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Wednesday 22 September 2010

Mercredi 22 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 22 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 22 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 16, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my pleasure and an honour to talk about this bill. At the outset, this bill is not going to do any harm, so New Democrats are going to support it.

But I have to say we are perplexed, we are puzzled and we wonder why this bill is here in the first place. Surely, when the government was looking at exemptions, this should have been one of them. When the government was looking at fast food and hamburgers, when you were looking at kids stuffing their face at McDonald's and eating all the wrong foods, you thought that was a great thing to exempt. When you were looking at soft drinks and all—great things to exempt. But when it came to this—oh, no, this was not going to be exempted.

Now you've heard parents screaming, you've heard kids not being able to play and you've come up with a \$50 maximum tax credit. I guess some families will want the \$50, some families will welcome the \$50; \$50 may make a difference to some kids being enrolled in sports or music or something else. So we are going to vote for it.

But if you think it's reasonable to tax children's activity in the first place, then you should come up and say that. I'd like to hear someone from the government explain why this was not exempted in the first place. I'd like you to explain why the \$50 tax credit is going to be approximately half of what parents are spending on HST. We know that if you spend \$500 putting your child into a

hockey team—any example would do, but a hockey team right off the top of my head—they're going to pay approximately \$40 in new HST. That's what they're going to spend just on that: one child, \$40 on HST, which they didn't pay before the HST came into effect. So you want to give some of that back.

We have a report. A recent study by a leading HST researcher, David Murrell, suggests that Ontario families spend \$1.8 billion on now taxable recreational programs and facilities and that the McGuinty government's 8% tax means that families will be paying \$148 million in new taxes, double the amount of the \$75 million that's proposed in this bill that the McGuinty Liberals are spending on their fitness tax credit. So families, again, are losers; they are losers in the overall scheme of things.

We have seen what's happening across this province in terms of the HST. Government numbers in opinion polls have gone down. People are starting to get very angry when they see HST coming up on their bills. In British Columbia, which has recall legislation, you are starting to see a government very nervous and worried as people are upset because they have to wait a whole year, or more than a year, until the time roughly of the next Ontario election, to vote to get rid of the HST in that province. People don't like it. They don't like what's happening to them; they don't like the costs of it. I'll tell you, what is happening in British Columbia, which is well documented because of the recall legislation, is also happening here. It may be more subdued, but when you go around and talk to your constituents, you are going to see that the government big sell on this new tax is not working. It's not working because people are unhappy with what they're being forced to pay. They are unhappy at all those little things, such as their children getting into hockey games or figure skating or piano lessons, now being taxed, and they will be unhappy in spite of this bill.

I have to say that I think the thing they're most unhappy about is not necessarily the 8% on this expense. What they are most unhappy about and what we've received so many calls on is the 8% that's being taxed on to the electricity bill. I ask my friends opposite—the HST is causing all kinds of grief. It's causing grief to children's minor sports, but it's especially causing grief to families when they get their electricity bill, their heating bills, their natural gas bills, their oil bills, their gas bills when they are filling up the car. The HST on electricity is probably the most heinous of the lot, because consumers are now paying HST on such a broad range of goods and services. It's not just HST on the five cents or eight cents

per kilowatt hour that they are using; they are paying HST on such things as the retirement of the debt. This is the first time I have ever seen a tax put on debt retirement in the history of this province. This government has chosen to tell people, "You are in debt." I understand why we're in debt: We went big, we went nuclear and we lost a bundle. We all understand what happened. But now, ordinary citizens are being forced to pay HST on the retirement of that debt in order that the government—

0910

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Beaches—East York, I'm sure that you're going to tie this in to the child tax credit within about the next 30 seconds.

Mr. Michael Prue: Absolutely. Mr. Speaker, you anticipated my very move. I'm talking about the HST, and then I'm going to go back into the HST as it relates to children and tax credits. But I'm just pointing this out as an example—probably the most heinous example—of where the HST has gone wrong so that ordinary people are now having to pay for things that it's simply not right that they pay for.

To bring it back to this issue, it is not right that families in the first place are having to pay HST on children's programs. It is absolutely not right, and it wasn't right in the first place. Again, I bring it back to a statement I made at the opening of this debate here today: The government saw fit to take the HST off such things as fast foods and things that are potentially harmful for young children—in fact, probably harmful for all of us—and yet, they left that same HST on children's programs.

A couple of points that I would like to make here: The first is that the families, in order to get this money, are going to have to jump through hoops. They're going to have to fill out forms, they're going to have to get records, they're going to have to get a lot of things. That need not have happened. Had the government in its wisdom not taxed this in the first place, there would have been nothing to do; there would have been absolutely nothing to do. But now, families are going to be forced to fill out forms, families are going to have to keep records, families are going to be limited in terms of how much they claim—because the maximum is \$50 per child per year, and that doesn't go very far in terms of expenditures on \$500. Anyone who has a child on a hockey team, anyone who has a child registered in any number of programs will know that \$500 of expenditure does not go very far. Yet, the return on this is only a maximum of \$50. In fact, for some of the cheaper programs, they're not even going to see that \$50; they're going to see considerably less—that is, programs that are often run by municipalities, church groups and the like are going to see even less.

There's the whole jumping through hoops, the whole keeping of all these records that I'm sure is going to make people angry. Better had this government in the first place simply not put the tax on children's recreational and sports programs.

