



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 4 November 2009

Mercredi 4 novembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 November 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 novembre 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ANIMAL HEALTH ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SANTÉ ANIMALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 204, An Act to protect animal health and to amend and repeal other Acts / Projet de loi 204, Loi protégeant la santé animale et modifiant et abrogeant d'autres lois.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise today on Bill 204, the Animal Health Act. I just want to say up front that I understand what the government is trying to do here. They're trying to put in place a regime in regard to the care and handling of animals so that we secure how animals are cared for and how they're dealt with on the farm, in order to make sure those animals are safe and not misused, but also, on the question of food, to make sure that those animals are cared for in the sense of not passing on any types of diseases to humans when we consume the products from those animals that are raised on farms in Ontario.

It's motherhood and apple pie. Most people are going to say, "That only makes sense; therefore, why not? This is a great thing and we should all move forward." But for the farm community, I think it's yet again the government that sort of doesn't get it, in the sense that, if you haven't noticed, the farm community is having one heck of a time. I know that some members on the government side know this, because they come from an agricultural part of Ontario, probably more so than me. I have agriculture as part of my riding, but certainly more farming happens in certain ridings in southwestern and south-eastern Ontario than in mine. Nonetheless, when I talk to people in my community who are in the farm community, they're mad as hell.

I talked to Mr. Hansen, I talked to Mr. Vanthof, I've talked to Legembre and others who are in the farm business, and said, "Listen, what do you think of all this?" They say, "Well, in good times I guess what they're asking us to do would be a minor inconvenience. But really,

when it comes to milking cows or beef for consumption or chickens—whatever it might be—do you think we are going to put ourselves and our livestock in a position where they may become diseased and we can't market the products we have on our farm?" Give me a break. They're saying, "We, among our own associations, deal with these issues. We're very serious about dealing with them."

If anybody has ever had a chance to visit a chicken farm, it's quite an interesting place to go. Not having a lot of chicken farms where I come from, I thought that chickens are just in a barn somewhere, and they let them grow and then basically cull them to provide meat to McDonald's and everybody else who eats chicken. Well, it isn't as simple as that. There are some pretty class organizations out there when it comes to how they handle chickens on farms. They are so concerned about making sure there's no disease, because it's not just a question of human safety, as far as the foods we consume, it's a question of them staying in business. There's no profit to a chicken farmer in having a practice on his or her farm that would put chickens, and in turn humans, at risk. Not only would that not make any sense from an environmental point of view, but also from an economic point of view. So people in the farm community have been saying to me over and over again, as I have asked about this bill, "Yes, motherhood and apple pie, but where's the rest of the stuff you can do to assist the farm community?"

We had the chicken farmers here last week or the week before with their annual lobby; they were here to talk to us about the issues around chicken farming. It was apropos, because we were dealing with this bill in the House at the time. I went to the reception and spoke to a number of people who are in the chicken business, and it was the same from them: I didn't find one person who was actually opposed, but what they were saying to me was, "There are a whole bunch of other issues that we need our government to be doing, and the government's not doing them. Why did they pick this as the centrepiece and not the other issues that are more important to our survival?"

So they're saying that this government, quite frankly, doesn't get it when it comes to farms. They're mad as hell at the Minister of Agriculture—that much I did figure out pretty darned quick. Of course, we have to say nice things to each other when we're all in each other's presence—the farm community, the government .etc— but as I've talked to farmers privately at the chicken farmers' event and in my riding, and more recently last night, when we had the soybean people here, they're

pretty concerned. They're saying, "Listen, we have never seen in a long time the type of economic problems that the farm community has been facing." For example, you've got lower commodity prices for pig farmers, and you have a huge problem this year when it came to weather. As I talked to the soy farmers who were here yesterday, they were going on and on about how the weather this year has affected all of North America and how the yields for their crops—soybeans, corn and others—have been lower than they've been in a long time. They're saying that from that perspective they're going to have less revenue coming in from their crops, which puts them in a more difficult position when it comes to their overall economic health as farmers. So they're saying to me, "We get it. We understand. We're not opposed to this. But if this is all the government has to say about farming, then that leaves a lot to be desired."

So I just say to the government across the way, "Yip-pee, wonderful, great," you brought forward a piece of legislation that I guess you can't say is a terrible thing, because what you're trying to do is deal with the issue of making sure that humans are safe when it comes to consumption of animals off a farm. Who can be opposed to that? But the issue becomes, where are the other things you should be doing to assist the farm community? I think that's really the point I want to make in this particular debate: The government should be a little bit more active when it comes to being able to resolve those issues.

For example, what are we doing to deal with the issue of energy on the farm? The prices of oil and gas are up, the price of electricity is up—the price of natural gas is down; it's the only one that went down—and they're having to pay higher energy prices in order to heat their barns and run the machinery that they need to milk cows and do the work that needs to be done on the farm. Those costs are going up, and a lot of those costs are directly controlled by what happens in this Legislature; for example, electricity prices. They're saying, "Why is the government not doing anything to try to help the farmers absorb the higher costs of energy?" Energy is a big part of their business. Why isn't there some sort of a rebate program for oil products and electricity in order to assist the farmers to offset some of the costs of electricity and oil on their farms?

0910

We heard a farmer who was on the CBC about three or four weeks ago for a period of about a week talking about the difficulties he was having with energy. He was a hog farmer, and he was at the point of having to shut down the farm because they'd turned off his hydro. He was waiting for the government to respond by way of a program that they were supposed to put in place in order to help him keep the family farm that he has been trying to run and which he sees fast coming to an end. What was interesting is the federal government put in place a loan program, and I guess a loan program is a stopgap measure. But what he kept on saying was the provincial government is nowhere to be seen when it comes to assistance in his particular situation.

Again, I say government could choose to do something about energy costs for farmers, but they choose not to. Instead, they come forward with Bill 204, the Animal Health Act, and they say, "Here's more rules for you, the farm community, to follow. We think you're not doing a good enough job, so we're going to make you do a better job." Farmers are a little bit mad, and they're saying, "Well, you know, we've been in the farm business far longer than you've been in government, and we've been feeding people in this province far longer than you've been in government. We are somewhat resentful of the fact that the government's response to assist us at a time of deep need is to say that we're quite frankly having to do better because you think we are not doing as well as we should."

What about the issue of capitalization? You would know, members of this House who are in the farming business—my good friend Maria Van Bommel and others—far more than I do that they're expensive enterprises. Not just land, but the equipment and the staff and the manpower to run a farm is a huge undertaking, financially. You have two different problems. You have the issue of debt, because a lot of people have had to buy equipment and have had to buy investments in technology in order to make their farms more efficient, all of which costs a lot of money, and all of which means to say you've got loans to pay back at fairly hefty interest rates. Where is there assistance in order to assist the farm to offset some of those costs?

We thought it was important for the auto sector, when the auto sector was having problems, and rightfully so. The provincial government said, along with the federal government and along with the United States, "We are going to offer aid packages to those auto manufacturers which are having problems, such as GM and Chrysler." As a result of that, those companies are trying to reorganize themselves with the massive debt that they've undertaken. One can get into an argument about why they had so much of a debt, but that's a whole other story. But the point is the provincial and federal governments provided debt assistance to those particular industries in order to assist them at a very tough time when the banks were getting more restrictive with their lending. So they said, "Here's some assistance; we're giving you some money in order to give you some breathing room on the debt that you're now carrying, and we'll assist you a little bit into the future." Why are we not doing that for the farm community? Do they not have some of the similar problems that the auto sector has had?

We've done it in the case of forestry. In the forestry sector, certain programs were put forward in order to assist the forestry sector. Many would argue that those programs were too little, too late and, quite frankly, not very responsive. The take-up on these programs has actually been pretty weak. Nonetheless, the government wanted to appear to be helpful to the forest industry by putting in place these particular programs. Again, why has the farm community not gotten a similar type of aid?

As I talk to people in the farm community in my riding, and when I have a chance to discuss it with them, at receptions and other places where I've run across the people from the farm community, they're saying, "All right, the Animal Health Act, Bill 204, it's not a bad thing. But, my Lord, can you help me with my debt? Can you help me with trying to offset some of the costs of carrying this debt?"

Then there's the whole issue of not just debt, but of operating capital because, as you know, a farmer doesn't get paid until the product is either harvested from the field or the animal goes out of the barn and is sent out for processing. Even then, they don't get the money for a while because companies aren't very quick in paying them back. But again, on the whole idea of operating capital, where are we in being able to assist the farm community with operating capital in these very tough, difficult times? There are no programs to assist them to do that; therefore, they're again on their own. So they're saying, "All right, 204—fine—but where are you on operating capital?"

My point is that there are a whole bunch of things this government could be doing to assist the farm community in these very difficult times economically. Instead, what do we get? We get a government that says, "Here's more regulation. We're going to give you another regime you've got to follow. We're going to name a czar veterinarian to go out and make sure you're doing your jobs, and we're going to give the minister the power to go in and tell you how to run your farm if we think you're not handling food properly."

Some out there will say, "That's a great thing. We believe that's wonderful." But I just want you to put yourself in the position of the farm community. There's nothing in it for them to run a farm that's going to kill the very animals they're trying to sell. There's nothing in it for them to grow crops in a field that at the end of the day are not going to be marketable because they're somehow contaminated. What farmer would want to do that? You know, farmers are pretty practical people. They understand that the commodity they have is their investment. They take care of it. They ensure that when they sell their product and bring it to market, it meets the high standards that are necessary to sell those products at a premium price, because if you don't have good products, you ain't going to get the premium price. So a lot of farmers are saying, "My, my, where is this government at when it comes to its priorities?"

So I say to the government, we understand why you're doing it; it's in light of what happened at Maple Leaf Foods last year. You're trying to be seen as being proactive and making sure we don't end up with problems in our food supply further into the system than processing but on the farm; therefore, you're going to put Bill 204 in place to assist them. I just say to you that I think this is a bit of a slap in the face to the farm community, and it will be interesting to see if the government is actually prepared to do something that would respond to the key issues that face farmers today.

I want to raise another issue, and that's organic farming. Part of what is going to happen with this act is that there are going to be regulations, for example, that will conflict with the requirement that turkeys and other animals have access to the outside in order to be fed organically. You know that organic farming has become more and more a big part of the food supply system in Ontario, as it has across North America and Europe. There are more and more people in our society who, for health reasons but also for ecological reasons, are looking for organic farm goods to consume rather than the regular processed foods we now buy.

One of the effects of this bill is that it will make it more difficult for organic farmers to meet the requirements as a result of the way the bill is written. Again, you know, it's a bit like throwing the baby out with the bath water. I think the government has to recognize that in the end there is an important part of the farm industry, which is organic farming, and if we're going to have rules, we need to come up with rules that give those who are involved in organic farming the ability to carry out the practices that are necessary for organic farming, and rules and regs that make some sense to them. The way this is written, my understanding as I read it, and from a chat I had about it with a few people a couple of weeks ago, they're concerned that in the end, the way this is written—organic farming is not going to disappear; I'm not going to start saying that—they're certainly going to have a lot more difficulty practising organic farming. I think that's an undesired effect of this particular legislation.

Donc, pour finir, je n'ai qu'une couple de minutes pour dire qu'on comprend bien où le gouvernement veut aller; on comprend qu'ils veulent, à la fin de la journée, mettre en place un régime pour la protection des humains quand ça vient aux produits qu'on consomme de nos terres agricoles ici en Ontario. On ne peut pas dire que c'est une méchante idée parce qu'il ne serait pas juste de dire ça. Le seul point, c'est qu'il y a beaucoup de monde dans le domaine de l'agriculture, beaucoup d'agriculteurs qui ont de grands problèmes auxquels ils doivent faire face chaque jour. Pour le gouvernement d'arriver et de dire, « Notre seule réplique aux problèmes que vous avez comme agriculteurs est de mettre en place le projet de loi 204 », je pense que ça dit aux agriculteurs qu'ils n'ont pas vraiment l'appui qu'ils aimeraient avoir de leur gouvernement quand ça vient aux problèmes auxquels ils font face de jour à jour.

0920

Avec ça, j'aimerais vous remercier, puis je regarde avec anticipation les répliques que je vais avoir de mes collègues ici à l'Assemblée.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I want to inform the House that, six and a half hours of debate having elapsed on this bill, pursuant to standing order 47(c), this debate shall be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: We would like debate to continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to thank the member from Timmins–James Bay for his comments. I understand where he's coming from on this in a lot of areas, but I'd like to assure him that what this bill is trying to do is send a message to our consumers and to literally the world that Ontario farm products are safe and to be trusted. I think there's nothing more important that we can say to our agricultural community than that our products are safe and can be trusted.

The proposed legislation is something that our industry partners have been asking for to protect animal health, with a focus on the livestock and poultry sectors, which will help strengthen consumer confidence and really support the economic well-being of the industry. Ontario is the last jurisdiction in Canada to introduce animal health legislation.

There are a number of issues that come forward in this. The member mentioned organic farming, but I can assure him that, if passed, this legislation would apply equally to all livestock and poultry species regardless of how they're produced or raised. If passed, the legislation will make a huge difference to our agriculture communities.

The member mentioned the Chicken Farmers of Ontario. I met with them yesterday and they said that they're absolutely in support of this legislation; they're doing a lot of it already. The idea that we can have our sector protected and make sure that animals are provided for—this is just another part of the ongoing investments in protection that our ministry has made in this sector. Since 2003, we have provided over \$1.5 billion for farm income support programs. Our government has committed more than \$50 million to its Pick Ontario Freshness strategy. This is just another step along the way of making sure that our farm products are safe for the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to be able to join the debate today on the Animal Health Act, 2009. Agriculture is in peril in this province, and this bill will do nothing to improve it. It disappoints me that the member just prior to me taking the stand—the floor—

Hon. Jim Watson: Oops.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oops is right—to me taking the floor would say that this is a very important bill.

We in the Progressive Conservative caucus see possible substantive amendments to this legislation that could improve agriculture here in the province of Ontario. This bill could be amended to remove the section which will allow new permits and licences. In addition, the bill should be amended such that consent of the owner or a warrant is required to enter private property in all but the most urgent circumstances. There could also be an amendment to strengthen the section on compensation and to remove discretion unless there were circumstances such as fraud or negligence.

If we're going to talk about animal health in this province, we have to start with one very fundamental issue, which is what the Liberals are going to bring in on July 1,

2010, and that's the HST. Animal health is going to be significantly impacted in this province when veterinarian services go up by 8% to a 13% HST. That's going to be quite significant for people in the rural communities of Osgoode and North Gower and other parts of rural Ottawa and, of course, rural Ontario where they require veterinary services on their farms. This is a big slap in the face to the farmers in Nepean–Carleton, and is a big slap in the face to farmers elsewhere. If the Liberals want to bankrupt farmers, they're going about it in the right way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to such important legislation. One of the things that I want to say is, I know that the members in the House know that agriculture is the riding of Huron–Bruce, and this is a piece of legislation that, quite frankly, my farmers have wanted to see for a very long time. They understand how important the chain is, and that the chain needs to remain strong. In order to be able to have a strong product line in the beef industry, in the chicken industry and in the pork industry, they understand that the linkage in safety is very, very important. We don't have to look back very far to remember what happened to an industry with the previous government and what happened with the beef industry in their term of office, to understand how that has a direct effect on the farms.

Clearly, what they had asked for with regard to the livestock was that there was a compensation portion, that there was the ability to go in and quarantine. This is something that they felt was important for the public to understand, that the safety was built into the system.

The members here know that supply management has been lobbying for a number of years, probably almost a decade, to get this to come forward. We've seen avian influenza in British Columbia and we see H1N1 affecting the pork industry right now. So this is a critical piece, and the legislation, quite frankly, is timely.

The member from Timmins–James Bay spoke about how the chicken industry was here last week. I had the opportunity to have a meeting with them. Quite frankly, we have the largest number of farms with regard to poultry, and they stressed how grateful they are that this legislation is coming forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to add a few comments today on the debate. I think that everyone agrees with animal health in theory; the problem is that we also need to have farmer health. We need to have an issue around food security and food supply. When you have regulation upon regulation for farmers to be able to do this, then obviously there's a tipping point—a point where someone says, "No, I can't do this." I think that there's been an approach taken by this government that tends to look at much larger agricultural units than actually exist for the majority of our agricultural food producers.

I represent the Holland Marsh region, which of course is the salad bowl of not only Ontario, but supplies much

of the rest of the country. I look at the fact that I have individual farmers who are working very hard and who stay up to date, who do GPS testing on their land, and who understand microclimates. These are people who have a tremendous background and understanding of what they're doing and what they're producing. Obviously, they understand the urgency to have healthy food to provide for people. They also understand the competition. They know that in other jurisdictions with which they compete in the Ontario marketplace, a much wider range of pesticides, for instance, is allowed. So we have to be extremely careful that we don't simply shut down food supply in this province.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Timmins–James Bay, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to thank all those who commented, in no particular order.

I think the comment that we need farmer health is exactly the point. You've got a farm community that's having much in the way of financial difficulty. Weather this year has affected them, commodity prices are affecting them, energy prices are affecting them; it's just on and on and on. It's almost like the perfect storm. We need to make sure that our farm community is in good health to survive this storm so that they can be there and continue to be an essential part of the food production industry here in Ontario. We certainly don't want to be in a position of having to import foods when we can produce those foods ourselves, grow and produce them into final products here in Ontario. The point that I was trying to make, and I'm glad that the Conservative member from—I forget the riding—made the point, is that we need to have a healthy farm community to be able to survive. We should not be just concerned about animal health, which is important, and I'm not saying it isn't, but we should be equally concerned when it comes to the issue of the farm community's health.

To the issue that was raised by the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—I forget the name of the riding. That's why I'll never run for Speaker.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Huron–Bruce.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Huron–Bruce. Thank you very much. I've only been here 20 years, and I still don't know all the riding names.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What riding are you from, anyway?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It used to be Cochrane South. I forgot. No, Timmins–James Bay. That's right.

Anyways, the point that she makes is that she met with the chicken farmers, and they thought this was good legislation. I never said they said it was bad legislation. I met with the same chicken farmers. They said, "We understand it, but there is a whole wealth of other issues that we want this government to address. What they pick as their issue to address is animal health and the processing of animals on our farms, not dealing with the

issues of cost as they affect us in this very hard, difficult time."

So I just say to the government across the way that there's much more work to be done and it's about time to get to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I didn't see you, Lou.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Obviously, they weren't paying attention. They didn't see me again. I'm delighted once again to join the debate about this particular bill—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I hesitate to remind you that you've spoken before on this bill and therefore can't speak a second time.

Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to my good friend Lou, the member from Northumberland–Quinte West: That's why we didn't notice you, because we knew—we've been keeping track of things—that you'd spoken before. But I didn't have to stand up and say, "Stop that man." I knew the Speaker was on top of this and that he was going to catch you. Nice try, Lou, nice try. I'll tell you, it's pretty hard to slip things by these folks at the table here in the Legislature. I've never, of course, tried myself, but there's always a first time.

