm not going to get in a fight on a whole bunch of other things you're doing. I'm not happy about your HST, I'm not happy on your forestry policy, but that's not the debate here. The debate is, should a government be passing a huge omnibus bill that I would venture to guess, never mind the opposition, members of the government have not had an opportunity to read in some detail?

Interjection: Name names.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, I'll name names: Gilles Bisson. I've not read the entire bill. I started on the weekend reading through that bill, and I would challenge anybody in this House to come and have a debate with me on the sections of the bill, because I'll bet you we would not be able to defend—any of us—all of the details in that bill because we have not had the proper time to debate this bill—not debate. I'm not even talking debate; I just mean to read the bill.

We said to the House leader last week, "Listen, don't call this bill on Monday. You just introduced the bill. It's this thick. We need to give it to our research staff." We had our researchers in here on Saturday and Sunday going through the bill in order to give it some critical analysis along with our critics—not that I oppose having to work on weekends. Listen, I come out of the mining sector. I used to work 12-hour shifts—I used to work graveyard, I used to work weekends, I used to work seven-day swings, and on top of that, I did call-outs and overtime. So it's not the work. But in the time that we've had, we've not been able, quite frankly, to give the kind of analysis that we need to for this bill.

I'll tell you what's dangerous here. My good friend Mr. Prue was here when the Tories were in government—and this is not a swing at the Tories, because every government has done it. Omnibus bills were brought to this House, to the point where the government

even had to admit at the end when they passed it that there were problems in the bill, and they had to come back and undo some of the damage they had done in the bill. The bureaucrats who draft the bill do the best job they can—they work hard, they're excellent at what they do—but sometimes they don't get it right. We were saying to the government of the day, "Don't go there. Take your time. Make sure that we look at this in some detail."

To give the Liberals some credit, in their first term, when the government was first elected, they had a similar omnibus bill and they gave us how long, Mr. Prue? You were the critic for that bill. We got about six months, seven months to look at that bill, and eventually you passed the omnibus bill, because the concerns that were raised that were valid were dealt with and those that were not, you just went ahead and did what you had to do. But at the end of the day, you got your bill.

We understand here there's a principle in Parliament that the opposition has the right to be able to ask critical questions—and yes, sometimes to be a bit tough on the government—but at the end of the day, we understand that the government has a majority and it will get its way. But you shouldn't be doing so in a way that sends, I think, a bill such as this through speedy passage without an ability to give it critical analysis.

With that, I would ask that we have a little break to have a bit of a chat. I would, at this time, move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Bisson has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I didn't hear warrant to adjourn the debate.

All in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Members have risen. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1717 to 1747.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Members, please take your seats. I call this House to order.

Mr. Bisson has moved adjournment of the debate of Bill 212.

Will all those in favour please stand and remain standing?

Will all those opposed please stand and remain standing?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 6; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I declare the motion defeated.

Mr. Bisson has the floor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We should have the same vote. It would be a lot better. I thought we had won that one; I thought it was rather close.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, Madam Speaker, do we have a quorum in here? I'd like you to count everybody.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'm going to ask the table to check if we have a quorum.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): A quorum is, in fact, present.

Mr. Bisson has the floor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wanted to make sure because I wanted to make sure the government heard what we have to say here.

I just want to make it clear to the government. Listen, I said at the beginning—and I'm happy that the government House leader was paying attention prior, and I know she's here again listening. I just wanted to make sure that she understood that there are sections of this bill, quite frankly, that we can support. There's some stuff in this bill that, at the end of the day, we understand are housekeeping items or are issues dealing with trying to make some processes a little bit easier. However, part of the problem we've got is that there are sections of this bill that are, quite frankly, problematic.

For example, there's a whole change to the Municipal Act. We can support generally where the government is trying to go as far as the timing of getting this done for January because we understand, for municipalities going into the election next year, it's important that we get that done, and we support that. There are parts of that bill that we support, but I know, in speaking to my leader, Andrea Horwath—we had a chat about this earlier, and I've had a chat with some other people in the municipality of Timmins—that there are some municipal financing issues that it would be really nice to be able to address in that bill.