We know we want our children to be healthy. We know that the Minister of Health Promotion stands in this place, whenever the opportunity gives itself, and talks about children and the opportunity and the desire that parents have to keep their children healthy. We also know that the Minister of Health Promotion talks about obesity and that kind of thing, and what the government is attempting to do. Yet here we have a program where parents are going to have to jump through hoops.

We also know a University of Alberta study showed that the high costs of these activities meant that upper- and middle-income families were twice as likely to submit the claim as poorer families. So what we have here is a sop to the middle class, the middle class who were particularly angry at the HST. We know who is going to make this claim. Is it going to be families from Regent Park, where I grew up? I don't think so. Maybe they will; I hope they do. But it's going to be primarily middle-class, upper-middle-class and rich families who know how to take advantage of this, who have accountants, who have lawyers, who have everything else, who have the wherewithal to keep their receipts and the monies that are being spent.

The University of Alberta set it out very well: This is not a fair tax, and it's not a fair remuneration. It is more likely to be taken up by those who already have more money than by those who have less.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I can hear my friend from Algoma muttering, but I can't make out what he's trying to say because he's muttering so badly. If he has something important to say, I wish he'd say it right out loud.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: He's muttering again. I still can't hear what he has to say. I'm sure it's of importance only to himself.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We're not talking about the 15% in NDP Nova Scotia.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh, I can hear the honourable minister a little better. He's much more clear and articulate when he mutters. I thank him for his interjection, but I reject it all the same.

We also know that families are in particularly tight circumstances these days. Unemployment remains spectacularly high. We know that the cost of living and taxes have increased, for some families exponentially, and we know that they struggle to do a great many things. I am extremely worried, and I think most of us need to be worried, that families will find less and less money to put their children through sports and other activities, because those are some of the less-than-necessities that have to be met. You have to first pay your hydro bill; you have to pay your mortgage; you have to buy food; you have to send your child to school, and you have expenses related to that; you have all of the families that are fundraising in schools these days because there isn't enough money coming forward from the government. When it comes down to it, one ought to be worried about the number of children who will actually participate in these activities

in the first place, never mind getting the rebate. The family has to first of all come up with the money in order to make sure the children have the opportunity. Where is the government on all of this? If you have the money, if you can send your child, then you can get a rebate in the magnificent sum of \$50.

To bring it all back together—and I may not use my whole 20 minutes here, because this is a pretty thin little bill—we have a government here that had choices to make. We have a government that could have done the right thing and exempted children's activities from the HST. We have a government that decided not to do that. But then they went out and they saw and felt the political heat around all of this. They felt the political heat because people were upset. They know that activities that people enjoy doing cost considerably more—we know that children were particularly vulnerable—and they came up with a \$50 tax credit.

I had the opportunity today to read the clipping service, and Christina Blizzard from the Toronto Sun wrote a very good column. It is slightly divergent away from this, but not too much, because one of the activities that many adults enjoy doing, me in particular, is fishing. She had a whole column about people who would travel from outside of the province to come to northern Ontario, to the area around Kenora, to the pristine lakes, to enjoy fishing. It was found out—and her column is all about the HST—how this outdoor activity, that was enjoyed not so much by children but by adults, is now becoming very, very difficult and less likely to occur in this province than elsewhere. She talked about people coming from the United States who found that the additional 13% HST was onerous—an additional 8% from the province that was onerous—and took us out of the league, so that people would now choose to stay in the United States and perhaps go fishing in Minnesota. She also talked about some of our brothers and sisters from other parts of Canada and how it now made more sense for people living in Manitoba, who had once come to enjoy outdoor recreational activities in Ontario—they are now more likely to choose to go to Saskatchewan.

0920

The same thing holds true for children's activities. If the activities in those border communities, be they on the border with Quebec, be they on the border with Manitoba or, potentially, even be they on the border with the United States, are that much cheaper without the equivalent of an HST on children's activities in those places, then I would suggest that that is where parents are going to take their children as well.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I can hear more muttering now, coming from the Minister of Community and Social Services, but I can't make out what she's saying. If it's important, please say it loudly.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Quebec has had HST for the past 10 years.

Mr. Michael Prue: She's telling me that Quebec has had HST for the past 10 years. Yes, they have, but

they've lowered it, and I'm not sure that they have put it—

Interjection: They lowered it twice.

Interjection: To what?

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I think there's lots of argument there, but I leave that for my colleagues, if they—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I agree with the member for Parkdale–High Park: If you have something to say, you'll be given an opportunity to do that.

The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Mr. Michael Prue: For Beaches–East York?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Beaches–East York; I'm sorry.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member from Parkdale–High Park sits beside me, and she is usually far more eloquent—I think you can tell the difference that way.

In any event, other provinces do what other provinces want to do. Manitoba has chosen not to go down this road; Quebec, as the minister rightly pointed out, went down this road many years ago. But they have wonderful programs for children, and I have not heard any screams coming out of those places in terms of the opportunities available for children, or indeed the opportunities for parents to have full-day child care. They've had it for many years, and all the opportunities that children can avail themselves of in that province are far different from anything this government has been able to come up with.

In closing, I think that we, as New Democrats, have no alternative but to vote for this bill. We have no alternative because \$50 in the pockets of families is better than nothing at all. But we have to ask those same families, and anybody watching this on television: Would it not have been better in the first place for the government to recognize the importance of children's health, to recognize the importance of recreational activities and to have done at least the same thing for recreational health that they did for McDonald's hamburgers?