I appreciate the opportunity, even if it was somewhat delayed, to speak to this bill this morning. I was certainly intrigued, as I always am, by the address from the member from Timmins–James Bay. He is always thoughtful in his approach and very, very protective of the people who he represents, which is exactly what he should be doing as a member of this Legislature on behalf of the constituents that he represents. Unfortunately, sometimes I believe that members on the government side sometimes have to forget about their constituents because they're getting orders from headquarters, as they say. You remember Jocko Thomas of the Toronto Star? "Headquarters," he used to say—because they get their orders from headquarters over on the other side, too. They don't like to step out of line.

It was interesting: My colleague from Leeds–Grenville yesterday, in speaking to the NDP's motion on eHealth and the Ombudsman, spoke about how members on the government side just seem to be whipped continuously into supporting whatever the Premier's office dictates. I am on topic; I know you're looking at me, Speaker, and wondering, "What has this got to do with the bill?" Well, I'm absolutely getting there. Again, this is one of those cases where the Premier's office has said, "We're going to put this through."

First of all, it's a good time to put this bill through, because we're getting a lot of people upset about what's been going on in this government, particularly with respect to accountability and eHealth and, most recently of course, the bizarre rollout of the H1N1 vaccine program where, as you saw in the papers this morning when the minister was talking about Ontario having the best H1N1 program in the world—we saw that only about 300,000 doses had been administered to people—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Now the member is straying a bit, I think. Back to the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's right, Bill 204. I can always depend on the Speaker to remind me of the number of the bill, and that is always helpful—204. I'm thinking two, four, 2.4; it's actually 2.2, 2.2 million doses of that vaccine that Ontario received, and only 300—yeah, 204.

My colleague from York–Simcoe spoke about what's very important and is sometimes lost on the government: With their tremendous propensity to legislate and regulate, they forget about the people on the other side of the equation. There is not a single person in this province who does not place a tremendously high priority on the safety of the food that we consume—absolutely a tremendously high priority on the food that citizens of this province consume. One of the things that is very, very important, if you're going to have safe food, is you have to have a healthy production industry. Our production of food—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Huron Bruce is prone to heckling and interjecting at times, unlike—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, seriously, unlike myself when the members of the government are speaking.

She comes from a farming community, and she should understand that if we don't have healthy farmers who are given not only the opportunity but the tools and are allowed to work in the environment that allows them to be successful, then it's going to be very difficult for them to ensure that the food that comes from those farms is going to be safe. That's where this government has fallen short.

You've heard my colleague from Oxford, our critic for agriculture, speak on the total lack of support for the pork industry by this government. Even though the federal program has kicked in, Ontario won't even put in its 40% share to assist the pork industry in what is clearly the greatest crisis in its history. Yet the Minister of Agriculture sits back and ignores the problem.

What do they do? They bring in a bill. There are large portions of this bill that we can be supportive of, because, as I said in my original premise, who is going to argue against food safety? Who is going to speak against safe food? We believe that to be a prerequisite, an automatic, an inherent right of citizens to expect that the food that they consume is safe. What they're failing to recognize is that if they're not going to protect our farmers, then the safety of our food will certainly be in jeopardy as well.

I know the member spoke about the chicken farmers and how happy they were. Well, they didn't say they were happy with this legislation; the chicken farmers are just happy. One of the reasons they're happy is that they are one of the few agricultural industries that is doing extremely well. Why are they doing well? Because they're supply-managed. That is a very important distinction that separates them from some other commodities. The supply-managed commodities in this province are the only

truly successful groups. Grains and oilseeds have had some success, and they've also had difficult times as well.

0940

But talk to the beef farmers. I was glad to have the chicken farmers here last week and enjoyed their chicken wings; they were tremendous. I enjoyed the beer as well; it was pretty darned good too. Even though the chicken farmers didn't produce it, they did chill it and pop the corks, and it wasn't too bad to go with those chicken wings either.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It was Ontario beer.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It was Ontario beer, my colleague from York–Simcoe says, and that's great. That's one thing I'll say for Speaker Peters: I give him great credit for insisting that Ontario products are not only served as much as possible at the receptions that we host here in the building at Queen's Park, but also in the legislative dining room. That was a great move on his part and I applaud him for his support of Ontario farmers and the products that they produce. The government never did anything. It took Speaker Peters to actually move on that, and again, I credit him for that.

One of the problems with this bill—and I know Lou is interested, is watching closely, but you're not going to get another opportunity, Lou, possibly until third reading debate. You do understand that. You will be able to visit in committee—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, you're going to get a two-minute question and comment, yes, and we'd be pleased to hear from you. So get your notepad going there.

Anyway, one of the problems with this government traditionally, and we've seen it since they were elected in 2003, is that many, many times they use the approach—and I've heard this from my friend from Kenora–Rainy River, the former leader of the third party; I've heard him use this expression, and he's so correct when he uses it: They've taken a sledgehammer to a fly.

If you ask people in the agricultural business, when the spectre of warrantless entry and warrantless search is put before them there is a tremendous fear. It's sort of like when you get the call, Mr. Speaker—even though I'm quite certain that you've never had a moment on your tax returns where you've done anything, if you know what I mean—but when you get one of those calls from Revenue Canada and they say, "Hello? Yep, we're going to be coming down to do an audit on you," your life goes upside-down, because you think, "Oh, my God, those guys are coming in and they're going to sit down at my kitchen table; they're going to tear apart everything I've got. They're going to go back to the time when my grandfather did a little bootlegging, and they're going to find something, and I'm going to pay. I know I haven't done anything wrong, but I know those guys are going to dig something up that I might not even know about." That's what happens when you've got this warrantless search thing hanging over you.

All of a sudden, the inspectors come in—and I know how they work. I'm going to give you an example: In the Ministry of Labour, under the guise of protecting people, they'll go into a sawmill, for example—and again, you want to talk about an industry that is struggling? I mean, unbelievable. I've talked to people who've been in this business for 60 years themselves, and they've never seen anything like it. This government is about to make it worse with the legislative regulations that they're bringing in.

I'll be talking about that a little later, maybe, but not necessarily in this bill, because, as you always caution me, Speaker, I need to stay on the subject of the bill. The bill here is about farm safety and food safety, and I want to make sure that—I see the member from Barrie is helping the Speaker. She wants to make sure that everything is on the subject of the day. I do my very best at all times to follow that—that's a standing order, I believe, Mr. Speaker.

So when you have this power, this draconian power, to just, without a warrant, walk onto the farm of these hard-working people who have invested their lives—their lives—in providing good-quality, safe food for the people of the province of Ontario—and now they're going to have this hotshot inspector walk in, fresh out of school, and he or she is going to show them who the boss is. They're going to go in there because of the notch on the gun. "I got to put another notch on the gun, because we're going to go in there and we're going to show these people who's boss."

A farm—and this is about animal health—and a livestock farm—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You're digging yourself into the ground.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, no, I'm not, Lou; trust me.

A livestock farm—do you know what we do? For all of those people who don't understand, you raise animals, you kill them and they're served as food. It's not a pretty business. That's what you do. If you want to have meat on your table, it doesn't come from A&P or Food Basics or whatever the heck—maybe some of those folks on the other side are getting theirs at Pusateri's or whatever, but we regular people have to buy it from the food store. But we know where it comes from. It comes from the heart and soul and blood and guts and sweat and tears of the people who give their lives to produce that food. That's where it comes from.

All they want is a fair shake from this government. And where is this government when farmers are in trouble? They dance around the issue. You'd think they were on—what's that show on Monday nights? My wife always wants to watch it.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Dancing with the Stars.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Dancing with the Stars.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Look at them dancing over there—dancing. Shame on you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But they're not having waltzes. I'm trying to think of—I'm never going to be on that program because I don't know all those dances, but I'll

bet you my friend from Parkdale—High Park knows those dances.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Used to.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But it would be one of the dances where you kind of get close but you never really touch. You show some emotion but then you slip away. It would be one of those dances where you never actually get intimate. That would be the approach of the government. They want to be there with the farmers; they want to be there for the photo ops; they want to be there and they want to make all these pronouncements. They want to make these pronouncements about how the McGuinty government is the farmers' best friend, but the farmers know different.

From time to time, of course, they get these third party validations—and Geri Kamenz, the former president of the OFA, was great at those third party validations. And what did he get for it? My friend from Nepean—Carleton would know. He got himself a cushy government appointment when his time at the OFA was done. You really have to ask yourself: Was he speaking for the farmers or was he padding his nest, preparing for the day when the folks from the other side, the appointments secretary of the Liberal Party, would come calling and say, "Geri, you've done us well. We're paying you back. Don't worry. You'll be looked after?"

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, the member for Huron—Bruce is upset because they don't like to see—the average person out there doesn't know probably that that appointment came immediately after the end of his term at the OFA.

Do you know the old story about if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck? Well, I'll tell you, that was a mallard in full glory, that little game that went on between Kamenz and the government and the pay off that existed after all of those third party validations on every announcement they made over his term while he was president of the OFA.

0950

One of the things that is in this bill, although they have no enforcement powers or anything until the feds actually produce a piece of legislation, is traceability. People understand the importance of traceability when it comes to protecting food, but the minister herself, when she tabled this legislation, spoke about it, saying that they need the federal government to have legislation that they can piggyback on in order to have this aspect of the bill actually functioning here in the province.

I don't have much time, but I want to talk about one thing. You talk about support for farmers. My friend from Durham gave me a piece of news coverage here that says, "Farm's Lights Back On, For Now," where a farmer who had invested huge amounts of money in his operation had the power cut off. He was a hog farmer, of course. That's that part where I was talking about how they've never been in a greater crisis, and the Minister of Agriculture sat back and is continuing to sit back while

they spiral into worse and worse conditions on a daily basis. Thank goodness the creditors have agreed to pay that outstanding hydro bill. It was Wayne Bartels, and his 4,500 hogs are out of the dark for now.

Wayne and his hogs are out of the dark, but sadly, this government for the most part remains in the dark. It is fixated on staying out of the news on its scandals, the summer of scandals has turned into the autumn of scandal, it will be the winter of scandal, and this government is wrong-headed, bringing in legislation when it really should be dealing with the crisis that it created.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to follow the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and his impassioned plea on behalf of farmers and, really—let's table this—his entertaining wit. We always look forward to what he has to say.

It reminds me, when I was in Huron–Bruce as a minister, some incredible farmers in that part of the world, who really work hard, told me this joke. They said, "What does a farmer do when they win the lottery?" And the answer was, "They just keep farming until it's all gone."

Our concerns with this bill are manifold. Number one, we're concerned that so much is left up to regulation, it's very difficult to see how this is going to play out, and the devil is often in the details of these pieces of legislation.

I'm also particularly concerned at tracing something like listeriosis and how that's done. Maybe I'll take a few minutes, when I have a few minutes, to talk about that.

Finally, folk in my riding in particular, although we're city slickers, are concerned about animal health, and they are concerned about organic farm practices and the plight of the smaller organic farmer and how they'll fare in this. We fall way behind, for example, the European Union, way behind many jurisdictions in the States on protecting animals and protecting our growing organic farm group. I'd like to focus on that because that's a concern to my constituents. Also, what happened when this government took Maple Leaf Foods' side over the side of small butchers and drove butchers out of business in my riding—I'll spend a few minutes on that as well.

But suffice it to say, again, it's difficult to know what this bill is going to mean. It's got a very grandiose title, but when you actually read the bill, you see that so much is left up to regulations and enforcement—with no money, of course, to go along with the enforcement—that one really doesn't know what's going to happen on farms and one really doesn't know what's going to happen for animals with this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to respond to my good friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Let me say from the outset that I learned this morning that farmers in Ontario do have a big supporter in John, because I know that if they need help spreading some manure, John

did a lot of that here this morning. He did a great job with that.

The short memory: On one hand, he says, "How can you say no to food safety?"—then let me just give you some little tidbits. Meat inspectors under the previous government—gone. Walkerton: Under that watch, there was no inspection. I come from Brighton. There was an egg office in Brighton—gone.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Then put it back, Lou. You've been in government for six years.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We did put some of that back: 170 meat inspectors.

They're not talking about the good work this government is doing.

I tell you, I met with the chicken farmers as well, and they were thrilled with this particular piece of legislation.

I met with the grain and oilseed folks. Just yesterday, they were here. They're thrilled with this piece of legislation, and they're prepared to work with us in making it better.

The opposition can say whatever they want, but I think this record speaks for itself: from 10 meat inspectors to 170.

So, yes, we do have safe food in the province of Ontario, thanks to the work that the ministry has done and thanks to the work this government has done to restore some of the safety that was long, long gone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If we want to talk about manure, then the member from Northumberland–Quinte West might want to talk about how he's been spreading it for the past two minutes. My colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is a champion of the agricultural sector in eastern Ontario and in his own riding.

Let me tell you what Today's Farmer said: "Ontario Animal Health Act Heavy-Handed." It's not just that. The reality is that this Liberal government has continually cut resources to farmers. Not only have they cut resources to farmers, but in the next year alone, the folks in the province of Ontario who are fortunate enough to be farmers in today's era are going to be confronted with a couple of things—that you are going to make it even more detrimental for them to make a living and for us—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is, this is the government that is going to increase veterinary services in this province by 8%, harming animal health. This is the government that is going to increase energy costs for farmers as a result of the Green Energy Act. They are going to make it less affordable, not just for everyday Ontarians but in particular for farmers.

The people of Nepean–Carleton, from the farm communities in Osgoode and Rideau townships, of North Gower and Burritts Rapids, can't afford this Liberal government anymore. And I can tell you another thing: Your own constituents can't afford you anymore. The reality is, on election day in 2011, you will be rewarded for this

heavy-handed act and you will be rewarded very well, and they will send you for a very long vacation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is always on topic. One thing he mentioned in passing—he failed to stress the importance of this government introducing a bill that, if you look at the details, is fraught with a lot of red tape.

Stakeholders were asking for a traceability system, which is largely absent from the bill. Traceability allows the livestock producer and the consumer at the end of the day to be able to trace the source of potentially contaminated food. There's a system here—it says the minister will allow a system to set up a framework for traceability.

1000
It goes way too far—from my notes here—for what is required to protect animal health. It creates a system of permits and licences which are really more red tape, and adds additional costs to the farm operation. There's no compensation for the time and the paperwork and expense that are being downloaded to the agricultural community at a time when agriculture, on all sides—both on the livestock and field crop side—is fraught with the challenges in low commodity prices.

When, as the member from Nepean–Carleton said, you factor in the HST that's coming on farm equipment, veterinary services and the rest, the story for agriculture and our food security and food safety is very much in peril. I don't see a lot in this bill other than the fact that it champions food quality and food safety, which is not disputable here. We would go a long way to support that, and in fact we do support that provision. But when you're giving them more work, more responsibilities, and are downloading the responsibilities to an already stressed sector of our economy, it certainly doesn't serve the end that you suggest that it does serve.

I would say one thing: The adding of the chief veterinarian for the province is a good system. We would support that.

But there are so many things that are wrong, we can barely even find support for this bill—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members for Parkdale–High Park, Northumberland–Quinte West, Nepean–Carleton and Durham.

I want to focus on what the member for Northumberland–Quinte West said when he talked about manure. It reminds me of when Mitch Hepburn, the former Liberal Premier, was on a campaign stop one time and he wanted to speak to the crowd. He wanted to get elevated so that they could see him, and it was a farming community. All they did was they brought out this manure spreader and they got him to stand on the manure spreader while he addressed the crowd. Partway through his address, he alluded to the fact that he felt a little uncomfortable delivering the Liberal platform from a manure spreader, and

immediately, the interjection from the crowd was, “Well, wind 'er up Mitch, because she's never carried a bigger load.” And that is exactly what you're getting from the member for Northumberland–Quinte West. That is what the whole Liberal policy is when it comes to farmers in this province.

Let's get a couple of things straight. When the Liberals want to talk about Walkerton, they should read the whole Walkerton report and read about the drunks who deliberately falsified records and failed to report, thereby jeopardizing people's health and causing the deaths of several people. They faced criminal charges as a result of that. Let's call a spade a spade about what happened in Walkerton and stop pretending that that was somehow anything but a failure of individuals who deliberately falsified records in order to protect themselves, thereby causing the ill health of over 2,000 people and the deaths of seven. Let's get the record straight when you want to talk about Walkerton.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I have been listening to this debate with enthusiasm. Let me say for the record, right off the top, that our aim in the New Democratic Party, of course, is what this bill's aim is as well, and that is to protect animal and human health and to prevent what we had in the summer of 2008, which was a horrible tragedy, deaths from listeriosis.

I just want to go back to that summer and talk a little bit, again, about—and this is part of the problem of this bill. Part of the problem of this bill is that it seems to fall on one side rather than the other. It sets into place aspects that look and sound good, but everything is left to regulation. There's not a lot of money to back it up, and we really don't know how it's going to be enforced or what that's going to look like until it is. Based on some examples of how this government has enforced some of its regulations vis-à-vis food and animal safety, one has real cause for concern.

As the deaths from listeriosis were happening, two little butcher shops in my riding, for example, shut their doors. They shut their doors not because there was anything wrong with their operations or anything unsafe. Certainly, the Toronto Board of Health had passed both of those operations, one for 50 years—50 years—and the other for at least 20 years. They were shut because an inspector came from the province and told them they would have to install about \$200,000 worth of upgrades just to be able to fulfill the letter of the regulatory law. They couldn't afford to do it. They were ma-and-pa operations; they didn't have that kind of money. They were barely making ends meet, and this drove them out of business.

Interestingly, the listeriosis problem did not drive Maple Leaf Foods out of business. Again, we see the fat cats, the big companies getting help from this government but not the little guys, not small business, not those ma-and-pa industries that are really working hard and just trying to survive. I'm afraid that is what this might mean—again, we don't know for sure, but we've got

some bad examples, and I'll go into those in a minute—for farmers. It might mean that the government picks the large producers over the small organic farmers. That's what we'd like to see prevented.

We have an example. The Toronto Star brought this to light; otherwise, it probably never would have come to light. This was around turkey producers. The Turkey Farmers of Ontario passed a regulation restricting turkeys from going outdoors on safety grounds. Unfortunately, that's the way organic farmers work. Many in my riding and many in Toronto—you can see this, as witnessed by the Healthy Butcher on Queen, Rowe Farms on Roncesvalles etc.—really would prefer to buy organic free-range fowl. What happened is, the turkey farmers passed this legislation restricting turkeys from going outdoors on safety grounds—debatable, I must say, because certainly in California, when they were looking at a proposition down there, they discovered, quite contrary to the Turkey Farmers of Ontario, that it's no less safe to let poultry roam than it is to keep them chained up in unbelievable circumstances. With the stroke of a pen, the Turkey Farmers of Ontario drove out of business organic turkey farmers. That's the kind of enforcement of the regulations that aren't clear in this bill that we in the New Democratic Party would like to see prevented.