Are we going to be able to get that done? I don't know. But the point is, for the government to bring in a huge omnibus bill that gets us changing a whole bunch of acts—and I've got to say that the omnibus bill is about that thick—in the end, it's really leading us to try and pass legislation that's not properly vetted.

As I said earlier, our staff were here on the weekend. Members were reading the bill on the weekend.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a minute, please. I appreciate that people are tired and it's late in the afternoon, but I'm having a hard time hearing the member. So if you could keep it down. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying, there are sections of the bill that we can support.

Interjections: Blah, blah, blah, blah.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Come on. I don't do that when you speak, Mr. Whip. Why are you doing that to me? Come on.

Interjection: You're wasting your time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, well, there we go. There we go. The parliamentary assistant over there, the guy who wants to be minister and hasn't been appointed yet—he's all excited. I can understand why, because if you're really excited, maybe Dalton will see that and bring you into cabinet. You notice I didn't use your name. It's a he. I'll narrow it down to that because I know the women of that

caucus are much, much smarter than to make comments like that. They're very rational people.

Anyway, back to the bill: I just want to say that there are sections in this bill that are problematic. I think what the government has to do is take a little bit of a pause and admit they're pushing this thing through a little bit too fast. You've got an omnibus bill that's about this thick. We're changing a whole bunch of sections of the act to make sure that, at the end of the day, they're going to make some changes that are going to affect a whole bunch of acts, and all we want is to make sure that what is passed are changes that, at the end of the day, will get us to where we want to go.

I've seen omnibus bills passed through this House before. I've seen, from time to time, where governments have passed omnibus bills and have pushed them through the House lickety-split without giving the public an opportunity to have their say in proper time to make amendments to the bill, for the bill to be scrutinized. The government passes the omnibus bill and then they're back two or three years after introducing amendments to their omnibus bill because they made errors in the first place.

You've seen that. I remember it happening with the Conservative Party a couple of times. There were a couple of omnibus bills that they dealt with, and even they had to come back and make changes.

Remember the one on the Municipal Act, my good friend across the way from Essex?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, not that one. When they first got elected in 1995, there were changes to the Municipal Act. It was a huge omnibus bill, and you were on committee—Mr. Levac, I think, was on committee with me. We were warning the government that we didn't support a lot of what the government was doing, "but at least if you do it, get it right. Don't make a bill that, at the end of the day, not only doesn't get you where you want to go, but makes things worse because the bill is not properly written." The reason that happened was because the government had pushed that bill through the House so fast that neither the government, the opposition nor the public had a chance really to scrutinize the bill and take a look at where the errors were. The public soon found out, after the bill was passed, that there were problems. I remember that the government came back with seven amendments to that bill. Seven times they came back and made amendments to that legislation because they didn't get it right the first time.

All I'm saying is: I understand. The process is really simple here. We all have a role to play. Members of the opposition will hold the government accountable in the British parliamentary system. We say to the government that we're going to put a good eye on what you're doing to make sure you do it right, and if there are things we think you've erred on, we're going to point those out.

But at the end of the day, we understand. The parliamentary system says that the government has a majority, so the government is going to get its bill. It's not as if

you're not going to get your bill at the end of the day; we understand that you will. But what we're saying to you is, we should pause, return it to the House leaders, have a bit of a discussion with the House leaders about how we proceed, so that we in fact put ourselves in a position that we're able to deal with those parts of the bill that we can agree on and move those things through, so that at the end we have the ability to deal with those things that we have agreement on. And then, to those things that we have no agreement on or that we have some difficulty with, all I'm asking is that we send the bill out to committee. Advertise across the province and allow members of the public to have their say: municipalities, environmental groups, anglers and hunters, people in the planning business. There are all kinds of people affected by this bill. Let them pronounce themselves on this legislation. You know what? At the end, maybe the public will decide that they're not interested and maybe they will decide that there's not a huge amount of concern, and so be it. But at least the process will lend itself to allowing the public to have its say and making sure that we look at this omnibus bill in the proper light.