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you for the opportunity to add a few comments to those of the previous speaker from Beaches–East York. I would have to say that this bill, and the government's plan, are to try to do everything they can to help young children and families in Ontario. I can tell you, as a former soccer coach for close to 17 years, working with young children in house leagues and competitive soccer, that this is definitely an opportunity to help those families with some of their costs. I certainly will be supporting it, and I'm glad my colleague from Beaches–East York will be supporting it.

But I think there's something very obvious that has to be noted. Unlike the federal children's fitness tax credit, which is non-refundable and only applies to income tax owing, this government chose to make it a credit that everyone will receive, especially low-income earners in Ontario, whom this government has been trying over

time to help, year after year, if you look at all the programs we've brought in, in the last couple of years, one of them being the Ontario child benefit program.

The whole revamp of that system has put more money into lower-income families. Full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds is certainly helping low-income families, with their kids being in school all day and reducing their costs in having to pay for daycare. If you look at what we're doing, I think it's very positive, and families are going to welcome this.

The one additional thing you need to note is that this particular credit does not apply to organized sports only. It applies to activities for young people like music lessons, language classes and dance classes. I think this is a very positive thing on the government's part.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I give credit to the member from Beaches–East York for pointing out the trivialness of this bill, the knee-jerk reaction, you know, switching the channel. In fact, I know that in the Minister of Finance's riding, the Windsor Star posted an article that reads, "Cynical PR move." If you put that into context, I think Andrea Horwath summed it up very nicely as well: "The announcement comes two months after the introduction of the despised harmonized sales tax," and she says, "What would be the best is if the government had thought more carefully about the harmonized tax in the first place."

Clearly, we on this side understand. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has said this is a tax on people that was never talked about and never planned; it was just a tax grab. And our research has said it's about \$732 or more a year per family.

What does this \$50 mean? Let's put it in the context of the bill—the member from Beaches–East York did point that out. If you spend \$500 and you do the tax, 13%, that comes out to \$65 in tax. That's money out of your pocket. It's actually \$500 plus \$65. And no expense would be just \$500; it could be \$550 or \$600. If you spend less than that, you don't qualify. But if you're already spending, or giving Premier McGuinty, an additional \$65, they're saying, keep your receipts and file your taxes, which is more red tape. But some of the receipts may not qualify. If it is a specific "instruction," as it says in the bill, it doesn't include hotel costs, travel costs or anything like that. None of that is covered. So I don't think it does anything for families at all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Let's name this child tax credit for what it is. First of all, to correct what my friend from Scarborough–Rouge River said, or implied, it's \$50 maximum. You don't get \$50 over and over again on programs your child is enrolled in. It's \$50 maximum.

For parents in my community, who probably spend, on average, over \$1,000 on child programs every year, it doesn't come close to matching the HST burden even for them. Let's face it: This is a gnat-sized corrective for an

elephant-sized mistake, which is the HST. As my friend from Durham said, this is a public relations move that will have little to no bearing on parents across this province.

A woman from my riding was talking to me about her hydro bill. She said, "How ridiculous. The government announces a \$50 credit at the same time that I'm opening my hydro bill to an extra \$100," an extra \$100 on one bill alone—one bill alone. Another member from my riding who runs a small business and also has children said that his hydro bill now represents a huge portion of his profits because of changes this government has made with their not-so-smart meters and their HST. In return, they get \$50 back.

This is an insult to hard-working families across the province. This is a subtle way—maybe a not-so-subtle way—of saying, "Oops, we made a mistake. We didn't look at the HST well enough. We didn't look at the implications of the HST well enough. Now we're trying to claw back some of that mistake." It's too little, too late. Too little and far, far too late for the majority of families across this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm so pleased to have a chance to talk this morning and bring a little bit of reality back to the conversation we're having here. I would suggest that the members opposite who are saying this is meaningless to Ontario families are totally out of touch with Ontario families. This is \$50 per child indexed with inflation, refundable to families, added to the \$75 per child that the federal government provides.

I look at the programs in my community, where families line up, get on the phone early in the morning to get on the programs that are offered by Toronto Parks and Recreation. I brought some of those programs here today. Let's be in touch with what families register their kids in.

0930

Islington Community School offers a program through Toronto Parks and Rec, Kids in the Kitchen: \$31 for nine weeks for kids nine to 12 to go from 5:30 to 7 on a Wednesday night to learn about healthy cooking and to be part of that program. It's a great program, and when you're paying \$31 for nine weeks, to a maximum of 50 bucks at the end of the year—and the program that you're registering your children in is a whole new program. You get to put your child in one additional program. Ball hockey on Saturday mornings at Islington Community for kids nine to 12 years old, from 12 to 1—again, \$31 for nine weeks of those programs.

This \$50 return allows you, as a parent, to say, "Do you know what? I'm going to put my child in one extra program because that's the amount that I will get refundable to me." These programs are also not subject to HST because they're municipally provided.

I think we need to be clear about what we're doing here. We're in tune and in touch with families who want

to put their kids in programs and we're giving them some financial ability to be able to do more of that. That's really meaningful to parents in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches—East York, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from Scarborough—Rouge River, Durham, Parkdale—High Park and the Minister of Children and Youth Services for the comments.