In terms of animal health—I don't have a lot of time so I'm going to leap ahead to that, because there is a great deal of concern in my riding for animal health and the way that farm animals are treated. You need to know that we're not looking good in the international community in Canada for the way that we treat our farm animals. You don't have to be a fan of Babe: Pig in the City to know this, but you do need to know that a report by the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies ranked Canada well behind Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the EU in terms of farm animal welfare.

Let's take an example. In 2007, the EU banned veal crates. A veal crate, for the non-farmers in the crowd, is so small that a calf that is raised in them cannot turn around for its 16 weeks of life. If that isn't cruel, I don't know what is. I have long since refused to eat veal because of the way veal is produced. Many of my friends are the same in that regard. The EU banned it in 2007. Will this bill help veal calves? No, not at all.

Sow stalls, which keep pregnant pigs in such close confinement they're virtually unable to move throughout their 16-week pregnancy, will be banned in the EU. Does this bill make any specific moves around banning that kind of cruel practice? No, it doesn't. It goes on all the time.

The EU agreed to ban battery cages for laying hens in 2012, stopping a practice that denies birds virtually all their natural behaviours and keeps them so cramped they cannot even flap a wing. Here we're even behind Arnold Schwarzenegger's California—the Republicans' California. We're behind them; they've even passed a bill that will ban battery cages, sow stalls and veal crates by 2015, not to mention Colorado, Florida, Oregon, Arizona and Maine, which have all passed legislation banning inten-

sive confinement systems. We still have them on our farms.

The member next to me was absolutely correct: We in the city buy our meat; it looks very sanitized as it comes in a little plastic package. We don't see where it came from. We don't know what kind of lives, brief though they may be, those animals had. Yet we've got a range of organic farmers who would like to change that, and we in the New Democratic Party would like to at least enable them to do so. We would like a government that stands up, again, for not only the big farmers—the big operations—but also the small ones.

If the government does trace back, for example, an outbreak of listeriosis or anything else that comes from farm animals, and then calls upon the farmer to destroy those cattle or those fowl, what kind of compensation, for example, will an organic farmer get compared to someone who doesn't raise their cattle or their fowl or their pigs organically? It certainly costs way more for the organic farmer. Will they get the same compensation per animal per kill? These are all unanswered questions; these are all the kinds of questions we'd like to see answered.

Just to point to a larger strategy, and that is the fact that we don't have one. We don't have an Ontario food strategy. Food activists have called for the longest time for a Canada-wide food strategy, but also for an Ontario-wide food strategy.

I was at a wonderful inauguration in Parkdale-High Park the other night for the beginning of the West End Food Co-op. I invested in that, as did about 150 people. What we'd like to see is what many in the city of Toronto would like to see: co-ops being able to sell locally grown produce directly from farmers, locally and organically raised produce that's healthy for us, and being able to make it affordable so that we don't have to go to a large American outlet like Whole Foods to buy good, healthy, organic produce. That's the kind of movement that's really growing in Ontario. That's the kind of movement that this government should be supporting, but I don't see any support for that kind of movement in this bill and I don't really see anything that's going to support animal health in this bill. I see an enabling system set up, again, where much is left to regulation and much is left to the fiscal capacity of this government, to the number of inspectors, to the wisdom of those inspectors, because who knows—it's left up to them—what they'll do and what they'll rule as cruel and unusual, and as not. So much is left up to regulation that it's very difficult to get excited about this bill. It's very difficult to see how this bill would conceivably prevent a listeriosis outbreak like the one we had in the summer of 2008 and the one that inspired this bill.

Certainly, this bill should go to committee. There will be lots of deputations, I'm sure, to this committee, and we'd like to see those who are concerned about animal welfare, as well as those who are concerned about the small organic farmer, make deputations to this committee so that this bill can do what it purports to do. That's all

that we ask at the New Democratic Party, that this bill do what it purports to do, because there is a need for that.

On a general note, as the small business critic for the New Democratic Party, I would like to see this government for once look at the small producer, look at the small business person, take their glance away from the large contributors to their political campaigns and from the large companies, the large producers, and look instead at the small farm, at the small ma-and-pa butcher shop—I could go on—the small pharmacy over Shoppers Drug Mart etc. Again and again, this government opts to protect the wealthy at the expense of the middle class and the not so wealthy.

I'm looking forward to the committee on this and to the deputations, and I'm looking forward to a bill that actually does what this one says needs to be done.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to the standing orders and with reference to my trusty pocket watch, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd invite all members to join me in welcoming my son, Joshua. It's take-your-student-to-work day today.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to introduce Gary O'Neill, president of the International Union of Operating Engineers, and his son, Kris, who are in the gallery for take-your-dad-to-work day.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce two of my guests in the opposition gallery: my son, Robert Bailey, and a good constituent of mine, Mr. Gary Ingram, from Petrolia, Ontario.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to introduce the mother of page Rebecca Bartlett, Deb Bartlett. She's a former reporter from my area who spent many years shadowing me in my role as a school trustee, and she's visiting from Little Britain.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm proud to introduce my son, Jack Arnott, and my nephew Ben McIntosh, who are here with us this morning as well. Stand up, guys.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wonder if that'll be a dynasty up in that riding, Mr. Speaker? It could be the beginning of a dynasty.

I would like to introduce from Kapuskasing Joanne Baril and Roger Lachance, who are here today to meet with Minister Smitherman, along with Jonathan Hack.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome to the gallery Hannah Korbee and her dad, Leon Korbee, who are joining us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Etobicoke North and page James Profiti, we'd like to welcome his father, Pat Profiti, to the Legislature today.

We also would like to welcome a number of students from the deputy finance minister's office from grade 9 for take-your-kid-to-work day. We'd like to welcome those individuals to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to welcome a number of grade 9 students who are taking part in the Ontario Legislative Assembly's take-your-students-to-work day. They are Nicholas Lao; Mark Jimenez; Avesh Chadee; Dana Mariah Chadee; Sean Giverin; Christina Vasconcelos; Linnea Sage; Senen Yuen; Abby Cromwell; Kevin Turner; Julia Nakamishi; and Jade Bautista. Welcome to Queen's Park for the day as well.

Also, I would like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery Mr. Don Brewer. Don is the manager of broadcast services from the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador. Welcome.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Although I think he might be a little young for the grade 9 take-your-kid-to-work day, I notice that Rob Benzie from the Toronto Star has his son with him today, and we'd like to welcome him to the House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. On October 21, you attended a press conference to announce that H1N1 vaccination clinics would be opening a week ahead of schedule. In the 13 days that followed, it was obvious from the long lineups and wait times that you weren't ready. Minister, why did you roll the vaccination plan out ahead of schedule?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to answer the question. We wanted to get the vaccine out and protecting Ontarians as quickly as we could. We could have, I suppose, withheld the vaccine and kept it in our fridges, but our decision was to open the clinics to move forward because H1N1 is a serious illness and we want to protect as many Ontarians as we can as quickly as we can.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Yesterday we asked the chief medical officer of health whether she recommended the press conference to announce opening clinics a week ahead of schedule. She said it wasn't her idea. When we asked whether the minister requested the press conference, we didn't get an answer. Minister, why did you make the chief medical officer of health announce that you were ready to administer the vaccine a week ahead of schedule when you weren't?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me make this very clear: Dr. Arlene King, the chief medical officer of health for the province of Ontario, and I have been working very, very closely together to get the vaccine that we have out and doing what it's supposed to do, which is to protect people from H1N1, as quickly as we can. We could have held back. We could have held back until we had enough for the whole population. That was not the

decision we took. Our decision was to get the vaccine out as quickly as we could.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: A pattern has developed with the McGuinty Liberals. A scandal or a damning report comes to light and a hastily assembled conference is called to try and change the channel. The release of the cellphone driving bill, the tobacco lawsuit, the full-day kindergarten and auto insurance announcements can all be tied to bad-news days for the McGuinty Liberals. The early rollout of the H1N1 clinics was announced a day before the fall economic statement revealed that the McGuinty Liberals are running a record \$24.7-billion deficit. We can understand the McGuinty Liberals shying away from talking about their scandals, but why drag the chief medical officer of health into their political PR schemes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that I am astonished at this question. I am amazed. I cannot quite believe that what I'm hearing—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I simply can't believe that what I am hearing is that we should have withheld the vaccine that we had because—it's extraordinary to me. I think, frankly, on behalf of the people who were able to receive the vaccine a week ahead of schedule, the member opposite had better apologize.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again my question is for the Minister of Health. During question period yesterday, the minister showed how out of touch the McGuinty Liberal government is with the Ontario public, Ontario front-line health workers, and reality. Does the minister regret saying that Canada's worst government has the world's best vaccination plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I don't for one minute regret that because we have an excellent vaccination plan that is in place that is rolling out. We're on our way to having over two million people receiving the vaccine by the end of this week. We are a week ahead of schedule. The lines have now come down. Public health officials across the province have responded to unexpected demand and the vaccine rollout is going extremely well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Let's look at reality. We're two weeks into the rollout of the minister's plan. She won't hit the four-week target set out in the Ontario influenza pandemic plan that her government commissioned. She hasn't administered the H1N1 vaccine to everyone in the high-priority category yet, let alone everybody else in the province. The same day that she bragged about having the world's best vaccination plan, she said, "It's safe to say that what we saw in Toronto last week is simply unacceptable." Which is flawed—the minister's plan or her execution of it?

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you that the vaccine is getting into people as quickly as we receive it. We will not be able to reach a four-week target because we simply don't have the vaccine. Public health units across the province are reporting that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I know members get upset with the Speaker when he misses an unparliamentary comment that may get made occasionally in this chamber. I'm finding it extremely difficult to hear the answers and the questions. I would just ask all members on both sides to have some consideration for not only us as members but for the guests that are here observing as well.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are moving very quickly to get the vaccine out as quickly as possible. Public health units across the province are delivering the vaccine. Our hospitals are responding to the increase in demand. We have flu assessment centres opening up across the province. We are doing extremely well on our response to this pandemic. The only thing that we are missing is a sure and steady supply of vaccine from the federal government.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact of the matter is that this government is not implementing the Ontario influenza pandemic plan that they commissioned, and the minister's criticism of Toronto Public Health is unacceptable. Front-line workers are looking to you for leadership and not attacks.

In response to her attack on public health officials, John Filion, a Toronto city councillor said, "Politicians shouldn't play politics with this." Minister, are you playing political blame games to change the channel?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Whitby-Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I was finished with my question, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I actually stand by my comment that the rollout in Toronto was unacceptable. I do think that having people line up for hours in the rain was not the way that that vaccine should have been rolled out. I make no apologies. If you think it was acceptable, I disagree with you. There were some very fine examples across the province where the vaccine rollout was delivered in a respectful—

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

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. As parents watch this government's pandemic rollout, they're getting extremely anxious. They've been told that their children should be vaccinated, but then

they're told that clinics will not make school-aged children a priority. My question to the minister is a simple one: When will school-aged children get vaccinated?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is quite right that school-aged children, for medical scientific reasons, are not part of the highest-priority group. We're focused on children between the ages of six months and up to but not including five years old; we're focused on pregnant women; we're focused on people under the age of 65 who have chronic underlying conditions; we're focused on our health care workers; and we're focused on caregivers of people who, because of medical conditions or because they have a small infant, cannot be vaccinated. That is the right approach to take. We are looking forward, when we do have the availability of the vaccine, to expand the list of priority groups.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Earlier today, the Saskatchewan government announced that school-aged children from kindergarten to grade 6 are now a priority. Parents in Saskatchewan can get their kids vaccinated today. In Ontario, parents are left waiting—and they want to know, are school-aged children a priority group? And if they're not, why not?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am taking the advice of the chief medical officer of health. Her advice and the advice across the country is that the highest-priority groups are those who will suffer the greatest complications from H1N1 if in fact they contract the virus. We are, as I say, focusing on those priority groups. The next group of priority will be announced shortly. It will include younger school-aged children. The details of that I will leave to the chief medical officer of health.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: One of the lessons that we should have learned from the SARS epidemic was the need to have a clear plan and to communicate it well. In Ontario, parents are left in the dark about plans to vaccinate their kids, while the rich and powerful can buy their way to the front of the line. If there is a plan to make school-aged children a priority, when will the parents of this province finally find out?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand the impatience of the member opposite; in fact, I share that. I would love to be able to tell parents today when they will be able to take their school-aged children to be vaccinated.

We are dealing with uncertainty around the timing of the supply. There will be enough vaccine for everyone, I have been repeatedly assured of that; the timing is the question. We are dealing with a real-time pandemic, and we are responding based on the best science available to us about who should go to the front of the line and when we can begin to expand to other people in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Uncertainty and incompetence seem to be the modus operandi of this government, I have to tell you.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is, as well, to the Minister of Health. Algoma's eHealth system has made their H1N1 vaccination program simple and seamless. This is evidence of how important an electronic health records system is for Ontario. But the development of such a system requires significant public dollars and complete transparency to ensure value for the money.

On October 29, Nightingale, an eHealth records company, told its investors of a new \$236-million deal between the McGuinty government and the OMA. My question is this: When was the government planning to tell Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is absolutely right: If we had a fully functioning eHealth system in this province, this vaccine rollout would have been significantly easier. In some communities where they are more advanced when it comes to eHealth, they have seen much smoother response. In fact, in some communities they've been able to go into the records, find where the babies are and reach out to those children between six months and four years old to get them vaccinated.

I am delighted that we are going to be able to significantly expand the number of physicians who have access to the technology and the software that will allow them to join the ever-growing eHealth system in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For a government that has never shied away from a photo op, you'd think a \$236-million deal would warrant at least a press release from this government.

The deal was signed in July. If it wasn't supposed to be a secret, will the minister release the full list of vendors, indicate how those vendors were selected, and release the full agreement between the government and the OMA?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are very proud of our continued commitment to rolling out eHealth. This information was, in fact, in the Auditor General's report. I urge you to look to page 32, where you will read, "The eHealth strategic plan targets a 65% EMR adoption rate by primary care physicians by April 2012, which it projects will require further funding of \$50 million in 2011 and \$77 million in 2012. Achieving the target is thus expected to cost more than \$225 million," which is what we are investing over the next three years.

It's critical to the sustainability of our health care system that physicians adopt the latest technology. We have seen how it works, we know it's the right way to go, and we are not going to lose focus on achieving that objective.

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians have a right to expect full transparency on this matter and they are still not getting it from this minister. They've already seen \$1 bil-

lion in health care money go out the door with very little to show for it.

We know that in 2008 the OMA rejected a proposal that would fund doctors' transitions to eHealth records in exchange for greater accountability measures, including an independent board, government audits and open procurement.

A simple question: Does the \$236-million backroom deal include these measures to protect the public's investment?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I feel like I'm getting a little bit of whiplash here. If you'll excuse me, I've got one member of the third party saying stop it—the health critic said, “Stop this investment right away”; the other one is saying, “Let's go ahead with it.”

This is really important, and frankly I am going to proceed with the implementation of eHealth. It is the right thing to do for this province, it's the right thing to do for the people of this province; it is a safer system for people, it is a more efficient system for people, and it will save us money that we can reinvest in much-needed health services.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Health. When the Premier said in his media scrum yesterday that there is “fairly broad resistance amongst Ontarians in participating in the vaccination program,” it's clear that there's not. Do you agree with the Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, I actually do agree with the Premier. We have an ongoing challenge to communicate to people across this province that H1N1 is a serious illness and they should get vaccinated.

I know that there's been a surge of people, particularly parents of young children, who wanted the vaccine immediately, but I do believe that there is still much work to be done to convince people across the province who do not fall into those high-priority groups to get the vaccine. It's very important that everyone in this Legislature understands that H1N1 can be prevented with the vaccine, and the more people who get the vaccine, the better for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I guess the minister's interpretation of four- to six-hour lineups is “broad resistance” to this vaccination.

The Premier, if he's believed, shows how out of touch he is with the public, the front-line health workers and with reality. John Filion, a Toronto city councillor, said, “People were listening to the message and want to get vaccinated.” George Smitherman said that long lineups and wait times were a positive sign that many people wanted to get vaccinated.

In question period yesterday, the health minister admitted the big problem is that she totally underestimated public demand for the vaccine. Is the Premier clueless or just trying to change the channel from the mess the minister made?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment she made.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I wish there was a really simple way to communicate the H1N1 pandemic response to people, but what the member opposite needs to understand is that we've got three different things at play. We've got a supply of vaccine—that is one issue we are watching very, very closely—we have the demand from the public, which of course is changing depending on what happens to be in the news, and there is also the issue of our capacity to deliver. I am now very pleased with our capacity to deliver the vaccine across the province. Public health units are reporting, and I have heard anecdotally as well, that when people go to the clinics, they're getting very prompt vaccinations. I'm hearing that right across the province.

We do need the supply of vaccine and we need to continue to convince Ontarians—

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

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Hospitals have no surge capacity to meet the growing demand caused by the H1N1 flu. Hospitals in the Niagara system are cancelling surgeries. The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions says that hospitals are operating at 98% capacity or above. We all know that the vast majority of people who catch H1N1 won't need hospitalization, but right now in Ontario 11 million people have not been vaccinated. They are catching and spreading H1N1, and some of them need hospitalization. Minister, a small percentage of 11 million people makes for a lot of patients. My question is simple: What is your plan for the people who do need hospitalization after coming down with H1N1?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to have the opportunity to report that our hospitals are coping very well. Each hospital has a plan. They are implementing that plan. Cancelling elective surgery is part of the pandemic plan. This is not business as usual for hospitals. This is not business as usual for our health care sector. This is a global pandemic. We are responding to it in a very measured and excellent way. The hospitals are rolling out their pandemic plans. We have approximately 90 people who are in hospital today as a result of H1N1. We've had over 600 come into hospital, and 500 of those have left hospital. Our hospitals are coping, but it is not business as usual.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: My 87-year-old mother-in-law broke her foot. She was sent to Sudbury Regional Hospital to get a cast. The waiting room was so packed with people with flu symptoms that the triage nurse decided

that it was safer to send her home with her foot fracture than to have her wait her turn in the emergency department to get her cast on.

Let's go have a look at the website of Sudbury Regional Hospital. We all know there are 129 ALC patients in there, nine patients on ventilators in critical care, 77 in isolation because of the flu, 21 surgeries cancelled in the last two days; this is, yesterday and the day before. Seventeen patients are in the emergency department as we speak right now waiting for a bed. My question is simple: Is turning away a frail, elderly, 87-year-old woman with a fractured foot part of the minister's plan to deal with the surge in H1N1?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me start by saying I'm sorry to hear that your mother-in-law has fractured her foot. I trust she is going to get the excellent care she deserves, as does everyone else.