Omnibus bills, at the end of the day, are problematic by their very nature. It's something that I think all of us, as legislators, quite frankly don't have a very big comfort with. I know my friends who were then in the Liberal opposition to the Conservatives, and certainly Conservatives and Liberals who were in opposition to our government, really did not like omnibus bills, and for good reason. Because at the end of the day, they deal with far too much far too quickly and put us in a position, quite frankly, of passing bills that can be flawed.

I just say to the government across the way, please understand what we're saying here. We're saying that at the end of the day, we understand you're going to get your bill, and we're saying that there are some things in this bill that we can support. But we're also saying that there are certainly some things in this bill that are problematic, and we need to have a bit of a discussion about how we deal with that procedurally.

I was a bit surprised that we were informed at House leaders' meetings last week that this bill would come here on Monday. I indicated at that time to our government House leader—and Mr. Runciman did the same—that we shouldn't proceed on Monday, and the reason was very simple: People wouldn't have a chance to read the bill; it's this thick. We pointed out at the time, "Give us the time to look at it. Let's look at what's in the bill and we'll decide what to do." We've now done that, to a degree. We still have some of the bill that we haven't read, quite frankly; we're still going through it. But there are some problematic parts of the bill, and we need to deal with those in a way that makes some sense and gives

justice to what we're trying to do here in the Legislature. So we are saying to the government, "Let's do the right thing."

For example, one of the things in this bill that we saw, another section, was that there are some amendments in regard to the issue around hunting within the MNR Act. There are some changes being contemplated there. I had a chance to take a quick look at them, and, quite frankly, some of them seemed kind of innocuous. But then I flagged it by somebody who I pass legislation on to when I want to get a critical analysis of something, and they pointed out to me that there were some problems in the way that it was particularly worded. It wasn't so much what the government was trying to do, but the way that the wording was put forward certainly created difficulty as far as what their perspective was when it came to their ability to be able to hunt and fish.

Now, for some people here, that may not be important, but I can tell in you, in places around southwest, southeast and northern Ontario, there are a lot of people who are fishermen, a lot of people who are anglers and hunters, and who do so respectfully and want to know at the end of the day that we have some rules that, yes, protect the wildlife, that we don't over-fish or over-hunt, but that still give people the ability to enjoy those recreational sports that are out there.

I personally don't hunt anymore. I can't get a moose tag; that's a whole other story. Moose tags are impossible to get, so after many years of application, I decided to stop applying for a tag because, like everybody else, I got frustrated. So what I do is fish. I can tell you, over the years it has become much, much more restrictive when it comes to the ability of anglers to get out on the lake and do some fishing, and I can tell you stories about that.

There are also changes to the agricultural act. I talked to our good friend John Vanthof on the weekend. I asked him to go to the Internet—hopefully he'll have that done sometime this week—and I asked him to read those sections of the bill. John Vanthof, for those who would know, is the candidate who ran in Timiskaming-Cochrane in the last election and was within 300 votes of winning that particular election. He's a dairy farmer. I've asked him to take a look at this bill in some detail.

I would say to you, Madam Speaker, that there's much to be done and there's much to be said about this bill. And seeing that we're almost at 6 of the clock, I would ask that we just stand this down and continue on the next day.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being 6 o'clock, or very close to, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Eric (LIB) Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	St. Paul's Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Linda (LIB) Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
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Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP) Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB) Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Huron–Bruce Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L’hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l’Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L’hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L’hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l’opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L’hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L’hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l’Énergie et de l’Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L’hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L’hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l’Assemblée
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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: Khalil Ramal
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Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
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Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
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Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
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Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri
Elizabeth Witmer
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Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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