I want to talk first of all about the member from Scarborough—Rouge River. He said that this is a credit that everyone is going to receive, and yes, it is a credit. But he wasn't listening, I don't believe, to what I had to say. You have to fill out forms and other things to get the credit. We know from past experience, from the University of Alberta's study, that people tend to apply for these credits who are better educated, more well-off, and that poorer communities—although poorer people can apply for these credits—are far less likely to do so for two reasons: first, because they may not understand it as well in some cases, but the second and more important one is they're not likely to participate to the same level because they can't afford the amounts of money that are going out for recreational programs. To spend \$500 for a child, if you're a parent in Regent Park, Parkdale or Crescent Town, is an enormous sum of money for a family that barely makes ends meet. So to get the \$50 tax credit, you would have to have spent the \$500 at the outset. They simply don't have it.

The second thing is the Minister of Children and Youth Services. She gave two examples of wonderful programs that are being offered by the city of Toronto in Islington. One of them, I think, is a great program teaching kids how to cook healthy meals. The city's charging \$31. How much tax credit is going to be available for this? I would think none, because it's a city of Toronto program, but even if there is something, it's to a maximum of 10%. They're going to get \$3.10 back. What good is that going to do—

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important bill. The Ontario Children's Activity Tax Credit Act, 2010, as proposed, would give an up to 10% of \$500 tax credit per child and an up to 10% of over \$1,000 for children with disabilities tax credit.

Let me say a couple of points at the outset. What I want to do eventually is sort of parse all the different elements of this tax credit, because I think there's a lot of confusion being discussed here.

First of all, I think we should not trivialize any help we can give our families, especially our parents. Every little bit helps. I don't think anybody is claiming that this is going to result in a big windfall for our families—of course not—but it's substantive help. It's going to directly help parents with kids to ensure that their kids

can be involved in various physical and non-physical activities.

The other thing I wanted to make a point of is that we should not demean individuals who happen to be on low incomes by insinuating they don't have the capacity or means to understand how a tax credit could work, that they somehow are able to file an income tax return every single year and not take advantage of a credit like this. I think those kinds of ideas are not appropriate. Just because somebody is on a low income does not mean that they do not have the capacity to take advantage of various government programs and various government tax credits that are available to them. I take exception to those comments that were made.

Let's look at this tax credit closely. I have divided it into five different parts. First of all, the uniqueness of this particular tax credit is that it applies to both physical activities and non-physical activities. The comparison that is often given is the federal government's tax credit, which is up to \$75, but that only applies to physical activities like soccer, hockey, floor hockey, dodge ball etc.—those types of activities. This provincial tax credit goes beyond. It covers all that is covered under the federal government's tax credit, and it adds on top of it. So that's a significant amount. It's \$75 plus \$50, and I want to make that very clear. It's not one or the other; it's both.

But it also applies to non-physical activities, because not all parents are sending their children to hockey, soccer or some other physical activity. Some of them are sending them for music lessons and for language classes, so those types of activities are also included in this particular tax credit, and I think it's a significant point.

I'll give you some examples of non-physical activities that are covered under this credit: cadets; chess; choir; cooking for kids, as the minister mentioned; dance; drama; first aid courses; Girl Guides; leadership development; lifeguarding; musical instrument lessons; and the list goes on and on. That's fairly expansive in nature in terms of coverage.

I know I've got, for example, the Ottawa School of Speech and Drama in my riding of Ottawa Centre, which never qualified. Those parents who sent their children to the Ottawa School of Speech and Drama were not able to qualify for the federal tax credit, nor will they in the future unless the federal government changes its mind. But once this bill comes into force, if it's passed by this Legislature, they will be able to get a tax credit for their activities. Up to now, they were getting nothing. That is, I think, a very important distinction.

I can tell you, from speaking to parents in my riding of Ottawa Centre, that they are very appreciative of this particular change. They are very appreciative of the fact that we are not covering just physical activities but that we are going beyond and also covering non-physical activities.

The second point, and this is a technical point—and it's important because I think members from the opposition can muddy the water, so to speak, on this particular

point—is that this is a refundable tax credit. Now, the question arises of what the difference is between a non-refundable tax credit and a refundable tax credit. Well, here is the difference: A federal tax credit is a non-refundable tax credit, which means that the only time you will get that money back, the \$75 tax credit, is when you owe taxes. If you owe taxes to the federal government, they will make an adjustment by the amount owing for the tax credit. If you don't owe tax, you get zilch, nothing, zero.

That creates a differentiation between those who are on middle or high income versus those who are on low income. This is where we should be talking about the differences between those families who live on low incomes—who, at the end of the day, do not owe any taxes and cannot take advantage of the federal tax credit because it's non-refundable—versus those who earn middle incomes and higher incomes, because they owe taxes so they get some money back.

Let's contrast that: This particular provincial proposed tax credit, which applies to both physical and non-physical activities, is refundable in nature, which means that it does not matter for a family whether they owe taxes or not. They will still get money. They will still get a cheque from the provincial government, which means that if you're a low-income family and at the end of the day you do not owe any taxes to the provincial government, you will still be able to take advantage and either get \$50 or \$100, depending on the circumstance of your child, from the provincial government. That is a very significant distinction because we are not creating classes; we are not distinguishing between various income levels. We're helping all Ontarians regardless of their income—a very important point. This is not a subtle distinction. This is a very important discussion and I do not hear the opposition speaking about that.