One of the things that is happening across the province is that we're opening up flu assessment centres. These are centres that are specifically for people with flu-like symptoms, where they can go have their condition assessed and can get started on Tamiflu if that's what is recommended. This is taking the pressure off our emergency rooms. It is part of our plan, and I'm very pleased with how it's working.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: In previous questions to the minister, this House has heard about the government's extensive efforts to confront the challenges posed by H1N1. Public health care workers across the province are working strenuously to immunize as many people as they can in the identified priority groups and in the shortest time possible. The vaccine is the best prevention tool that we have. Yet once H1N1 has been contracted, doctors prescribe Tamiflu. Some serious concerns raised by parents of York South-Weston, and in particular by a father whose daughter has a pre-existing asthma condition, relate to the lack of pediatric Tamiflu in pharmacies across the GTA. Can the minister assure us that all efforts are being made to accelerate the delivery of pediatric Tamiflu to pharmacies across Ontario so that—

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I sure do understand the concerns of the father who is concerned about his child. I am a mom; I understand how parents will fight for the best interests of their children. I'm very pleased to report that we now have delivered pediatric Tamiflu to 3,200 community pharmacies in Ontario, including many in the greater Toronto area. There have been some challenges with the supply, and I know this has been very concerning for parents. With this delivery, we're ensuring that the drug is more widely available for when a doctor prescribes it for a child who is sick with H1N1. There are also methods that pharmacists can use to convert the adult Tamiflu into a child's dosage. I will talk about that more in the supplementary.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to address another question to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on the same topic.

As the minister mentioned, other products may be used by pharmacists to create the children's dosage of Tamiflu, such as Ora-Sweet, the product used to convert Tamiflu into the sweet liquid solution given to children, but these products are also lacking in supply.

Given that our province is also waiting for the manufacturer of pediatric capsules of Tamiflu for children aged one and older to ramp up their stock and accelerate delivery, when can fathers and mothers across Ontario expect to find a plentiful supply of pediatric Tamiflu and related products on the shelves of their local pharmacies?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We do understand that there is more to do on this, and one way to increase access to Tamiflu is by converting those adult capsules into the children's dosage. The ministry has provided pharmacies with guidance on how to convert these doses using a product called Ora-Sweet. However, unfortunately, there's a shortage of this product as well.

This is, as I said, a global pandemic we are dealing with. That's why we've been working with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association to advise pharmacists about possible alternatives to Ora-Sweet. We've been informed that the Ontario order for Ora-Sweet will be arriving within days, helping ramp up access to Tamiflu.

I do want to thank the member for York South-Weston and other members of the House for having raised this issue. I look forward to continuing to work with you to increase access to pediatric Tamiflu for kids in this province.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday, the Premier called the obstruction of the Auditor General's investigation into the ministry an "unfortunate slip." The auditor gave notice of his intention to audit the Ministry of Health in August 2008 and wasn't let in until February 2009, so the slip lasted six months.

Minister, it's hard to believe your assistant deputy minister wouldn't be familiar with section 10 of the Auditor General Act, which puts a duty on the ministry to hand over information and access to records the auditor believes are necessary. What disciplinary action have you taken with Mr. McKinley for obstructing the auditor's investigation into the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you that as soon as my deputy became aware, through a phone call from the Auditor General, that there was an issue, that issue was resolved immediately.

I do know that the deputy and others have been called before the public accounts committee. They have been very open and forthcoming in their responsiveness.

We welcomed the report from the Auditor General. He gave us some very important recommendations. We have

responded to those recommendations and are following up on implementing each and every one of the recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's really not that simple because shortly after the auditor gave notice of his intention to audit the Ministry of Health, Mr. McKinley was installed as ADM. His predecessor wasn't implicated in the decision to obstruct the auditor. Mr. McKinley was the first to break the law by violating section 10 of the Auditor General Act.

It makes no sense for a senior bureaucrat, just appointed to the program, to break the law. Public servants don't put their careers in jeopardy for nothing. It makes no sense that no one inside the government knew what was happening for months. It also makes no sense that no action has been taken against Mr. McKinley or anyone else who broke the law.

Minister, if you and the Premier won't ask the hard questions, why not appoint a public inquiry that will and investigate this matter and get to the bottom of it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the members of the opposition have been calling for a public inquiry. I am convinced that that is an issue that would not shine more light on to this issue. We have had significant changes that have been made in our procurement policies as a result of the auditor's report. I think the political interference—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If the member opposite is arguing that we should discipline our public service, I think she would characterize that as political interference. I can tell you that members of the Ministry of Health have been working very, very hard to implement the changes. We are moving full-steam ahead on the implementation of eHealth. It's very—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'm content to stand here all day. New question.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Why are Ontario Works and Ontario disability recipients being told that they must pay for Tamiflu out of their own pockets when they go to the pharmacy with a doctor's prescription in their hands?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to the member for this question. I'm very surprised that that's what they're told, because Tamiflu, I'm told by the Minister of Health, is free for everyone. So if there is some concern and if you have examples, please bring them to my attention and I will look into them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: We have countless stories, and we've been told that pharmacists have been given batches

of Tamiflu to give without charge to Ontario drug benefit recipients who are prescribed the drug as part of this recent pandemics protocol. Yet people are contacting us, saying that they have been asked to pay for Tamiflu.

Given this pandemic, has this government informed each and every pharmacist, every doctor and every ODSP and OW client that Tamiflu be given free of charge to everyone who needs it? And has the government given adequate supplies of this drug to pharmacies across the province so they can dispense it without charge?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you again for the question, for bringing that to our attention. It's our understanding that every pharmacist is aware that it's free of charge—not just for those on social assistance, but for every Ontarian. We will look into it, and if you have any examples, please bring them to our attention and we will specifically talk to these pharmacists.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Recently, the Toronto Star reported on a study led by Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital under the headline that one third of Toronto's homeless population are immigrants. The study looked at over 1,000 individuals in shelters and meal programs and concluded that 32% were immigrants and almost a quarter of those had mental health issues.

Minister, this is an issue that I have been active with for some time in my riding of Ottawa Centre. Just this past September, I met with the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre, specifically regarding their concerns on mental health services and opportunities for Ottawa's immigrant communities. Specifically, they have been working hard as members of the multicultural mental health services working group, which is comprised of 20 community health and resource centres, immigrant settlement organizations, multicultural community groups and mental health organizations in Ottawa, to better understand the issue and make recommendations.

Minister, will you commit to supporting these individuals to break barriers and find work opportunities so immigrants with mental health issues are no longer isolated or stigmatized?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Ottawa Centre for his question. To newcomers, upon their arrival, Ontario is a new land, a new culture, a new language and a new way of life for them. They also face challenges in securing a job. This is why our government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in many bridge training programs, supporting over 30,000 newcomers.

Through the Office of the Fairness Commissioner, we are making access to regulated professions more open and fair. For example, the Ontario College of Pharmacists, the Ontario College of Teachers, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario are all taking action to improve access.

There's more to do and we are moving on the right track.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Immigrants come to this great country to join with us as productive and contributing members of our society and economy, but mental health problems can derail all of that if not properly understood or treated. Indeed, we all know that newcomers face a number of particular challenges and obstacles when they arrive in Canada that can be catalysts for mental health challenges to arise. Furthermore, both the Canadian Mental Health Association and Ottawa's multicultural mental health services working group state that there are very real cultural barriers to seeking treatment or assistance for immigrants with mental health problems, such as: the perceived or actual social stigma of mental illness; a lack of understanding of mental illness and mental health services available; language and cultural barriers to accessing services; fear of diagnosis or treatment, or of being denied employment or housing if mental health problems are identified. Minister, will you take steps to identify solutions to eradicate stigma, negative cultural perceptions and the prejudices that revolve around mental health issues in our cultural communities?

Hon. Michael Chan: Newcomers travel thousands of miles and face many hurdles to reach our province. I know first-hand of their challenges. That's why we have invested in settlement services, language training, bridge training and credential recognition. By investing in these areas we are helping newcomers transition to their new home and develop skills that are necessary to succeed in Ontario. We have also consistently consulted with immigrant communities and our service providers to better understand the challenges faced in these communities. The consultations will support the Ministry of Health to develop a mental health strategy that includes the needs of the immigrant population. Our collective prosperity relies on the success of our newcomers, and our government knows it.

TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Deputy Premier. On two occasions in this House, your Minister of Revenue was asked if the new HST will increase the cost of playing sports such as hockey. He responded by saying that recreational memberships or fees would generally be exempt from the HST. Minister, I've seen and, quite frankly, heard you skate, and you should know well that memberships and registration fees do not constitute the majority portion of the cost of playing sports. My son's registration fee was \$200. Yet I pay \$2,000 in ice rental fees, 10 times the registration fee. What was neglected to be mentioned was that when the ice registration fees come in and the HST comes in, that will increase the cost by 8% next summer.

Minister, in this economy you should understand the financial pressures on parents with kids in sports. Are you going to allow exemptions for youth ice rental fees to minimize the impact on minor hockey?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think most Ontario parents will benefit from the personal tax cut that they're going to get, that will more than offset these kinds of issues. Our comprehensive package of the HST and tax cuts will—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Hamilton East would be wiser to be in his seat.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That package will create jobs that will employ people and help this economy grow and get out of the difficult circumstances we find ourselves in. I think parents across Ontario want the best for their children. I agree with the member opposite. That's why the policy we're pursuing will create jobs, create a growth environment and will in fact help Ontario build back as we move out of the downturn in the world economy into a position of growth again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: The answer was yes, you can expect an 8% increase on your ice fees. Minister, we are leading into an Olympic year, and the impact of the economy has hugely affected recreational sports participation by youth. Hockey numbers are way down and it's expected to get worse while the government's job-loss funding dries up. Minister, does your government have any programs coming out that will assist organizations to counter the increased cost of the HST and help those organizations keep kids in their respective sports?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Several moments ago, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, my colleague the Minister of Revenue, along with Jack Mintz, noted world economist, released the following report. Here's what Mr. Mintz says. Jack Mintz says, "Within 10 years, Ontario will benefit from increased capital investment of \$47 billion" as a result of our policies. Mr. Mintz also says—and I'll remind my heckling colleagues opposite that this is the same Mr. Mintz whom your leader has endorsed as one of the best economists in the country—that our policies will increase worker incomes in 10 years by \$29.4 billion. Most important, Mr. Mintz says that this policy will create an estimated 591,000 net new jobs in Ontario. That's what this—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Finance will come to order.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Following question period yesterday, the health minister told the media that the H1N1 vaccine rolled out to First Nations communities was a shining example of how well the system works. Today, the Globe and Mail reports that the H1N1 vaccine is arriving too late in many First Nations communities: One in 15 First Nations people are already sick with the flu. Children are

being hospitalized, but First Nations are still waiting for adequate supplies of the vaccine. Is this really and truly the minister's definition of a shining success?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you that, first of all, of course, I'm concerned about the situations with our First Nations, particularly in the remote fly-in communities. We did get an oversupply of vaccine to them as quickly as we could. I do want to say, though, that the supply of the vaccine is not within our control. We have shipped far more than their per capita share to those First Nations, but there are people who are getting sick with H1N1.

I have spoken to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs about this and I will refer the supplementary to him, as he has an update from the community this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Health units are responsible for delivering the H1N1 vaccine to First Nations communities, and the health units are a provincial responsibility. First Nations communities, in fact, were told that they were a high priority for vaccine supply, but Stan Beardy, Grand Chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, says that his 49 communities have only received half of the vaccines that they were promised. Why are high-priority First Nations people experiencing such a delay?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's pretty obvious that the leader of the third party didn't listen to the original answer from our Minister of Health. I'm sure she knows that Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit health branch and the Public Health Agency of Canada have the lead for health response to H1N1 influenza in First Nations communities. But there is an unprecedented level of collaboration going on between the two governments. I did have the opportunity to speak to a chief from a community that is experiencing some real challenges just before question period. The vaccination is being administered. It is still being administered today. There is a teleconference being scheduled this afternoon to assess the situation further to determine when additional doses will be available.

We are working very closely with those communities. We communicate with them at every opportunity. We will continue to advocate with the federal government to ensure that the response is there and is fulsome.

1120

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Education. Western Mississauga is home to thousands of young families, and they send their children to our province's publicly funded schools. Ontario's full-day learning announcement would provide the option of full-day learning for our province's four- and five-year-olds. Our parents are interested in this initiative and they like the idea of a seamless school day for their children, but some parents have contacted us and asked why the program would not be available in all schools next September.

Would the minister please outline how Ontario plans to move ahead to implement full-day learning across the province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There's a broad consensus that early learning is one of the most important investments we can make in our children and our economy. Former Premier Bill Davis; Don Drummond, chief economist at TD Bank; Sid Ryan, president of CUPE—I think we've got a broad consensus there. It's about setting our kids on the road to success, and we want to make sure we get it right.

Our goal is to have the program fully implemented in all schools by 2015-16. This timeline will ensure that the resources are not overstretched and that school boards and local governments have sufficient time to hire staff, build facilities and work with local partners, because there isn't space in every single community to implement this.

Next September, we're planning to implement it in schools that already have appropriate space to accommodate additional classes, and in communities where there's both child care need and socio-economic need. We've asked all school boards to recommend the communities that would be most appropriate to begin.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: In addition to families in western Mississauga and all over Ontario with four- and five-year-olds who are anxious to get their kids into full-day learning, we also have families with younger children who are wondering what kind of child care options will be available to them.

In our ridings, we have some daycare operators who make a very good living providing high-quality, affordable child care who are also concerned. Some of these child care operators are wondering about the ongoing viability of their business and what it will do to the families who otherwise make up their market.

With some 35,000 four- and five-year-olds moving from child care operators into our schools next year, and the rest to follow, what is Ontario doing to ensure that our parents will have options for their kids under four, and how will we provide stability to the child care sector?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: This initiative is so exciting for Ontario's kids. But we do know that every single day, dedicated professionals across the province who are knowledgeable and loving help families give Ontario kids the best start. That's why we're committed to maintaining and enhancing child care services for kids and families, because we know how important they are. We know that moving to a universal full-day learning program for four- and five-year-olds will affect how child care programs are delivered and that these impacts will vary across the regions. So the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services will be working with municipalities, school boards and child care operators to minimize the impact on existing child

care programs and to enhance the care available for children under four. We're going to review such issues as subsidies, capital funding, and potential changes to legislation to make sure that Ontario kids from zero to four and beyond get the best—

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

CASINO EMPLOYEES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Casino Rama is the largest single-site employer of our First Nations brothers and sisters in our country. You know that the operating and development agreement for Casino Rama expires in the fall of 2011. Minister, can you explain to the House what you are doing to have the agreement renewed in order to protect the jobs of both aboriginals and non-aboriginals in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me start off by saying how proud we were and are as a government that we've been able to reach a gaming agreement, which we did about a year and a half or so ago. This is going to ensure that billions of dollars flow into First Nation communities right across this province, and it's going to provide much-needed support for economic development activities, investments in infrastructure, and investments in many of the different needs in First Nation communities that, at this point in time, have been unaddressed on many occasions, mostly due to lack of investment on the part of the federal government.

We're going to continue to work towards these agreements. The gaming agreement is indeed in place. It's good news for aboriginal communities, it continues to be good news for aboriginal communities, and it's another step forward in our efforts to build stronger First Nations communities—

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I just want to remind the minister, I was speaking specifically of Casino Rama.

Minister, we all know the dramatic changes and controversy surrounding the OLG under the watch of the McGuinty Liberals, and there's no doubt that there has been a lack of trust created. Historically, Casino Rama is the most profitable commercial gaming casino in Canada, and the general public are concerned and anxious to find out when the operating and development agreement will be renewed. We're not talking about old agreements; we're talking about the new agreement. Minister, can you tell the House today when your government will announce the new agreement? It's plain and simple. We just need a date.

Hon. Brad Duguid: These things take time to reach fruition. They are complex agreements and they continue to be worked on. The fact is, if you look at the last year in this province, we've seen more advancement. We've seen more progress made in working in partnership with

First Nations communities than we've seen probably in this province in the last 40 years.

Just last week, and I'm very pleased to be able to say this, Ontario brought all aboriginal affairs ministers from across every province in this country, every territory, the federal aboriginal affairs minister, as well as five national aboriginal groups, to Ontario so we could work on issues like economic development, so we could work together on issues like improving education. It all fits in together.

I appreciate the member's question. It will be done as soon as it possibly can be. We're working together, though, to move forward with First Nations communities—

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

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There we go. We know you've been waiting for a question.

My question is very simple. Communities across my riding are hearing from all different sources that the Ontario municipal partnership fund is going to be reduced this year for the community of Opatatika. They will go from \$263,000 in OMPF funding to \$150,000. Can you confirm in this House today that will not be the case?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me thank the honourable member from Timmins–James Bay for the opportunity to talk about some of the investments that the McGuinty government has made with the municipal sector. When we signed an historic agreement with the municipal sector a year ago last week, one of the commitments we made was that the Minister of Finance would provide mitigation funding for this fiscal year, which we did, but that we would undertake a review of the Ontario municipal partnership fund, which the Minister of Finance is doing in concert with AMO and our municipal partners.

I can say, however, that in the interim we have already uploaded the Ontario drug plan, 100% of that cost, saving municipalities close to \$165 million; we've uploaded 50% of ODSP costs, which is saving tens of millions of dollars; and we continue to upload over the length of the agreement, to the benefit of all municipalities in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the minister: I've called each municipality in my riding and they're telling me what you have done is not revenue-equal. Their fear is the OMPF is going to be reduced, all of those communities are going to be hit, and the offsets they're supposed to get on the upload are not equalizing. So I put the question to you. Just cut to the chase. Tell me no, you will not cut the OMPF this year.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm pleased to report a couple of things that would be of interest to the honourable member and his constituents. In Timmins, OMPF funding

totalled \$14.3 million, which was a record amount of money, well beyond the old community reinvestment fund. The total upload benefit, when fully uploaded as a result of the historic agreement the McGuinty government signed in partnership with our municipal partners, will be 3.7 million net new dollars for the good people of Timmins.

We're proud of the arrangements that we've made with the municipal sector. We're working in partnership with them and I know the Minister of Finance will communicate with the municipal community—the 440 municipalities—on the status of the Ontario municipal partnership fund. We've been there with them in the past; we'll be there with them in the future.

1130

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Culture. For over 100 years, the Royal Conservatory of Music has provided the finest music education to millions of Canadians in virtually every community in the country. Every year, 500,000 people in 300 communities participate in the Royal Conservatory's world-renowned programs.

After years of renovations and construction, the Royal Conservatory recently opened the doors of its stunning new Koerner Hall. Koerner Hall has attracted significant media attention since it opened a few weeks ago. Today, as part of this month's royal tour, the Duchess of Cornwall will be touring the Royal Conservatory of Music, including the new Koerner Hall.

Can the Minister of Culture tell this House what investments this government has made in the new Koerner Hall?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Thank you to my honourable colleague. It was just simply a great pleasure to attend the opening of Koerner Hall. With its outstanding acoustics and phenomenal design, it's adding yet one more landmark of the cultural world's rooting here in the city.