0940

The third point I want to make to distinguish this particular tax credit: that there is a higher amount that is available for children with disabilities. The eligible amount is \$1,000, so it's a tax credit of up to \$100 for children with any disability, and the age—the definition of what a child is—is higher as well; it is 18 years. In the case of kids with no disability, the age limitation is 16 years. So not only is the age for disabled kids longer, at 18 years, but the amount is higher as well. I think the thinking there is that clearly, children who have disabilities tend to have higher needs. They need services that tend to be more expensive, and government wants to do its part—modest in nature, no doubt about it—to help those parents who have kids with disabilities. So that is another very important distinction we have to keep in mind.

Point number four that I want to make in this regard is that this tax credit, if passed by this esteemed House, will apply retroactively. It will apply as of January 1, 2010. So parents who are incurring expenses this year should keep their receipts handy in a file somewhere so that they can apply for the tax credit.

My experience with all kinds of credits—and I think we all have experienced filing our income tax returns. We used to do it in paper form. I remember doing that, up to a few years ago, on paper, and now I do it with various services on the Internet. Some people have help they get from outside. These tax credits are easy to apply for because most of them just apply automatically. They do the calculations fairly automatically once certain criteria are determined, because you have to state, as basic information, whether you're married or not, whether you have children, or how old your children are. You have to put in certain information about that, so the rest of the calculation kicks in. The most you may have to do, probably, in this regard is check off a box and of course, if asked, provide receipts. When you're filing your income tax return online, obviously you do not file any documentation unless the Canada Revenue Agency comes back to you to prove that your child was enrolled in music lessons or hockey lessons etc. So it's not going to be that overly cumbersome as is being suggested, as is the case with many other tax credits, and it applies retroactively to January 1, 2010, for this year.

I'm really hopeful—and I'm sensing from all the members that they will be supporting this bill—that once it is passed through this Legislature, parents keep those receipts handy so that they can take advantage of this tax credit this year.

The last point: I think a very important distinction that applies in this bill which I want to highlight is that everybody is making a point that this is only \$50 or \$100 and that's it's not that much money. The government has made it very clear that that amount will rise annually based on cost of living. It's indexed. The \$50 or \$100 is the amount which is in the first year, but every year, based on the cost-of-living indexation, this amount will rise. So we will see it reflective of the cost of living, which we all have to bear as we live. I think that is a very important point as well.

I want to talk about the idea that somehow this tax credit—because that's the impression one gets—is something we're just doing in isolation; there's nothing else that government is doing to make sure that our children remain healthy. We know that is not an absolute truth. The government has been doing a lot of things to ensure that our families have the opportunity to ensure that their kids remain healthy and our children have the opportunity to ensure that they are active and healthy.

We know that in Canada, child obesity is a big issue. Just a few days ago, I was listening to some analyses and documentaries on CBC Radio talking about childhood obesity in Canada and comparing it to some other countries around the world. We need to do everything in our capacity to ensure that we allow opportunities for our children to be active. Now, we have done a few things in our school system alone to ensure that our kids are more active. I don't know where the previous governments were on those issues. For example, the most simple thing—I can't believe we never had that before—is 20 minutes of mandatory physical activity in our elementary

schools. We never had that. I can't understand why our kids were not required, since they go to school every day, to have some mandatory physical activity. I mean, this is where we teach our students; this is where we educate our kids; this is where we develop good habits in them. What a perfect place to ensure that they get into the habit of having some sort of regular activity. I'm sure all of us members have our routines, where we try to maintain our health by engaging in physical activity—some probably more than others, but we do our best. So by legislation, we have taken that step of ensuring that kids have 20 minutes of daily physical activity in elementary schools. Now it's mandatory—a very important point. And guess what? There are no costs associated with that. Those kids are going as part of a publicly funded education system and they're being helped to develop the right set of habits that will help them as they grow up as members of society.

The other thing which I think this Legislature dealt with in this Parliament—I believe that was in 2008 or 2009—was to ban trans fats from vending machines, school cafeterias and tuck shops—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Ottawa Centre, I'm sure that we're all interested in those things, but that you want to bring that back to the context of the bill that's before us this morning.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: And I will do so, Mr. Speaker, in 30 seconds.

We want to make sure that we are giving our children all the right sets of opportunities, like this children's activity tax credit is doing, to ensure that they continue to live a healthy life. We want to make sure that when they go to school, they are not eating foods that are unhealthy for them, because it is about creating and developing the right kinds of habits to ensure that our kids are living healthy lives. Through this tax credit, we are ensuring that parents have the opportunities available to them—again, modest in nature, no doubt about it—to ensure that they are helping their children by providing them the right kinds of sets of activities.

All in all, I think this is a good bill. This is a bill in the right direction. From a tax policy point of view, I'm hearing some comments about how things could have been made exempt from HST. I think those who have looked into the tax policy know that one of the best ways to deal with consumption taxation is to provide targeted tax credits, because that allows incentives to invest money in a particular area, and by providing a children's activity tax credit, we are rewarding those parents, those individuals who are actually ensuring that their kids are enrolled in physical and non-physical activities.

I urge all members to support this important legislation. I think it's a step in the right direction. It ensures that our parents have the resources necessary to continue to support their families. I know in my riding of Ottawa Centre parents are quite happy about it. I've received that feedback, and they encourage me to do more tax credits which are specific in nature to them.

0950

The other thing I want to highlight from a tax point of view is that it covers a lot of services, a lot of activities, which have no HST; for example, music lessons. There is no HST on music lessons, while this tax credit will apply to that.

I think we need to be very clear to ensure that, be it services being provided by municipalities or a for-profit group, when it comes to helping our parents, we are not distinguishing between incomes and we are not distinguishing between what kind of activity. We are making sure that there is some directed help that is available to parents.

We'll hopefully continue to work together as elected public servants for the people of Ontario by providing targeted incentives to help our families.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing the views of my colleagues.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened to the member from Ottawa Centre carefully, and I probably don't disagree with a lot of it. I think the stress and importance that he puts on it is a bit exaggerated.

Nonetheless, here's a suggestion, and I mean this quite sincerely and humbly: What they should do is extend this tax credit to seniors.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Tai chi.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, exactly. The member from Peterborough is quite right. If people are participating in programs that are good for their health and fitness—mentally and physically, I suspect—they should be entitled, because our health care system is struggling under the burden of an aging population. We all know that, and we're not sure just how we're going to deal with it. But the point here is that it's kind of tax discrimination. Young children—I would encourage them to have an active lifestyle, whether it's soccer or ballet. It's just being active that's important, intellectually as well as physically, and I would say the same for seniors who are dealing with Alzheimer's.

So I make a positive suggestion here this morning. There are a couple of ministers in the House, and I hope that they're listening and that they'll take this. And I would ask for public hearings, even if it's just for a morning, so that the public—rather than introducing these tax changes without consulting with the public. This is another problem with your eco tax. I was speaking this morning with the former Minister of the Environment, who was quickly moved out of that portfolio right after the introduction of the eco tax, and it sounds like they're going to introduce that again. I would say that what they should do is consult with the people of Ontario.

The member from Ottawa Centre is a young, very active president of the Liberal Party. He's very active and eager to be in cabinet. Take back the suggestion of adding it for seniors. That's a positive thing that our leader, Tim Hudak, suggested at our caucus meeting, that

it's tax discrimination. So there's one way of improving it, we suggest to you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the honourable member and what he had to say. He took some umbrage at the fact that I had said that the poor are less likely to apply for these credits than people who are not poor. The reality is that that's exactly what happens. One needs to look only at the Alberta report on these types of exemptions, written by Mr. Murrell, to know that that's exactly what happens. But one need not even go to Alberta. One has to go even back to the 20 or 30 years of all of the social reports that have been tabled in this House, all pointing exactly in the same direction: People who do not have the same kind of opportunity, people who don't sometimes have the same educational opportunities, the same backgrounds, are far less likely to avail themselves of credits such as this. People who are new Canadians who don't know about the availability of the credits—lots of people don't get them to the same extent that many middle-class families will be eligible. That's the reality of what I was trying to say. Why he takes umbrage at something that is a known social and proven fact is beyond me.

The second thing: He talks about having children eat healthy food. He talks—he tried to talk, before the Speaker rightly told him to get back on topic. But the whole question, and I raised this—I ask him perhaps if he would comment on why this government thought it so important to take the 8% additional HST off fast foods, things that are not healthy for children, and didn't think it was important to have children's programs exempt in the first place.

This is a sop. This is \$50 maximum in most cases. Parents are going to spend more than that on the HST on the programs all by themselves.

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

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I was listening very carefully to the presentation done by the member for Ottawa Centre.

With this bill, the people really got the answer they were looking for. I have to tell you that at the present time, over 1.1 million Ontarian families will benefit from this tax credit.

I have to tell you that during the sessions that I was giving on the HST, one of the questions that was brought to my attention—a gentleman from the municipality of Russell came to me, and he was a little upset about the HST at the time. He said, "It's going to cost me \$800 more to register my kids." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I'm the president of minor hockey," and I said, "How many hockey players have you got?" He said, "About 300." That amounts to about \$24 with this tax credit today.

We are giving the answer to those families, really, that they were looking for. They will be getting a tax credit with which they will be able to continue having their kids

play any of the sports that are recognized by the provincial government.

When I look at the other benefits that the families are going to get—when we said that some of the families are going to pay more than that for travel and everything, we have to remember that low-income families are getting \$260 per head in the family, so that could amount to quite an amount of money. Also, the first year they get \$1,000. When we explain all that to the people—"Oh, I will be able to continue having my kid registered at the YMCA or dancing lessons."

This is exactly what we're telling the people today, but it's too bad that the people are being scared by the opposition. They're not telling exactly what's going to happen.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think that this is an initiative worthy of debate in this chamber, one that is going to have far-reaching impacts on children and their families right across the province. That's why I think we need to do it right.

I think I speak to the issue that my colleague from Durham brought up, which is that we should have public consultations on this initiative, whether for half a day or perhaps we might even want to try and engage young families and their children through other means, perhaps through social media or what have you.

The issue here is not that people don't want children's activity increased in the province. Of course every member of this chamber wants that to happen. I guess the question is, what has motivated this bill at this particular time? I look forward to speaking to that at a bit more length when it is our rotation in a few minutes.

I leave my colleagues with that, for the next few minutes: to think about what the motivation is, how we can improve upon it and why we are at the point we're at right now, where people are actually calling this "a cynical PR move," as my colleague for Durham did in this chamber at this time last week.

I look forward to speaking at greater length to this piece of legislation and I look forward to hearing the member from Ottawa Centre complete his remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Ottawa Centre, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I do want to thank the members from Durham, Beaches–East York, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Nepean–Carleton for their comments on my 20 minutes earlier.