I was also delighted that Her Royal Highness has chosen Koerner Hall to visit. She should do so; I'm sure she'll be delighted in what she sees and what she hears.

We're delighted because we have supported the Royal Conservatory of Music and Koerner Hall with \$16 million of investment to assist them in the restoration and the expansion.

At the time of the opening, I had the opportunity to announce a further investment of \$5 million to enable the conservatory to continue to invest, promote and provide their—

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: Over the past decade, Toronto has undergone a remarkable cultural renaissance. The results have been an unprecedented building and architectural transformation of many of Ontario's renowned cultural institutions, including the Royal Conservatory of Music.

The National Ballet School has become a glittering new centre for arts education. A new elegant home was built for Toronto's opera and ballet companies. The Gardiner Museum was expanded and re-landscaped with a bold new image. The ROM expanded its facilities with the addition of the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, and Frank Gehry transformed the Art Gallery of Ontario, which has generated international praise. Collectively, the Ontario government has invested \$123 million towards Toronto's cultural renaissance.

Can the Minister of Culture explain why the government has invested so much funding in Toronto's cultural renaissance and why it is so important to Ontario?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Again I thank my honourable colleague for his insight into the fact that the cultural sector is an integral part of making our economy more prosperous and more competitive.

The cultural sector plays a key role in that it generates \$20 billion in the GDP of this province. Our sector is one of the fastest-growing in the Ontario economy. Cultural tourism creates or generates \$4.6 billion annually for the provincial economy, and it creates hundreds of thousands of jobs, a subject I know the opposition is particularly attuned to. By investing as this government has in each of the wonderful cultural agencies and attractions my colleague has described, it enables this city and enables this province to simply be a jewel in the Canadian crown.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: I wonder if the Minister of Health could help us with a very practical issue relating to H1N1. Ontarians would like to know what the protocol is. From the time that someone is suspected of having contracted H1N1, what is the process to confirm that? What is the testing process? Where is that test confirmed and what is the turnaround from the time that swab is taken until we have that confirmation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I confess that I am not a medical doctor and I do not have the answer to that question, but I certainly will undertake to get it for you.

What I can tell you, though, is that we have some very good news this week in our fight against H1N1 in that we now have 86,000 doses of the unadjuvanted vaccine that is now, across the province, distributed for pregnant women. I'm very happy to be able to tell you that pregnant women across the province will have an ample supply of vaccine. Different public health units are setting up their protocol for that, delivering it to high-volume obstetricians, setting up clinics specifically for pregnant women. That is just one more step in our fight against H1N1.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I would have thought that the Minister of Health would understand what the very practical protocol is.

The reason I ask this question is that the son of one of my constituents was in hospital, segregated, for more

than 10 days. The swab was taken, and it took almost two weeks for the test results to be brought back. There's only one place in Canada that does the testing, and that's in Winnipeg. I would hope that, in this province, we would have a system in place that would at least accelerate the delivery of these tests to ensure that we know what is going on in this province relative to H1N1 and so that there's an efficient process that we can all rely on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, I will look into the particulars of that question, but what I do know is that almost all the people with flu-like symptoms that we are now seeing do, in fact, have H1N1. So we don't need to test everyone right now.

I would recommend that people go to a flu assessment centre, that they take the advice of the health care professionals, and that, if they are sick, they stay home. No matter how strong that work ethic is, it's important to stay home if you're sick to protect the other people that you are working with.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est encore pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

We know that the first pillar in the fight against H1N1 is vaccination. Well, if you can't get the vaccination and, unfortunately, you get the disease, then the second pillar is to get quick access to an antiviral, mostly known as Tamiflu.

I was able to find that the government has distributed about a third of their supply to 3,200 pharmacies throughout the province. What I'm not able to find is a plan for equitable access. We don't know where those 3,200 pharmacies are located, but I can tell you that there's an equity-of-access issue in northeastern Ontario.

I'd like to ask the minister, what is your plan for equitable access for distribution of free Tamiflu antiviral to all of the pharmacies outside of the big centres, but more particularly to northeastern Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member is right that Tamiflu is available at no cost to people who have been prescribed Tamiflu. That is actually above and beyond the call of duty for us, but the right thing to do because we want to get people treated as quickly as possible.

The Tamiflu has been distributed across the province. If there is a particular supply issue in a particular area, I would like to know about it, and we'll take whatever steps we need to ensure that people have access to it. We have ordered enough Tamiflu to treat 25% of the entire population. That is ample supply of Tamiflu. If it's not being distributed properly, I would like to know about it, and we'll fix the problem.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise on a point of order in regards to section 37, and there are two points that I want to make here.

The first point is that section 37(d) says, "In putting an oral question, no argument or opinion is to be offered nor any facts stated, except so far as may be necessary to explain the same; and in answering any such question, the member is not to debate the matter to which it refers." Clearly, a number of the questions that are put forward contravene that section.

Also, the second point: I've been timing question period and watching, other than the lead questions, the questions that come after the leaders. On average, the opposition members have been taking 40 to 45 seconds in asking their questions. What is clear is that the government, in asking their questions, rag the puck up to over a minute if they can get there, and when it comes to the ministers, they're doing the same. Today, we were fortunate to be able to get to question seven.

My point, Mr. Speaker: I would ask you to be somewhat more diligent and watch the timing. If the opposition is being careful in the time that they use in asking questions, we would ask that the government do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A couple of points. I'll start with the second one.

We were able to, today, get 18 questions in. I will say there are two of us, at least, watching the clocks. I keep tabs on everything. I am very conscious of saying, with 10 seconds, "Question" or "Answer." You can raise your point. I will not consider that a point of order other than to say that I am very conscious of trying to keep those questions within a minute each way.

Regarding your second point, I will remind members of a ruling that I made on June 4, 2009, regarding standing order 37(a). I won't reread the whole of that ruling, but let's just say that I recognize that one man's pothole could be another man's crater and that, in some people's minds, the investments of millions of dollars in cultural facilities, as the one question related to today, could be seen as a very important stimulus to the economy. I do listen very closely to those government questions and I really would continue to urge government members to take heed of something being of "urgent public importance." It is important, but it is a challenge: In one member's mind that was an issue of urgent public importance.

Hon. James J. Bradley: On a similar point of order to the member, Mr. Speaker: I feel it would be insulting to members of the opposition when they ask questions if I, as a minister, were not to give a complete answer to the question. That's why I find the minute limits me very much.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to correct a figure that I used in the response to a question. As of yesterday, there are 707 confirmed cases of H1N1 that have been hospitalized, and of those, 599 cases have been discharged, leaving 108 people with confirmed cases of H1N1 in our hospitals across the province today.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Frank Klees: On the same point of order that the Minister of Transportation just made, Mr. Speaker: I want to assure the minister that we are in fact insulted, because we very seldom get any answers when we put them to the government. I would just appeal to him and his colleagues to realize that question period is that, and we do expect answers. So if he doesn't want to be insulted, give us the answers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the honourable members for their comments. I would just encourage that if there is agreement amongst the members of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, I think a comprehensive review of question period would be most welcome, but I will leave it to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly to have those discussions.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my distinct pleasure to invite members to recognize my lovely wife Peggy, who is visiting here today. I think it's the first time in 14 years that she's actually been here. Welcome, Peggy.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

REMEMBRANCE DAY PHOTO EXHIBIT

Mr. John O'Toole: It is my privilege today to pay tribute to a new exhibit at the Bowmanville library entitled Vets and Cadets: My Photos and Your Words. This show is by Kristin McCrae, a talented photographer from my riding of Durham, who has photographed local veterans and cadets over many years. The unique feature of this exhibit is that it is interactive: Visitors are invited to view the photographs and then respond with their own thoughts and reflections on our veterans and the cadets. The words from those who see the photos will complete the work.

The display of 14 black-and-white photos will be in the Bowmanville library Artspace on the Mezzanine throughout November. The mezzanine gallery is a joint partnership of the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington and the Clarington Public Library, located in the municipal town centre.

I would like to commend Kristin McCrae for a truly creative venture that encourages us to reflect on the meaning of remembrance and be inspired by her photographs, Vets and Cadets.

Today, in Queen's Park's clippings, the cover features four reflections on Remembrance Day, which is next Wednesday, the 11th. One of the features is on John W.

Foote, VC, who was the MPP from my riding of Durham from 1948 to 1959. He was the only Victoria Cross recipient to have served here at Queen's Park.

To all the veterans and those who served Canada in the wars and in other ways, thank you.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to pay tribute to the wonderful animal rescue work that is being done in my community of Scarborough Southwest. I have had the privilege of meeting a number of people in my riding who rescue cats, dogs and wildlife through their own compassion and with their own resources. Gandhi once said that the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated. This rescue work exemplifies the compassion, humanity and kindness in my own community.

There is one rescue group that takes care of what is known as the Scarborough Bluffs cat colony. In the Scarborough Bluffs area there are about 16 cats that are considered feral but who have benefited from the help of volunteer rescue workers who selflessly give their time and money to treat these animals. In addition, the volunteers help to rescue defenceless cats and kittens that are dumped at the bluffs colony by irresponsible owners. I'd like to pay special tribute to the rescue work of Judy Wilson, Robert Brydges, Doreen Montgomery, Jim Masterson, Russell and Barb Parsons, Wendy Gibson, Peter Eno and many others.

I have heard from countless constituents who have found abandoned cats or litters of kittens under their porches or around their homes. The ultimate answer to this growing overpopulation problem is to spay and neuter cats and dogs.

There is a saying that saving the life of one animal may not change the world, but for that one animal it is the world. I want to thank all those who help save stray animals across all of Ontario and, again, remind people how important it is to have your own cat or dog spayed or neutered.

ELK MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Last week, the government introduced Bill 212. This bill, if passed, would authorize the Minister of Natural Resources to issue harassment, capture and kill permits for wild elk in Ontario.

For those who don't know, elk are magnificent animals that have been reintroduced back into Ontario, and I'm proud to be a member of the former government which initiated the elk restoration plan back in 1997, along with key partners such as the First Nations, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the anglers and hunters, and numerous other supporters and volunteers. From 1998-2001, elk from Alberta were released into Ontario at four sites, and the Bancroft population has grown to a self-sustaining population of well over 500 animals.

Our caucus understands and appreciates the ability of farmers and landowners to protect their property, crops and livestock. Management of elk should be approved through the co-operation of the MNR, but we are opposed to the issuance of kill permits. Elk should not be considered a nuisance animal, and this bill sets an alarming precedent, given that the MNR has not even finished developing an elk management strategy for Ontario.

It would have been much more appropriate for the government to move forward with an elk strategy and first consider a carefully controlled hunt for elk as a means to manage the entire population, assist landowners and provide hunting opportunities that help stimulate revenues to manage the elk program.

Partners and stakeholders have been urging the MNR for some time to move ahead with its elk plan and initiate a limited hunt for 2010. I would advise the government to amend this bill and immediately introduce an elk management plan for Ontario, to the benefit of all Ontarians.

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today is Take Our Kids to Work Day. This is a wonderful initiative that started 15 years ago and continues to give students access to workplaces across the province.

Today, grade 9 students in Ontario will visit the workplaces of their parents, relatives and volunteers. This program helps students gain a better understanding of what it's like to participate in Ontario's workplaces. It also helps them access information about careers that may interest them so they can make informed decisions about their education and the future ahead of them. What's more, this initiative also impresses upon students the importance of staying in school. It even helps give them an appreciation for the hard work their parents do to earn a living and support their families.

This program will benefit many students across the province and will help them prepare for entering Ontario's workforce when they finish their education.

In today's highly competitive and globalized economy, taking our kids to work today is another part of ensuring Ontario will have a powerful workforce that keeps our province strong in the years to come.

TIFFANY WHITE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am very proud to congratulate today Tiffany White from Nepean–Carleton. Tiffany, just last month, was awarded the Commitment to Care and Service Award for pharmacy technician initiatives.

The Commitment to Care and Service Award recognizes exemplary dedication by pharmacy technicians in assisting staff to enhance patient care and improve pharmacy workflow. Tiffany has only been working as a pharmacy technician for a couple of years and has already distinguished herself through her hard work and commitment to better serve patients.

I'd like to take this opportunity not only to congratulate my constituent Tiffany White but also to thank all pharmacy staff across Ontario for the work they do to improve patient care and to encourage not only Tiffany but all of them to keep up the good work that they do.

At a time when we're dealing with a national pandemic—international, indeed—it is so important that our front-line health care workers know that they have the support of this chamber. So I'd like to encourage Tiffany to keep up the great work. I know that she and so many others have a bright future ahead of them.

MUNICIPAL FINANCE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Imagine how municipalities are feeling across the province as they look at what is happening in regard to the funding they're going to be receiving in this upcoming budget year. We've had in this House now at least a couple of questions from myself, along with, I think, the Conservative opposition asking a similar number of questions to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of Finance and the Premier in regard to what's going to happen to the municipal partnership fund this year.

I heard clearly this afternoon the Minister of Municipal Affairs rave on about how the uploading was going to be revenue-neutral for the city of Timmins and other municipalities in my riding and that we should not be worried.

Here is the math: The city of Timmins gets about \$14 million in OMPF funding. The province has re-uploaded \$3.5 million worth of services back to the province, but they're about to lose close to \$5 million of their Ontario municipal partnership fund, leaving a gap of \$1 million to \$1.5 million, depending on how you calculate it.

1510

For towns like Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Opatatika and others, this is going to create an extreme amount of pressure on their budgets, to the point that the municipalities of Opatatika, Mattice and others are telling me that if the government moves forward with the reduction of OMPF funding, as they are hearing, then they are going to hand you the keys to the municipality, because they will not be able to run the services in those municipalities, either hard or soft services, if OMPF is touched in the way that you're going to.

BREAST CANCER

Mr. David Zimmer: On Sunday, November 22, the North York General Hospital and Bayview Village Shopping Centre are holding their ninth annual Heart of Fashion exclusive shopping event, with proceeds benefiting patients and families served by North York General Hospital's Karen, Heather and Lynn Steinberg Breast Services.

Unfortunately, too many women across Ontario are diagnosed with breast cancer, many of whom seek care at North York General Hospital. Heart of Fashion is an

opportunity to participate in a wonderful event and to lend your financial support to a leading community teaching hospital. Heart of Fashion offers shoppers what's "haute" in the world of fashion, beauty, dining and home decor. Over the past eight years, the generosity of this event has raised over \$1 million for patients at North York General Hospital.

Attendees of the Heart of Fashion will experience four of the grandest international fashion destinations—New York, London, Paris and Los Angeles—all in Willowdale at the Bayview Village. While travelling between the four themed fashion zones, attendees will delight in the evening of in-store discounts, gourmet food and a fantastic fashion show.

This is a great way to support cancer care. Please come; you're all invited.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you for the opportunity to rise in the House today to share with my constituents of Ottawa Centre some of the vital infrastructure investments we have been making in Ottawa, along with our federal, municipal and community partners.

Since early 2009, we and our other partners have invested a total of over \$457.5 million to upgrade our infrastructure and support the economy in Ottawa during difficult economic times. These investments have been spread across three sectors: infrastructure, recreation and post-secondary education. We have invested \$250 million in infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, public transit, sewers and water systems, but we have also invested in important cultural projects, like \$250,000 towards building the Chinatown gateway and \$3 million to renovate local libraries such as the Sunnyside branch in my riding.

We have also invested \$24 million to improve recreation facilities across our city through the recreational infrastructure Canada program. Two great examples among many are the Rideau Canoe Club, which is receiving \$1.8 million, and the YMCA/YWCA, which will be receiving \$6 million to improve their facilities. We also are giving \$14.8 million to the city of Ottawa for improvements to public recreation spaces such as the Hintonburg Community Centre and Hintonburg Park, for replacing the McKellar Park Community House, and for improving Parkdale Urban Park and fieldhouse.

I am especially pleased that we are investing \$158.5 million for our university campuses through the knowledge infrastructure program. In particular—

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

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I want to acknowledge the excellent work of our local health unit and Dr. Paul Roumeliotis in responding to the H1N1 flu virus. Dr. Paul is the eastern Ontario chief medical officer. During the first three days of its H1N1 immunization clinics, the

Eastern Ontario Health Unit successfully immunized over 20,700 residents. For the most part, the six clinics operated smoothly.

By this evening, the Eastern Ontario Health Unit will have delivered another 4,200 vaccines to hospital residents and health care providers. The health unit will run 12 clinics over Thursday and Friday, and they anticipate vaccinating up to another 15,000 people. By Friday of this week, the health unit should have vaccinated almost 40,000 people in the five counties in eastern Ontario, which consist of Glengarry, Prescott, Russell, Stormont and Dundas.

I would like to thank all of the hard-working staff at the Eastern Ontario Health Unit, led by Dr. Paul Roumeliotis.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Paul Miller: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr15, An Act to revive Allaura Investments Limited;

Bill Pr18, An Act to revive 1516495 Ontario Inc.;

Bill Pr25, An Act to revive Cen-Tower Investments Limited;

Bill Pr27, An Act to revive Brismair Property Management Inc.;

Bill Pr28, An Act to revive 1105481 Ontario Inc.

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

Report adopted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Jaczek assumes ballot item 49 and Mr. Kular assumes ballot item 62.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak on Remembrance Day.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my privilege to speak on behalf of the Liberal caucus in honour of Remembrance Day.

Today we remember in reverence a generation that is slipping away from us. We should remember their lives.

We should remember the context of their lives. Indeed, we have a duty to do so.

More often than not, without thought, we pass by the long list of names engraved on the cenotaphs in our local town squares and in the remembrance plaques hung in neighbourhood high school auditoriums. We casually scan the veterans' obituary notices in the newspapers and then move on to the next page. How often do we pause and ponder the distinguished service records of our parents' and grandparents' generation as we, today, live our hurried lives?

Veterans, men and women now well into their 80s, are passing away. Reading their obituary notices, you see their war record and their military decorations proudly commented on in the notice. Often in their obituary you see a photograph taken 60 or 70 years ago—a handsome snapshot, distinguished in their uniform, an expression of pride and determination on their face. I, like all of us here, marvel at their sense of pride in nation, at their confidence in the cause, at the sense of daring and adventure that permeates their stories.

Their lives were changed forever. They were times of fearsome danger and deep sadness; times of hope, happiness and exhilaration; and times of chance encounters in the randomness and chaos of war.

My own parents were one of the thousands of examples of lives lived in the tragedy, the triumph, the chance of war. But for the war, my parents, from completely different cultural backgrounds, would never have met. My father, an infantry soldier, and my mother, a worker in the local armaments factory, were thrown together by this randomness and chance of war—the randomness and chance of war, the great anxieties suffered, the risks run.

1520

My mother's beloved brother and her first cousin—they were all raised together very closely. One went into the army and one into the air force. Both died in the war. Their names are engraved on those cenotaphs and remembrance plaques in the hallways of high schools. My father married my mother during the war. He survived. After the war, like others of their generation, they raised a family and helped build the province and the country while never forgetting their losses. Today we are the beneficiaries of their courage. We here today have a solemn duty to remember their lives and the context of their times.