A couple of points I just want to make: I think, in terms of motivation, it's as simple as us wanting to collectively do as much as we can to help our families, to ensure that in a very targeted fashion, when it comes to activity of children, we are helping them.

The member from Beaches–East York raised a point about a study from Alberta. I do recall looking at that study and I do recall that the study looked very closely at the non-refundable nature of the federal tax credit. You

are absolute right, sir, that in that case, it does discriminate between those who are middle or high income and those who are low income, because the non-refundable tax credit only applies to those who owe any taxes, whereas there is a very important distinction in this particular bill; that is, it's refundable in nature. So it does not matter how much money you make; it does not matter whether you owe any taxes or not; you will still get the money back. That is an important distinction to make.

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Again, I come to my original point that this is a progressive piece of legislation that is the right way of ensuring that we help families. It's through the means of tax credits to ensure that there's a directed investment being made to those parents who are taking that additional step of ensuring that they're helping their kids in engaging in physical and non-physical activities.

I cannot stress how important it is that we are going beyond just hockey and soccer, which seem to be the mainstay, and also looking at things like music lessons, cadets, Girl Guides and language training, because those types of activities, especially arts activities, are also extremely important because they do help our children have a healthy lifestyle. We need to help those parents who engage in those activities.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this legislation.

This morning, when I was making breakfast for my little girl—she's five years old—she said, "Mummy, will you play with me?" I said, "Mummy has to go give a speech." It was about eight o'clock. She said, "What's the speech about, Mummy?" and I said, "It's the children's activity tax credit." She had a huge smile on her face because it said "children"—one of the few times that this Legislature is actually speaking to that five-year-old demographic that we all desperately want.

She looked at me with this huge smile on her face. I think, ever since we were visited by the tooth fairy a couple of weeks ago, she gets really excited when she thinks she's getting something. So she was very excited. She said, "Do I get that?" and I said, "Yes, you do."

I realized at that point in time that we have to be very careful when we put forward initiatives in this chamber where every little girl, like Victoria, or every little boy whom she will go to school with is eligible. While we're saying "Yes, everybody's eligible," we have to be very careful, because the cost of ballet—I know this because I put her in ballet—has increased as a result of the HST. I know this because she's in ringette, and that cost, as well, has gone up, as has our driving to and from; the cost of our fuel. I know also because she does play soccer, indoor and outdoor, that that has increased as well, and it has all increased beyond \$50.

Hon. John Gerretsen: She's one busy little girl, I tell you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, she's a busy little girl, and I'm fortunate to be able to put her through those programs. I'm very fortunate, and she is fortunate.

But they say in life, children are the great equalizer, and my little girl goes to a public school and she goes to birthday parties. In a lot of cases, the little girls don't know her mom is the MPP, and I want to keep it that way. But I'm going to tell you, when I sometimes go to birthday parties and accompany my little girl, I see single mothers who have done every single thing they can to put a birthday party on for their little girl or their little boy so that they haven't done without. Then I think of those mothers and those children who I know, and I know for a fact that those parents are not thinking about a \$50 tax credit because right now, they cannot afford the registration at all, and I'm speaking from first-hand experience in this chamber. That's why I'm encouraging people from all sides of the political spectrum in this chamber to consider doing what my colleague from Durham has suggested, which is bringing forward public consultation, and not just in Toronto. Because I think of Victoria's little friends and I think of equality.

I also want to bring forward some research by the University of Alberta. This is a \$50 tax credit. The federal tax credit is \$75. The University of Alberta found that "overall"—and I'm quoting this and I'll be happy to provide it to Hansard—"only 15.6% reported that it had increased their children's participation in physical activity programs; however, lower-income families used the tax credit less than wealthier families because they couldn't afford the registration ... for physical activity programs to begin with."

This is a great idea, but we have to make it fair for every child across the province. We can talk about the semantics and talk about the government lines; I'm not interested in that today, because I want every little girl and every little boy in my daughter's senior kindergarten class in Nepean to have equal access to sports and other children's activities, whether that's music or art lessons, whether that's karate, whether that's Cubs.

I think the timing is also suspect. I've often, and many people can point to this, been an advocate for this type of tax credit. In fact, in 2008, I requested that my colleague Toby Barrett, the MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk, put this idea forward. He put forward that—and I'll read this to you. At the time, on page 16, it was entitled, "Health promotion sports tax credit." What I put forward to Toby, who ended up bringing it to the finance committee, was:

"The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs recommends the Minister of Finance, within total planned program spending, create a provincial health promotion sports tax to match or exceed the federal children's fitness tax credit to children in sports under the age of 16."

At the time, the Liberals rejected that.

By the way, Mr. Speaker—I know I'm a little late—my colleague from York-Simcoe will be splitting the time with me.

The reality is that timing is everything. It's sort of what we talk about: In life, timing is everything. Let me say this: Timing is everything. Two years ago, sports registration didn't increase because of the HST. We didn't see skyrocketing deficits, like we do right now at \$20 billion, which is about \$1,500 per family that is a debt burden on top of the \$1,100 or \$1,200 per family they're now paying as a result of the HST. Timing is everything. If we really, truly took this type of initiative seriously in this chamber, we would have adopted this approach during better economic times so that parents who might not be able to bring forward this type of initiative to their child or to be able to pay for this registration could have taken advantage of it earlier on.