When my father died, many years ago, the local veterans' Legion draped his casket with our flag and quoted a traditional soldier's funeral oration from the Bible: "He has fought the good fight. He has finished the course. He has kept the faith." What better can be said to describe the lives of our veterans? This was their great contribution. This is their great legacy. We should—we must—in their memory, always strive to emulate their sense of right and wrong, their sense of conviction, their bravery and, yes, their modesty. This is our generation's greatest duty.

Mr. Ted Arnott: In January 1945, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was assigned the task of attacking,

overtaking and "liquidating" the only remaining German outpost south of the Maas River in Holland at a place called Kapelsche Veer. Kapelsche Veer was a ferry harbour on a narrow island in the Maas River between the Dutch cities of Raamsdonksveer and s'Hertogenbosch in southern Holland.

It was expected that it would take the Canadians a few hours at most to accomplish this mission, given that they would have a week to train and that unlimited munitions would be made available to them. Instead, the first day of the assault at Kapelsche Veer, Friday, January 26, ended up being the regiment's costliest day in their 10 months of operation in northwestern Europe, and the planned few hours of fighting stretched into a five-day battle of brutal attrition.

It was winter, and unusually wet and cold. Each Canadian soldier was assigned a white snowsuit, but the British military planners knew that this wouldn't be enough to conceal their planned advance, for it was known that the entrenched German positions afforded the enemy an excellent view of the point of attack. Their solution would be to blanket the entire north bank of the river in smoke with 32,000 phosphorous smoke bombs.

Crossing the icy river to seal off the harbour from the north presented another challenge, so 15 four-man canoes were ordered in as well. Twenty four men were to carry flame-throwers. They were called Lifebuoy flame-throwers, because they were strapped to a soldier's back like a life preserver. It was thought that the flame-throwers would be perfect for attacking the German defensive position.

The armaments were assembled, the training completed and the final order was given: H-hour, time to go. From the very start, the Lincs, as the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was known, were in trouble. The ground was wet and extremely muddy, which made movement difficult. The German troops were well dug in and fortified with machine guns and mortars, their ammunition was plentiful and they'd been ordered to hold their positions at all costs. The smoke bombs were employed, and they worked. However, the smoke intended to conceal the Canadians' movement choked them instead, leaving them gasping for breath, immobilized. The flame-throwers, that in practice were so frightful in concept, were worse than useless, as Major Ed Brady later recalled:

"I had Lifebuoy flame-throwers. I think I had 10. Lost every man; every one of them was killed. You can imagine what it was like.

"I think they weighed 60 pounds. Trying to manoeuvre was almost impossible. And the minute they shot any flame ... they were an [easy] target and every one of them got it."

That same evening, Corporal Howard Loughlin was attempting to advance alongside his lieutenant, W.O. Fraser. Listen to his account of what happened:

"You couldn't see in front of you, and the phosphorous smoke got into your lungs. [The German] trenches were all covered in snow. You couldn't tell where the fire was coming from.

“And talk about cold... I saw Lieutenant Fraser fall and I crawled over to him. His parka was all blood down here and I started to undo the parka. I had a hold of him in my arms. And he said, ‘They got me in the left arm too, Howard,’ and then he died right then. I just laid him in the snow.”

Morning turned into afternoon, night began to fall, and the brave Canadians fought on. Casualties mounted, and crude first aid was administered where the men had fallen. Major Brady, who I quoted earlier, did his best to help his wounded comrades.

“I had one bad situation that night,” he recalled later. “One of the fellows had his arm blown off. And they’d given us these morphine syrettes, and of course it’s pitch-black... and you couldn’t see what you were doing.

“They’d got the blood stopped. We’d put a tourniquet on the upper part of his arm... what was left of it. He was in terrible pain. So I fumble around, and my fingers are so frozen. All you were supposed to do was jab him in the chest and break the syrette, squeeze it.

“Well, I can’t say today if I ever jabbed him. I knew I jabbed him in the chest with something... What a helpless feeling when your fingers are so cold that you can’t feel a thing.

“You can’t see anything and a guy is suffering, and you’re trying to do something for him. It’s just the most helpless feeling in the world... But he lived... We got him out that night.”

Four more days of intense fighting followed, in the mud, the cold, and the blood. On the morning of January 31, Captain Dunlop pushed his 45 remaining and exhausted men the final hundred metres towards the original objective.

There they found no enemy—not yet peace, but quiet at least, and at last. After five excruciating days, the battle for Kapelsche Veer was over. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment had sustained 183 casualties, of whom 50 were left behind, to rest for eternity.

My wife, Lisa, and I have been, for some years, associate members of Branch 226 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Arthur, my hometown. We are members because Lisa’s late father, Edward McCabe, served in the Royal Canadian Navy, enlisting when he was just 17, in June 1944. Like so many, he volunteered and served while he was still a kid. God watched over him and brought him home safe when the war ended. He began his career as a school principal, got married and raised six kids. Our membership in the Legion honours him, his courage, his devotion to king and country, and his willingness to sacrifice his youth and perhaps even his life to stop the Nazis in their tracks and bring freedom to Europe.

I speak today, however, with a sense that no matter what I say, my words will not be an adequate tribute to our war dead, or their comrades whom God returned home. What gives me the authority to speak for them? As I grew up, my life was filled with all the benefits and privileges that my generation has come to regard as rights: a good education in high school, and then five years of university; time to mature and think and learn about the world, free from any real life-and-death dis-

tractions like a world war; time for hockey games, chasing girls, falling in love and getting married, pursuing a rewarding career, and raising a family myself—all because I grew up and came of age in a time of peace and prosperity, purchased for me and my generation by the millions of Canadians who served, and more than 100,000 Canadians killed, in World War I and World War II and in Korea and in peacekeeping, men and women forever denied the pleasures of youth and life that we are so privileged to enjoy.

And let us remember today, and on Remembrance Day, and every day, that they remain in harm’s way: Our Canadian Forces who bravely build and, when necessary, fight to bring civilization and peace in Afghanistan, reminding us of Churchill’s famous phrase, “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.” Our acknowledgment and memory of their service and sacrifice is the same as we offer to those who came before them in the wars of the 20th century, the ones we have so long honoured and honour still today.

I close with a poem written last year by two 13-year-old boys in my riding, one of whom is with us in the gallery: my son, John Arnott. It proves the next generation will carry the torch of remembrance, as John McCrae exhorted us so eloquently to do. It’s called *A Soldier’s Journal*:

We fight for Canadians
The old and the young
We fight for the freedom
That soon will be won

The sacrifices we make
For our family and friends
Depict the bravery
As we fight and defend

We are the soldiers
Who fight in the field
Some of our wounds
Will never be healed

1530
The bodies we see
All covered in mud
We hold back our tears
As we walk through the blood

The letters we write
The pictures we send
To our loved ones at home
Who wish for the end

They stand here today
In this moment of silence
Proud of their loved ones
Who fought in this violence

From Vimy to Kandahar
Wherever the need
We stand tall as Canadians
Ready to lead

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my privilege to make a few remarks on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus here at Queen's Park on Remembrance Day.

Next week, many of us will take part in Remembrance Day ceremonies at our local war memorial, our Legion Hall or our cenotaph. Whether it rains or shines or snows, our veterans will be parading through our cities and through our towns to the local site of remembrance. Some will march; others will need to be assisted by former comrades or family members. And when they stand at attention while the Last Post is played, when the clock reaches the 11th minute of the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, their faces will be transformed as their thoughts travel back to days gone by.

I've seen that change take place in those faces, as I'm sure many of us around this room have, year after year. There's a sadness and a dignity at the core that is deeper than my very words can express, because in that moment you can see, in the faces of these men, young men in uniform who are far from home, in places that they had never even heard of or imagined but now are names of locations that are seared into both personal and national memory: Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, Juno Beach, Ortona, Korea—young men and women who left their families behind, abandoned their textbooks or postponed their careers to go to fight and often to die.

We speak of sacrifice in the day-to-day debates that occur in this place, we extol the virtues of duty and responsibility, but confronted with the enormity of what was demanded of these soldiers and the harrowing price that they paid, the scale of their sacrifice is absolutely humbling.

Our words in remembrance of our fallen youth and those who returned home from the horrors of war are weak and empty if they are not accompanied by the will to ensure that their sacrifice had and retains meaning and purpose.

"In Flanders Fields" is perhaps the one poem that every Ontario schoolchild is guaranteed to hear and learn. In the last stanza of the famous poem, John McCrae calls on the reader not to break faith with us who die. The call not to break faith is more than a simple call to carry on the fight. The men and women who lived through these conflicts returned with a commitment, a commitment to build a better world for their children and their grandchildren, and they did not break faith in that commitment.

We owe them so very much. We can never repay that debt. We can never hope to accomplish what so many of them have accomplished, both in life and in death. But we can commit ourselves to remembering: remembering those who served in our past, remembering those who serve today, and honouring their memory.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members to please rise as we observe two minutes of silence for those who have served, for those who continue to serve, and for those who paid the supreme sacrifice.

The House observed two minutes' silence.

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

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I definitely would like to acknowledge the efforts of the brothers and sisters from the Effort club—no pun intended—of Pakistani professionals in Mississauga. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A very eloquent statement—I'm pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Vladislav to carry it for me.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition here signed by hundreds of people.

"Whereas the McGuinty government is closing approximately 70 privately operated driver and vehicle licence-issuing offices in Ontario, it is requested that the Legislative Assembly take a further look at the impact this action will have on the affected communities and stop the closures from happening;

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

"It is in our best interest to request that the current private driver and vehicle licence-issuing offices of Ontario remain open. They operate in an incredibly efficient

and cost-effective manner that has been proven for almost 100 years, continuing to provide quality customer service excellence to Ontarians. To allow the transition of this service to the government centres is unconscionable and is unacceptable to the taxpayers of Ontario.”

I support this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table with Kira.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition with 200 names from the people of Sheshegwaning in the riding of Algoma–Manitoulin. It reads as follows:

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

1540

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

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I have another petition that contains over 1,000 signatures, delivered to my office by Camette Piché of Embrun:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Government Services intends to close or move to another location in the township of Russell the Embrun licence bureau, presently located at 717 Notre Dame St. in the village of Embrun in the township of Russell;

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

“Say no to the closure or move of the Embrun licence bureau and say yes to the establishment of an expanded office of ServiceOntario at 717 Notre Dame St. in the village of Embrun in the township of Russell.”

Thank you.

SALE OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition signed by thousands of people in my riding. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Ontario Korean Businessmen’s Association:

“Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of beer and wine to the LCBO, a few winery retail stores

and the Beer Store, and the three large beer companies are owned by multinationals;

“Whereas other provinces (notably Quebec) have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores for many years without any harm to the well-being of the public;

“Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of beer and wine in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society;

“Whereas it is essential to support local convenience stores for the survival of small businesses;

“Whereas it is obvious from the current market trends that the sales of wine and beer in convenience stores is not a question of ‘if’ but ‘when’;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of beer and wine in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province and to do it now.”

Thank you.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of members of the North York Historical Society in Willowdale, 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.

TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s a pleasure to present a petition from my riding of Durham which reads as follows—I’m just picking out a good one here. This one looks pretty good:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and legal and accountant fees; and

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

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

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

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

RURAL EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm proud to introduce the following petition, and I want to thank Paolo Miele and his wife, Adriana Miele, for providing me with these petitions. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education funds rural schools in Ontario and that this allocation only be used for the rural school that has qualified for rural” school “funding and that a rural” school “allocation only be used for that school that is qualified; and

“Whereas a school board must only use this rural allocation for the rural school that is qualified.

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

“Rural school funding should be used for rural schools only, not city schools.”

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge, which reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in 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; and

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

As I agree with this petition, I will sign it and provide it to Bethany.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition addressed to this Parliament and Legislature, and it has to do with the 2009-10 Ontario budget. It reads as follows:

“Whereas a global economic downturn calls for bold and decisive action by the government of Ontario to ensure that Ontario remains the most attractive and competitive place in North America to set up or relocate a business, raise a family or build a career; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced a budget that reduces taxes for individuals and businesses, takes immediate steps to aid small businesses and manufacturers and expands training, literacy and apprenticeship programs; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario, with its export-oriented economy and vibrant small business sector, needs to move past a sales tax system that sees a single sales transaction subject to two separate taxes levied by two levels of government under two separate sets of rules at two different rates and collected by two different bureaucracies;

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

“That the elected members of all parties support the comprehensive set of financial and tax reforms ... and in particular implement the proposed single sales tax to enable Ontario to emerge from the current economic downturn in a position to enhance its world-leading position and to attract, build and retain the people, careers and companies that will lead our province forward to a prosperous tomorrow.”

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition and send it to you by page Jeremy.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save Ontario's independent school bus operators.

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the school boards of Ontario, is entertaining or proceeding with a request for proposal ... to obtain transportation services, with the intention of eliminating the current process; and

“Whereas this concept strongly favours large international operators who are in a position to underbid local, small, existing, independent operations; and

“Whereas independent school bus operators form an integral part of the communities in which they operate and contribute to the social and economic well-being of the community; and

“Whereas local school bus operators support other local businesses such as insurance brokers, gas station operators, farming operations, financial institutions, retail outlets and professional services such as dentists, chiropractors and doctors; and

“Whereas school boards already utilize a procurement process where they set the price for school bus services, and this process has proven to be cost-effective; and

“Whereas the outcomes of the RFP pilot projects have proven that local bus operators will lose their routes in an RFP process based on price first and quality second; and

“Whereas the experience in other jurisdictions has proven that, while there may be short-term cost savings to an RFP process, in the long run the process reduces competition and costs eventually go up when there are only one or two large operators left to tender;

1550

“Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned Ontario parents, students, community leaders, education professionals and business owners call on the Ontario government to address the concerns of the Independent School Bus Operators Association (ISBOA), abandon the RFP process and adopt a process that ensures small and medium-sized school bus companies continue to be able to do business in their communities.”

I strongly support this petition. I sign it and I send it down with James.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have this petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It comes from the Credit Valley AM Rotary Club. I especially want to thank Jim Kitchen, Jim Joseph and Dale Scheerer for having organized the signatures. It reads as follows:

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be better performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

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

TRUE PATRIOT LOVE GALA

Mr. John O’Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the spirit of tributes to Remembrance Day, I’d like to say that next Tuesday, November 10, there is an event being held, True Patriot Love. It is a \$1.5-million fundraiser which will be attended by Premier McGuinty

as well as Prime Minister Harper, General Rick Hillier and the Chief of Defence Staff, General Natynczyk.

I’d like to thank the organizers: Shaun Francis, Michael Burns and Erin O’Toole. I’d encourage everyone to support the event if given the opportunity.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2009, on the amendment to the motion for second reading of 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): The member from Burlington had completed her speech. It is now time for questions and comments. Member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craiton: Oh, sorry, Speaker.

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

Hon. Jim Watson: I’m pleased to stand today in the House for second reading of the proposed Good Government Act, Bill 212. This bill would in part, if passed, allow us to update the municipal election process, municipal legislation, our land use planning system and Ontario’s building code, among other pieces of legislation.

Les Ontariennes et les Ontariens veulent un processus électoral municipal qui soit transparent, responsable et efficace. Ils veulent des administrations locales qui soient réactives, autonomes, responsables et redevables. Ils souhaitent un système de planification qui accorde la souplesse dont les municipalités ont besoin pour bien planifier tout aménagement futur.

Les Ontariennes et les Ontariens veulent un cadre de réglementation du secteur de la construction qui renforce la protection des consommateurs, soutienne la sécurité publique et simplifie le processus d’aménagement.

La loi est un pas en avant en matière de réalisation de ces objectifs.

During each local election, thousands of courageous Ontarians put their names forward. They want to make a difference in their community. I firmly believe that our municipal election process serves these candidates and the electors in their communities very well.

There is, of course, always room for improvement, which is why our government has introduced Bill 212. If passed, it would improve the Municipal Elections Act. Our proposed reforms have been made in consultation with the public, municipalities, and municipal and school associations. We also took into consideration the issues we’ve heard raised by those concerned with respect to accessibility of elections.

Following each municipal election, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has a practice of reviewing the Municipal Elections Act. After the 2006 election, ministry officials consulted targeted stakeholders. As part of the review, the ministry's website also sought comments from the general public. Through this bill, we are responding to many of the issues that were identified during the review. They came from the public, candidates and election administrators. We discovered that there was a need for the act to be amended to increase transparency and accountability and to close certain loopholes.

If this legislation passes, 52 weeks from last Monday, the fourth Monday in October, voters across Ontario will cast their ballots for their municipal leaders and school board trustees. This is one issue that was brought up during many conversations I had about the municipal elections process. As it was emphasized in this House last week, local elections would occur before Halloween. They would also be held before daylight saving time ends, and I've been told that candidates going door to door would appreciate that extra hour of daylight. The changed date also means that more of our citizens would be able to vote, including our seniors who may travel during the winter months.

Don Gardiner, from the Canadian Snowbird Association, had this to say: "We wholeheartedly support the proposal, as contained in Bill 212, to move the date of the next municipal election up from November 8, 2010, to October 25, 2010."

Moving the date forward would also help provide for the uncertainties of weather, particularly in northern Ontario.

This is not the only change we are proposing to the election campaign calendar. Nominations would also have to be filed by the second Friday in September each election year.

June 1 would be established as the deadline for a number of administrative activities. These would include passing bylaws that would authorize the use of voting equipment and vote-counting equipment or authorizing the use of alternative voting, such as mail-in ballots or Internet ballots.

The deadline for candidates to file financial statements on campaign expenses would be the last Friday in March after each election.

If the bill is passed, it would also promote a level playing field for all candidates. Currently, incumbents can enter races with what is commonly referred to as a war chest. A war chest is money that they've raised but didn't spend, which can be carried over from one election to the next. This can be compared to having two sprinters competing in a hundred-yard dash, with the veteran runner having a 25-yard advantage over the other even before the starter's pistol goes off. We're proposing that in future elections, candidates would not be allowed to keep their war chest. Bill 212 proposes that surplus campaign funds would go to the municipalities.

This change has widespread support from many communities. Municipal leaders such as Hazel McCallion

have said the following: "It certainly poses a disadvantage to new people wanting to offer themselves for public office because they have no money to start with so the incumbent has a major advantage."

We're not proposing to change the rules midstream. Those candidates with surplus campaign funds held in trust from the 2006 election would be able to use them for their 2010 campaigns. We felt this was only fair because those candidates did follow the rules that were in place and we didn't think it would be fair to be punitive and make this particular regulation retroactive.

We did a survey of various municipalities—in fact, 18 municipalities with surpluses—and found a total of \$807,058 held in trust by various candidates. In my hometown of Ottawa, for instance, we had campaign surpluses totalling \$171,855. In fact, I believe one candidate had \$40,000 in their war chest, which was more than they were allowed to spend if an election were held today.

1600

Currently, an individual, union or corporation can donate a maximum of \$750 to each candidate in every municipal and school board election in the province. We're keeping that rule the same because we think it's important to bring those kinds of restrictions as we have on ourselves at the provincial level. But they can spread this money now to an unlimited number of candidates. We're proposing a new contribution limit of \$5,000 per contributor in each jurisdiction to stop this practice. In other words, the aggregate amount will have to total a maximum of \$5,000. The limit of \$750 per candidate would remain. This is a similar practice that provincial party riding associations must also follow. There are limits to the maximum amount a company or individual can give to—I believe it's five riding associations in total.

In this legislation, we're addressing some issues related to campaign finances that have been brought to our attention over the last couple of years. The list of expenses that are not subject to spending limits would be revised. Expenses relating to a compliance audit would be excluded from the spending limit. Under the existing rules, the cost of fundraising functions isn't included in the candidate's spending limit. Our proposed amendments clarify that the cost of fundraising functions would not include costs where the soliciting of funds is incidental.

Just on that, one of the challenges we have is that the rules are so vague now that, unfortunately, people are finding loopholes in them. An individual can take out a full-page ad in a community newspaper extolling their virtues and then put a small tick mark at the bottom of the ad saying, "Please donate to my campaign," and attempt to list it as a fundraising expense when it's incidental to the main purpose of the notice—that is, to extol the virtue of the individual.

During our consultations, AMCTO, which is the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, made several recommendations, includ-

ing changes to how the voters' list is developed. Christine Norris, president of AMCTO, had this to say: "AMCTO was very pleased to see that several of the recommendations we have made ...to the Municipal Elections Act were included."

We're proposing to enhance the integrity of the voting process by clarifying voter identification rules for the voting place. If this legislation passes, the list of documents acceptable as identification would be set out in regulation. It is intended that this requirement for identification would be consistent with federal and provincial election practices.

Just to be very clear—because I'd heard one criticism that a number of senior citizens, and I have plenty of senior citizens in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean, would be at a disadvantage because many of them do not have photo ID. I don't really agree with that. I think many of our senior citizens, in fact, do have drivers' licences or health cards or they have a passport, but if they do not, there is a stipulation that—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The members for Renfrew and Chatham.

Hon. Jim Watson: Thank you, Speaker. There is a stipulation that still would allow anyone, a senior citizen or another citizen of the community, to swear an oath to let the returning officer know that they are, in fact, the individual they say they are, and so that does solve that problem.

The vast majority of people do have photo ID of some sort or another, and we think it's very important to avoid the kind of potential abuse that an individual candidate or campaign can take part in. We've heard and seen stories where people go in and pick up all of the voter cards in a recycling bin in an apartment and hand them out to supporters, and no photo ID is required. We want to make sure that we close that potential loophole. Again, we're not putting anything in this piece of legislation that we're not requiring of ourselves at the provincial level.

As a step towards more accurate voting lists, which is another complaint we've heard from the municipal sector, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. and municipalities could have access to additional information. This could include checking a box when you register for a library card or recreational program in your own community. In other words, when you go and sign up for a library card or put your kids in swimming lessons, the municipality, if this legislation is passed, would have the right to ask, with your permission, to forward your name to the city clerk so that your name could be put on the voters' list or your address could be updated on the voters' list. We would work with the privacy commissioner to ensure that these provisions are acceptable to her, but we believe this is yet another way to make the list more accurate.

We propose steps that would help assist candidates in determining their campaign budgets. When they file their nominations, candidates would receive an estimated spending limit; this would be based on the number of

voters in the previous election. When nominations close, candidates would receive a final spending limit based on the number of electors on the current voters' list. The higher amount would be a candidate's official spending limit, because often you get into a situation where you think your limit is X dollars, fewer people are on the voters' list, the number drops and you've budgeted your campaign based on the higher amount. So we're going to allow the higher amount to rule the day.

Bill 212 also proposes strengthened compliance and enforcement measures, and removes potential conflicts of interest. Changes to this component were advocated by, among others, Mayor Steve Parish, of Ajax, who said, "To have the decision made by council was problematic from a fairness point of view." Municipalities and school boards, for example, would be required to appoint audit committees. These independent committees would hear and decide on applications for compliance audits. It would be the outgoing council that would appoint the compliance audit committee, and it would not be made up of municipal politicians, or any politicians, for that matter.

Compliance audits would not be prerequisites for bringing a legal action with respect to alleged contraventions of election finance rules. Right now, the situation is very awkward for municipal councils. If an individual wants to bring forward an allegation, most of the time he has to bring it right to the council where the councillor who is being accused sits as a member. It puts that individual and the rest of the council in a very awkward situation.

We're proposing strengthening penalties for contravention of this legislation. There would be a fine of up to \$25,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for corporations and trade unions. The limitation period for commencing a prosecution for contraventions under the Municipal Elections Act would change, and prosecutions would have to be commenced during the term of office.

These reforms also address the needs of candidates and voters with disabilities. For example, all voting places would be required to be accessible to voters with disabilities. Until I became minister in this portfolio, I had no idea that that was not a requirement. It seems strange, in the 21st century, that we would not require all the voting stations for municipal elections to be accessible. This legislation will do that. Our proposed reforms require municipal clerks to have regard for the needs of candidates and voters with disabilities when planning elections.

Expenses related to a candidate's disability would be excluded from a candidate's spending limit. This, I think, is a very progressive part of the legislation. For example, an expense such as using a sign language interpreter for door-to-door campaigning should not be included as part of the election expenses; that could put you over the spending limit for your particular ward or community in one week. These kinds of things would be excluded.

We want accessibility measures to be transparent, and to help achieve this, municipal clerks would be required

to report to councils on accessibility measures within 90 days after an election.

Bill 212 has had a positive reception across Ontario. For example, Oshawa Mayor John Gray said in the *Durham Business Times* last week that he welcomes the proposal to move election day forward. The mayor pointed out that there is a likelihood of better weather for voting on the fourth Monday of October, and the possibility that “local snowbirds might still be at home.”

A Toronto *Star* editorial last week called Bill 212 important legislation. They welcome our government’s proposed reforms as “welcome changes.” The paper comments on municipal candidates “raising far more money than they can legally spend and banking the surplus for future campaigns.” The editorial says that our proposed legislation would “end the built-in advantage for incumbents who are able to amass huge and intimidating campaign war chests.”

We’re pleased that the *Star* recognizes our government’s proposal to create a more level playing field for all candidates. The newspaper calls on the Legislature to move quickly on Bill 212. Since municipal election campaigns and fundraising are due to start at the beginning of 2010—in fact, on January 4—the paper says, “The legislation ought to be passed by the end of this year.”

As everyone in this House is aware, Ontario’s laws and regulations have to be regularly updated to keep up with the times. Our government is proposing to update the Municipal Elections Act, the City of Toronto Act, the Municipal Act, the Planning Act and the Building Code Act, among others. These reforms respond to the needs of Toronto and all 444 municipalities across the province, whether they are big or small.

We would also enhance Ontario’s building regulation framework, and we’re proposing to update how we elect our municipal officials and school board trustees. The legislation, if passed, would better serve Ontarians who put their names forward on voting day and those who have lined up to have their voices heard.

1610

Let me leave you with this: I’m calling on the members of this House to support the bill so we can better our local municipal elections, further promote local democracy and engage people in issues that will ultimately impact their lives.

In conclusion, I’d like to thank a number of associations. We received some very good feedback from a number of community associations across the province. The Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, AMCTO, does a very good job because they are the men and women who actually run the elections on the ground in the communities. I also want to let the House know that, as a result of our memorandum of understanding through AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, we have, in fact, consulted AMO. They also are looking forward to the changes that are coming forward. They’ve given us some very positive and constructive advice on how to proceed. I also want to thank various municipal leaders

themselves who have come forward to offer their insight and their points of view.

This is one part of Bill 212. I think it’s an important part of legislation. We believe that it’s something that is long overdue. We’re trying to close some of those loopholes and tighten up some of the regulations so that there is no room for individual candidates to skirt the rules when it comes to fundraising or when it comes to reporting finances and contributions. We also would require, for instance, that all donors be available electronically, online, to the public. That’s something that we do and that is very transparent and helpful through Elections Ontario. It can be very difficult to track down who gave to what candidate in the last election, and there is no requirement for that information, in an electronic age, to be available electronically. I think these are the kinds of things that make municipal elections more transparent and more fair, not just simply for incumbents or for newcomers, but obviously for anyone who is interested in seeking election at the municipal level.

I would urge members of the House, if they’d like a further briefing on any aspect of those pieces of the legislation that fall under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing—I commend my critic from the Conservative Party. I understand she was here in my office today being briefed on it, and I thank her for that. I’d offer that to any member of the Legislature to come forward. We can bring you some of the details of the Municipal Elections Act, Planning Act and the City of Toronto Act.

I thank the members for their time, and I look forward to their questions, comments and further debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I heard what the minister was saying. I can’t agree that this was done in quite the transparent way that’s been described because we, as members, didn’t have availability of the bill until more than 48 hours after it was leaked and released to the press and a statement made in the House. So we were not able to respond to the changes. I think that we have a little bit to go yet on being transparent and communicative.

Even though I can agree with parts of this bill, regarding accessibility, I think that that’s an exceptionally good part of the bill, and probably long overdue. I guess sometimes it’s these logical things we don’t think of right away, but I congratulate the minister and his staff for bringing those changes forward.

I do have a concern that something that is so accountable to the public is being hidden in an omnibus bill and not as a stand-alone bill, that this bill is going through the Attorney General’s office with many other parts to it—322 pages. As I say, something as public and accountable to the public as the Elections Act should be a stand-alone bill so that the public can see it, review it and not be mesmerized by the largesse of the bill and the magnitude of 322 technical changes.

I did get a briefing from the minister’s staff today, but unfortunately there was a very close eye kept on ques-

tioning, and there was a statement that some of the questions were not technical questions, and so it was very difficult to get answers.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let's not kid ourselves what this is. This is an omnibus bill. All right? I remember being in opposition with the Liberals, and they used to go over the top—"to the moon," as they used to say—when it came to anybody utilizing the tactic of an omnibus bill. I have pulled out of Hansard all kinds of speeches about how dastardly, how terrible, how awful it was to have omnibus bills, and here's the government with their own omnibus bill.

I say to the government across the way: Listen, I'm sure we're going to find things in this bill that we can all agree on, but I'm sure there are also going to be some errors made in this omnibus bill, because that's been the experience of the past. Each and every time that a government, in my 20 years that I've been here, has brought an omnibus bill into the House—and I don't care if it was an NDP government, a Conservative government or a Liberal government—those omnibus bills were with errors.

I remember Bill 26, the omnibus bill that was brought in by the Conservatives. There were errors in it such that seven times we had to come back to the Legislature to fix some of the problems that were in Bill 26. Why? Not because the bureaucrats don't know how to do their job or they don't care, but you're being asked to amend a whole bunch of acts, and there really isn't a public process to allow the public who may be interested in sections of the act to give it good scrutiny.

We in the New Democratic Party have very simply said this: I proposed a reasoned amendment, and I would like to see what the minister has to say. We agree that there is one section of this bill that has to pass before January 1, and those are the changes to the Municipal Act. They don't go as far as I'd like. If it was me in government, I would do some other things in there, but I'm not the government; you are. So we'll allow you to have that by the January 1 deadline, and we will allow you to have passage of the Municipal Act, but allow the rest of the omnibus bill to go into committee in the intersession so that those people affected can look at it, can give it scrutiny, and we can make the amendments so that when this bill is passed, it does what the government says it's going to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to congratulate the minister for his presentation today on the aspects of the bill here that pertain to his ministry.

There's just one question I have, and that is, who started the omnibus bills? Who started them? The NDP, quite a while ago, back in 1994. It was called the Statute Law Amendment Act: 756 amendments.

The PCs had a number of them; Bill 26, followed by the Red Tape Reduction Act, 1998, the Red Tape Reduction Act, 1999, and 2000 and 2001.

We introduced two good-government bills. We introduced one in 2006 and now this one. In this one, there are several different ministries that are involved. The ministers are getting up and speaking to the sections that pertain to their ministries. With respect to what Minister Watson spoke to today, I commend him for the changes he's made. He and his ministry have consulted with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., known as MPAC, Elections Ontario and the public. I wonder if the Conservatives and the NDP did that kind of consultation when they were in power.

To sit here today and say that we're the ones doing omnibus bills is hypocritical, extremely, because both parties—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I would like the member to withdraw that.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Withdrawn—inappropriate, because it's been done in the past. It's a measure that has been done in the past. It's being done today in a way that is extremely transparent. Ministers are coming forward and presenting their sections. This is not the first day that we've debated this bill. The minister spent his time today—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: He clearly went through the sections that will pertain to his ministry. He did so effectively, and I congratulate him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I think our next speaker, Mr. Yakabuski, will put it very clearly on the record that all omnibus bills—it's kind of a dangerous generalization—create bad legislation. This is a statement which I think will be referred to several times throughout this debate.

1620

This is an omnibus bill, the mother of all omnibus bills. In fact, if you look at it, there are 26 schedules in it. In fact, here's the issue. Quite honestly, for the newer members here, those elected since 2003, you actually can't read this bill without having the statutes you're amending beside you. They would stack that high. There are 22 ministries and 26 schedules. In fact, there are two brand new bills within this.

We might say that they're rather innocuous administrative changes. If that's the case, why aren't you being more forthcoming about it? What's the rush here? They introduced it last week. We're having debate almost closed up without even having briefings on it. Some of the ministries spoke for five or 10 minutes when their allocated time was an hour. What is it they're covering? Why are they doing this? It raises more suspicions than trust.

For the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, whom I have the greatest respect for—he will make a great mayor of Ottawa; I understand that, and maybe

some of these rules are probably going to affect you. But I look at it, and in my own section there are provisions to increase the pensions to the public sector. Are you aware of that? As a minister, you should be aware of it. It probably went through cabinet. What are you hiding?

There's another provision in here in section 11. I'm going to put this in the record in the few minutes I've been given. It's under the Perpetuities Act. It goes on: "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 would that be doing in here?

The government has a responsibility to maintain in perpetuity these sites. What is it you're changing? Just be forthcoming—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'd like to thank the members from Burlington, Timmins–James Bay, Scarborough Southwest and Durham for their comments. I'm going to stick to the issues that I raised that are an important part of our portfolio, and they are with respect to the Municipal Elections Act.

Let me just comment: One of the things that I think we all strive to do is to ensure that there's a greater voter turnout in municipal elections. It has traditionally been the lowest voter turnout of all three levels. One of the ways that we can do that is to try, for instance, to change the date to bring it a little sooner in the year so it avoids daylight savings time, it avoids Halloween and it avoids some of our constituents who may have the opportunity to go south in the winter. We want these individuals to vote in these municipal elections.

Secondly, there have been some comments raised today with respect to consultation. This is a government that takes consultation very seriously, and it's embodied in the AMO MOU process that was established several years ago between the government of Ontario and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. We also have a stand-alone agreement with the city of Toronto, which is not a member of AMO. This is all about not surprising our municipal partners. It's treating them with respect. It's ensuring that they're brought into the decision-making process before a final decision is made, and the process has worked very well.

My former parliamentary assistant, Carol Mitchell, and my current parliamentary assistants Mario Sergio and Lou Rinaldi know very well that the process of AMO MOUs is tabled on a monthly basis. It works well because we're not interested in blindsiding our municipal partners but bringing them into the fold and seeking their advice. In many instances, as a result of their advice, legislation and regulations have changed for the better.

I'm very proud of the government's track record in dealing with municipal governments in a thoughtful fashion, and I look forward to working with them in the years ahead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 212, which the Liberals call An Act to promote good government. I would say that it's an act to avoid scrutiny. It's an act to confuse the masses. It is an omnibus bill, as my good friend and colleague from Timmins–James Bay—although we've never actually been to each other's homes because they're so far apart, but I feel a kinship at times. I've got to tell you: He has it bang on when he talks about this omnibus piece of legislation.

I want to quote from the Hansard. Let me just put on my helpers here. "This omnibus, megabill approach to legislation makes for bad legislation."

Mr. Mario Sergio: Who said that?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, who said that? What this gentleman was discussing was his opinion that any time any piece of legislation that was an omnibus bill was inherently and by default a bad piece of legislation. Do you know who said that?

Interjections: Who said that?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, that was Dalton McGuinty.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, no.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes. But he was in opposition at the time. And I want to thank the member from Durham—he does some tremendous research—for digging up that piece of information for me. I'm sure that undoubtedly people will be referring to that on repeated occasions during the course of this debate.

You know, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing spoke for roughly 20 minutes, but all he covered was one part of the bill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A small part of the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A very small part of the bill. We're talking about changing election dates in Ontario. That's a part of the bill, quite frankly, that I can support. But he could have brought in that bill and changed the election dates; he could have had a bill to amend the Municipal Elections Act and brought that in separately and singularly, on its own, and accomplished what they're doing in this bill. But as my colleague from Durham so ably pointed out—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I already did that one, sir.

—this nuclear waste management section of the bill, what's that all about? What are we trying to bury here—and that's no pun intended. But if you're going to bury it, you're going to have to bury it fairly deep because people are going to be wanting to know what's going on here.

I also want to talk about some other parts. The bill is An Act to promote good government. I'm going to ask my colleagues on the other side—and it's interesting that a couple of weeks ago the member for—is it Ajax–Pickering, Wayne Arthurs? Ajax–Pickering or Pickering–Ajax?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Scarborough East–Pickering.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Scarborough East–Pickering. Thank you, Joe. Is Ajax–Pickering your riding, Joe?

Mr. Joe Dickson: It still is.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It still is. I knew it was.

He brought in a private member's resolution: "I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should aggressively promote the use of Ontario wood products in residential and commercial construction throughout Ontario in order to support the more than 63,000 direct jobs and the 130,000 people who owe their livelihood to Ontario's forest industry." Now that's—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, of course. Who wouldn't support that? But—

Interjection: That's not in the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no, it's not about the bill; it's about what this government actually does to the forest industry in this province, and that's not part of good government. In fact, on Monday, under the cover of hunting season—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's part of the bill. Under the cover of hunting season, when all of the folks up in my riding have put away the chainsaws and they're out trying to get some meat for the freezer for the winter, in the form of white-tailed deer—which season opened on Monday—the minister releases this new joint proposal for lightening the ecological footprint of logging in Algonquin park. This is not about good government. It's a joint proposal by the Ontario Parks board of directors and Algonquin Forestry Authority board of directors. What it will essentially do is shut down the operations in my riding because, you see, the government is, without a single shred of scientific evidence ever produced to indicate that logging is detrimental to the health of forests or to the habitat of species, basically beginning what is the death knell of logging in Algonquin park. It's in the act here, back in here; if you look at the Endangered Species Act, and I'm getting to that. It's in here, and this is part of it.

If you think the lightening of the footprint is going to shut down the operations, the Endangered Species Act—and I know my friend from Timmins–James Bay was one of only five people who voted against Bill 184. I was one of them; my friend from Timmins–James Bay was another. At that time, the government indicated that they were going to use the Crown Forest Sustainability Act when they established the habitat protection zones. All of a sudden in 2008, they pulled that right off the table and said, "No, we're going to a permit procedure," which, if you understand how the permit system works, doesn't work. All you have to do is look at the spotted owl experience in Oregon and how it decimated that industry without protecting the spotted owl.

I am so concerned that this government is simply being run by the Aaron Freemans in the Premier's office with respect to how they see the world, without any consideration of the human effect of the things they're doing, that it leaves me no option at this time but to move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has moved

adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1631 to 1701.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members, take your seats, please.

Mr. Yakabuski has moved adjournment of the debate. All those in favour, please stand until counted by the Clerk.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 14; the nays are 34.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Six and a half hours of debate having elapsed on this bill, pursuant to standing order 47(c) this debate shall be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise. Deputy government House leader?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We'd like the debate to continue.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It would have been amazingly interesting if the government House leader had actually called for the adjournment, because they just voted against the motion for the adjournment. The timing is impeccable. I want to congratulate you for bringing that up right at this precise time.

During the intersession, of course, I had a chance to—I am quite amazed, actually, that the government went to such an effort to defeat this motion: a whipped vote. Because when I was speaking earlier—now, maybe the word got out—I thought we might actually be able to get this through because there were only a handful of government members in the House. Quite frankly, I thought at least four of them were actually sleeping. So I thought we might slip it by them. But the whip got to work and he's whipped them into shape. Look, we're glad to have you here.

Now, what I was getting at earlier when I moved to adjourn the debate was that we have to understand the reason and the premise. I know I talked about my absolute upset with the tabling of this proposal on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources. That is a personal thing and it's deeply disturbing and of great concern to the people in my riding, but I know that also, as a caucus, we are just beside ourselves with the unwillingness of this government, the total disregard of what the people are calling for in this province, repeatedly, on a daily basis; you even read about it in the Toronto Star.

It was great to see Rob Benzie here this morning with his young boy on take-your-kid-to-work day. I know he's not in grade 9—if he is in grade 9, he's really a smart kid. I'm sure he is a smart kid, because I know Benzie is, but this kid was pretty young. If he's in grade 9, he certainly did better than I did when I was in school. But the total

disregard for what the people are calling for—I know the Speaker's actually wondering whether I got to grade 9, and that is not a record that I'm going to actually lay out on the table here, but I'll send you a copy of it.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The absolute disregard for what the people have been calling for—all across this province, from north to south and east to west, they've been calling for a public inquiry to get to the bottom of eHealth, and that is the real reason that we are so upset in our caucus at this time, because they've had ample opportunity to show some transparency and some accountability, and the Premier—excuse me; I just got a little bit of something in my teeth there. In the intersession, while the bell was ringing, we took the opportunity to go down to the reception of the Ontario elementary Catholic teachers' association, a wonderful reception. I hope that everybody has an opportunity either very soon or a little later in the day to get down there and join them. But during the break, while we were preparing our own strategy as a caucus, we did join the teachers down in the legislative dining room where they're holding a reception on our behalf, and we do appreciate that. I did have a little bit of beef stuck in one of my teeth there, Mr. Speaker, so I had to get that out of there, because I certainly wouldn't want it to be flying all over the place.

But now let's get back to the point. What I was talking about earlier was my concern with some of the decisions of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and if you look in this bill, Bill 212—it's a good thing that I have been working out lately, because I would have a hard time actually lifting this bill: 288 pages. You don't see many bills like this coming from this government. Most of the bills you see coming from this government could fit on the back of a napkin, and that's because they're printed in both languages. If they were just printed in one language, they could fit on half of the back of a napkin. Anyway, this bill is 288 pages. There are 26 sections, and 22 ministries that have some of their legislation amended. As my friend from Durham says, and I like the way he put that, it is the mother of all omnibus bills, and if he doesn't mind me quoting him, I take the liberty to do so.

Another concern that I have—and it has everybody in my riding upset and it's in this bill, so I'm not even out of line to be talking about it—are the amendments with the endangered species. I have in my hand a resolution that was passed by the township of Madawaska Valley, of which I am a resident. They are so concerned with what happened when Bill 184 passed this House, second and third reading—and again I see my friend from Timmins–James Bay, and I know he's upset about that as well. What really shakes the foundation of this building and shakes our confidence in government is when you have an undertaking on the part of the ministry that, “This is what you can count on. We are going to determine the protected habitat of endangered species using the Crown Forest Sustainability Act as the basis,” and then, at the 11th hour, that mat is pulled out from under you and you're left with nothing. It is a very serious concern.

1710

I've had some discussions with Jamie Lim and members of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, and they are equally as upset because of the devastating effects this is going to have on the forest industry.

The forest industry is going through the absolute worst period of its history. I speak to people who have been in this business for 60 years, and they say to me, “John, it has never been worse.”

There are some issues that are not necessarily within the government's control: You've got the credit markets, you've got the Canadian dollar issue, and you've got the US housing starts. Those all play a tremendously important role in the health of the Ontario forest industry. But what you can control is the legislation and the regulation that you foist upon the industry here in Ontario. You have complete control of that. At the worst crisis in their history, when they're down on their knees—they're down on their knees—this government decides to put more burden on them. That is wrong, and I have a responsibility, as a member who represents people who make their living in the forest industry, to stand and speak against what this government is doing.

I don't want to forget what the issue is today, notwithstanding the bill, and that is that we have fought tooth and nail since we came back here in the fall, asking for this government to stand in its place and admit to the people, and accept, that things went wrong and there are things that have to be determined. And the only way to determine that—because we know our committees can't do it; we know the trained seal committees, the neutered committees. I know the member for Scarborough Southwest was talking about neutering pets earlier. Well, the members on the government side have been neutered by the Premier's office when it comes to standing up for what is right. What is right is to allow Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson to appear before the public accounts committee. That motion was made, and this government told its people, “No, we will not allow those people who could shed light on this issue before the committee.”

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hate to raise my voice, Mr. Speaker—you know that—but there are times when I feel compelled, just to try to hear myself over the din from the other side. If I had it my way, I would speak in a whisper most of the time. If they would allow me, I would be more calm and more quiet—and that's the way I really like it—but they don't allow it because they like to heckle.

As a result of their unwillingness to stand before the people of Ontario, in front of a public inquiry, and put the chips on the table and let the truth be known, I move adjournment of the House.

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

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1713 to 1743.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand and be counted by the Clerk. Thank you.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the Clerk. Thank you.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Alas, Mr. Speaker, we are running out of time on this debate today. However, if someone would entertain a unanimous consent motion to give me a little more time, I would certainly be willing to bring more information to the House on some of the vitally important aspects of this bill that we have significant problems with.

Earlier, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing spoke to the municipal portion of the bill, and substantively, I can support that portion. But for the most part, we have to remember one thing: the words of Dalton McGuinty when he was opposition leader in 1999. I will paraphrase it because I don't have the exact quote in front of me, but it's in Hansard from earlier. He said, essentially, any—qualify that, Mr. Speaker; remember that “any”; that doesn't mean most, that doesn't mean some—any omnibus piece of legislation is bad legislation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's not an exact quote. I know the exact quote.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not an exact quote, I say to the Minister of Transportation. I did say that I was paraphrasing, but the exact quote is in Hansard from earlier today. But I want you to remember that over there when you stand and support an omnibus bill brought out by your government. I ask you, have you no shame to do something that your Premier and your leader spoke against repeatedly when he was on this side of the House? I say shame. Let's split this thing up and we'll debate every part of it one at a time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: I cannot pretend that I heard the entire speech. I did hear the bells ring, though, and I came running up to see what all the fuss was about. I must commend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke because he ended with such a rhetorical flourish, talking about the necessity of debating, one item at a time, everything that is contained within this omnibus bill.

I thank him for his support of our reasoned amendment, and if there is an opportunity, I might even get a minute or two to talk about it myself. But what he is doing is saying, quite frankly and quite correctly, that this bill is a huge bill, and this bill needs to be looked at within its component parts.

I firmly believe with all my heart that there is only one section of this bill that needs to be rushed through—and I

don't mean rushed through so that we're not paying attention, but to at least put on the fast track—and that is the stuff related to the municipal elections that are going to start on January 4 of next year. These rules must be put in place, whatever they are—and I hope they are changed—so that everyone who seeks municipal office in the election year 2010 knows the rules and knows what is expected of them as candidates, as campaign managers, or as CFOs. It is clear that that has to pass this House, has to be made law and has to be promulgated before that date.

I thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for wanting to debate the other items. I think there will be plenty of time to debate the others. In the fullness of time, we can look and see whether there are any problems, problems which—I could not even understand some of them that were brought forward by the member from Durham around nuclear energy and the nuclear energy bill. I know that there are some problems with the Ontario Municipal Board—at least I see some problems with the legislation that's being brought forward—and I think, in the fullness of time, with proper committee work, we can do a good job. So I thank the member for his comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: We talk about why the government is doing this. The Good Government Act, 2009, would, if passed, modernize Ontario's laws and regulations to increase transparency, accountability and effectiveness. This bill is the combined response of many ministries. The result is close to 600 items from 22 ministries. The proposed items include a number of technical changes, general housekeeping measures; others increase transparency and accountability in our existing systems by improving public inquiries and the jury selection process. This is what the opposition has been calling for.

1750

There comes a time in every government's mandate when it needs to do housekeeping. Things come up that require tweaking, and some things require a bigger change. I commend the staff in the 22 ministries for their work in bringing forward the amendments that they have. They've seized the opportunity to modernize the respective acts that affect their ministries.

When I was on the school board, we found, going through our policies and processes, that there was still a policy in place that said if you rode your horse to school, the school board was obligated to water and feed it for the day while the horse was there. These are the types of things that you have to go through on occasion to modernize.

When the member from Renfrew–Pembroke–Nipissing—close enough—was speaking, it reminded me of a television show that I loved earlier, probably about 30 years ago, *The Muppet Show*. There were two characters that used to sit in the balcony, Waldorf and Astoria, the grumpy fellows who sat in the corner. They always had things to say, nothing really constructive, but

there was always a comment and it was always very entertaining. I have to commend the member for providing the entertainment that he has this afternoon. I appreciate the entertainment value, but there really wasn't much substance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I just want to comment on the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He made a number of points, and before I conclude the remarks on what he missed at the end of his remarks, he spoke very passionately about the ecological footprint ongoing in Algonquin park as well as the Endangered Species Act and the implication on the forestry industry. In it, he made reference to the member from Pickering–Scarborough East and a private member's motion that he made in the House. If you look under schedule 21 of this bill, for instance, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in section 9 of the act it "authorizes the use of equivalent materials, systems and building designs," which might mean new types of wood products for beams and things like that. Well, that section is now repealed under the building code amendments. It's that kind of detail, and unless you read this, you're voting in the dark.

In fact, that's contrary to the innovation agenda. We need to have new materials, some of which may be forestry materials made here in Ontario, which is devastated—the economy of Ontario—and you're eliminating using replacement building materials. Now, as long as they meet safety and quality standards, they should be encouraged, not repealed. I think the member spoke because in his riding it accounts for a good part of the local economy. The member from Timmins–James Bay has often waxed eloquently on the same point. But the member also said that on December the 6, 1999, the now Premier, then opposition leader, said, "This omnibus, megabill approach to legislation makes for bad legislation." He went on to castigate it even further. But the point he was making is: Members, don't vote for this bill. Let's break it up and deal with it individually.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. David Zimmer: I just want to speak briefly for a minute or two to two points, both involving the consultation process. The transparency with which this legislation was introduced stems from the consultation process that Minister Watson went through with AMO and various other municipalities. He knew that there were real concerns about municipal elections out there, and who best to find out what those concerns were and how to address those concerns but the municipal councillors and the municipal mayors, the heads of those 440 municipalities here in Ontario. The minister and his ministry got valuable advice, hands-on, practical advice about what sort of amendments should be included in the bill to make it a more meaningful, a more helpful and a more practical bill. Those suggestions, as a result of those consultations, are in the bill.

But it goes even further, because if this bill is passed—and it will be, I expect—that consultation process is going to continue after each municipal election. It's in the bill. The minister and officials from the ministry are going to sit down with those 444 municipalities and talk about what really worked well in the last election, how they can make improvements, how they can strengthen the process. It's an ongoing consultation process conducted after every election. That's consultation, that's transparency, that's taking the best possible advice from the people on the street, in the municipalities, who have hands-on experience in what's best in this municipal election process.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members from Beaches–East York, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Durham and Willowdale for their comments. I can't touch on every one of them, but I do want to speak to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

I want to remind him that he's not on the school board any more. He's the MPP. He went on to comment that we didn't have much substance in what we were saying today, and I want to remind him that one of the most important things we were talking about was the lightening of the ecological footprint in Algonquin park and the effect it's going to have on the forest industry. He's going to have to go home and explain to his constituents why he feels that's not important, because there are a number of people in his riding who make their living from the forest, and also the forests in Algonquin park. I want to remind the member that if he wants to say that those things aren't important, he might want to go home to his riding and say those things, because those constituents in his riding are not going to be very happy about that.

I know that people who make their living in forestry depend on that raw wood product in order for this industry to continue. There are so many people in my riding and all of the ridings that surround Algonquin park—the member for Algoma–Manitoulin, his people as well.

If we don't do what we can to support that industry, then that industry will disappear, and so will all of the jobs and so will all of the families who depend on those jobs.

What this government is doing is kowtowing to a constituency that has no interest in or any understanding of what it's like to make your living with your hands, felling trees. It has to be protected. This is the wrong way to go about it. Algonquin park has worked simultaneously with multiple uses before this place was built. It can continue.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Whenever I take my pocket watch out, you usually know what it means. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock Thursday, November 5.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
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
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario 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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O’Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
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
Wilkinson, Hon. / L’hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l’Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L’hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l’Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l’opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Eric Hoskins, Pat Hoy
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, Reza Moridi
David Oraziotti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Yasir Naqvi, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Arnott
Ted Arnott, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Sophia Aggelonitis, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Use of question period

Mr. Gilles Bisson	8461
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	8461
Hon. James J. Bradley	8461

Correction of record

Hon. Deborah Matthews	8461
-----------------------------	------

Use of question period

Mr. Frank Klees	8462
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	8462

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Mr. John O'Toole.....	8462
-----------------------	------

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Remembrance Day photo exhibit

Mr. John O'Toole.....	8462
-----------------------	------

Animal protection

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	8462
--------------------------------	------

Elk management

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	8462
-----------------------------	------

Take Our Kids to Work Day

Mr. Reza Moridi.....	8463
----------------------	------

Tiffany White

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	8463
------------------------	------

Municipal finance

Mr. Gilles Bisson	8463
-------------------------	------

Breast cancer

Mr. David Zimmer	8463
------------------------	------

Infrastructure program funding

Mr. Yasir Naqvi	8464
-----------------------	------

Flu immunization

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde.....	8464
----------------------------	------

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private

Bills

Mr. Paul Miller.....	8464
Report adopted	8464

Private members' public business

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	8464
--------------------------------------	------

Remembrance Day

Mr. David Zimmer	8464
Mr. Ted Arnott	8465
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	8467

Taxation

Mr. Bob Delaney	8467
-----------------------	------

Government services

Mr. John Yakabuski	8467
--------------------------	------

Diagnostic services

Mme France Gélinas	8468
--------------------------	------

Government services

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde	8468
-----------------------------	------

Sale of domestic wines and beers

Mr. Robert Bailey.....	8468
------------------------	------

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell	8468
------------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. John O'Toole	8468
------------------------	------

Rural education funding

Mr. Kim Craitor	8469
-----------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....	8469
--------------------------	------

Ontario budget

Mr. Tony Ruprecht.....	8469
------------------------	------

School transportation

Mr. John Yakabuski	8469
--------------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. Bob Delaney	8470
-----------------------	------

True Patriot Love gala

Mr. John O'Toole	8470
------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Good Government Act, 2009, Bill 212, Mr. Bentley /
Loi de 2009 sur la saine gestion publique, projet de
loi 212, M. Bentley**

Hon. Jim Watson	8470
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	8473
Mr. Gilles Bisson	8474
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....	8474
Mr. John O'Toole	8474
Hon. Jim Watson	8475
Mr. John Yakabuski	8475
Hon. Brad Duguid	8476
Mr. John Yakabuski	8476
Mr. Michael Prue	8478
Mr. Rick Johnson	8478
Mr. John O'Toole	8479
Mr. David Zimmer	8479
Mr. John Yakabuski	8479
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	8479

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 4 November 2009 / Mercredi 4 novembre 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Animal Health Act, 2009, Bill 204,

Mrs. Dombrowsky / Loi de 2009 sur la santé animale, projet de loi 204, Mme Dombrowsky

Mr. Gilles Bisson	8441
Mr. Rick Johnson	8444
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	8444
Mrs. Carol Mitchell	8444
Mrs. Julia Munro	8444
Mr. Gilles Bisson	8445
Mr. John Yakabuski	8445
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	8448
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	8448
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	8448
Mr. John O'Toole	8449
Mr. John Yakabuski	8449
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	8449
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.	8451

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	8451
Hon. Christopher Bentley	8451
Mr. Robert Bailey	8451
Mr. Rick Johnson	8451
Mr. Ted Arnott	8451
Mr. Gilles Bisson	8451
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8451
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	8451
Hon. Monique M. Smith	8451

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Flu immunization

Mrs. Christine Elliott	8451
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8451

Flu immunization

Mrs. Christine Elliott	8452
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8452

Flu immunization

Ms. Andrea Horwath	8452
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8453

Electronic health information

Ms. Andrea Horwath	8453
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8453

Flu immunization

Mrs. Joyce Savoline	8454
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8454

Flu pandemic preparedness

Mme France Gélinas	8454
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8454

Flu pandemic preparedness

Mrs. Laura Albanese	8455
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8455

Electronic health information

Mrs. Christine Elliott	8455
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8455

Flu pandemic preparedness

Mr. Michael Prue	8456
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	8456

Immigrant services

Mr. Yasir Naqvi	8456
Hon. Michael Chan	8456

Taxation

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	8457
Hon. Dwight Duncan	8457

Flu immunization

Ms. Andrea Horwath	8457
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8458
Hon. Brad Duguid	8458

Full-day kindergarten

Mr. Bob Delaney	8458
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8458
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	8458

Casino employees

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	8459
Hon. Brad Duguid	8459

Municipal finances

Mr. Gilles Bisson	8459
Hon. Jim Watson	8459

Arts and cultural funding

Mr. Rick Johnson	8460
Hon. M. Aileen Carroll	8460

Flu pandemic preparedness

Mr. Frank Klees	8460
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8460

Flu pandemic preparedness

Mme France Gélinas	8461
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8461

Continued on inside back cover