My colleague from York-Simcoe will continue to speak to this bill, but I have a simple request to all members of this chamber: Think about those children whose parents cannot afford to send their child to an activity like the ones we're talking about today. One of my colleagues said that anyone who doesn't support this is out of touch. Well, I think it's been very clear that we support this type of initiative, but you have to get it right. If we truly want to get it right, we have to think about those little girls and little boys who we want to have an equal opportunity. Because of the tax burden on their parents, because of the regressive nature of the HST, it is difficult for those families to put their children through sports or any other type of activity. Right now, \$50 might be a lot to some people, but they will never qualify for it unless you do something about the sports registration fees themselves.

Thanks very much. My colleague from York-Simcoe will now speak for me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's a pleasure to have a few minutes in which to make a few comments about this tax credit. There are a couple of things that we need to understand about a tax credit. First of all, you have to file. That's the first thing. Then you have to have kept accurate records in order to have the information to be able to fill in the form to include the proof of registration and participation in one of the approved categories to receive the tax credit. And thirdly—and this is maybe the most important part of a tax credit—you must have the money already in order to have been able to sign up. When we look at the kinds of costs that are associated with many of these children's activities, we're looking at hundreds of hard-earned after-tax dollars that parents put forward to provide these opportunities for their children. So immediately you have, by having a tax credit, funnelled the opportunity down to a much smaller part of the population than at first would appear to be the goal of this piece of legislation. I think that's one of the issues that we need to understand. Of course, in the grand scheme of things, \$50 is a very small percentage of so much of what would be the cost of having children enrolled.

I had an interesting conversation with a coordinator for minor sports in my community. This conversation took place a year ago June, and it demonstrates the kind of thing that we are discussing here. That was the fact that she suddenly realized, frankly well before most people in the community, how the introduction of the HST was going to impact on minor sports. Most people were focusing on the outlay of money on things like gasoline, haircuts and various other things, but she recognized that the rental of the facilities was going to be impacted by the HST. Obviously, parents registering their children for any kind of municipally organized sport, whether it's hockey or soccer—there's still a rental fee and there's still an additional burden.

1010

So I actually convened a meeting where a number of the associations came together in response to this understanding. One of the things that came out of that was, certainly, the social benefits and the physical benefits that I think we all understand about participation in those community sports teams. But one of the other things was the danger of the tipping point: When is too much too much? The fact is that when parents look at the overall cost, that means, of course, equipment, not just registration, driving costs—that full cost. Where is the tipping point when people feel obliged to withdraw? Is \$50 going to make a difference? Not if they have to put out \$500 or \$1,000. Then \$50 is not necessarily going to make a difference. Instead, the danger is that if too many families feel that they've reached their personal tipping point of not being able to afford this, when is the whole infrastructure of these activities going to feel that pinch? How many families depart from supporting those baseball, soccer and hockey organizations before they, then, feel the pinch because then they have to carry the cost over to fewer and fewer participants? When you start looking at those kinds of dangers of increased costs, the question of the tax credit and how many people it is actually going to keep, literally, in the game, that's what we're really concerned about. That's what we're really talking about: Is it going to be keeping them in the game, or is it going to be seen as a government initiative that has all the elements of gesture politics, where everybody feels good because who is opposed to providing a \$50 tax credit for a worthy cause? Obviously, there are going to be many who see this in the way in which the government is portraying it: that it's a feel-good piece.

It reminds me of a few months ago, when this Legislature debated a similar piece of feel-good legislation. That was the same mechanism again, a tax credit for northern Ontario, recognizing that there were cost burdens in terms of energy. So we as a Legislature then dealt with the proposed legislation—which, obviously, passed—that provided northerners with a tax credit.

This is a recipe, obviously, that the government has found that enables them to go out and talk to northern residents or families and say, "This is what we have provided for you. We are encouraging you. We recognize that there are further costs than perhaps you anticipated."

But I would remind you of the material that has been shared by other members of the House in regard to the fact that—who actually fills out all the forms for the tax credit? Well, we know from the information provided to us already this morning that it's a relatively small number of people who are comfortable with the process of filing and registering and keeping track of all the paperwork that's required for this.

The fact that now we've narrowed—dramatically, I would argue—those people who are eligible by virtue of their participation, certainly that makes it, again, another example of gesture politics, like, “We did our thing. We provided you with this, and now it's up to you.”

I also thought it was very interesting that, a moment ago, the member for Ottawa Centre, if I have the right—

Mr. Michael Prue: That's him.

Mrs. Julia Munro: —made an interesting comment about how this amount was going to be indexed to the cost of living. I immediately thought about the fact that the 8% isn't indexed; that was arbitrary. We're going to talk about indexing \$50, but we're not talking about having any kind of recognition of fairness. And when I think of my constituents who are on fixed incomes, I can assure you that that's their biggest issue: “Where's my 8% increase to be able to afford the increase in so many of the necessities and regular problems of my life: my energy costs, my heating, my hydro, my gas? I don't get 8%.” And it's certainly not indexed.

So I think that while, on the surface, this is something that obviously no one is going to be opposed to—it provides an opportunity for a part of the population with which, fundamentally, we all agree. But let's us not kid ourselves: Fifty dollars? It's a very small amount, and it's a tax credit.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being 10:15 of the clock, and pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west members' gallery we have page Nick Jiang's parents, Tony Jiang and Anne Hu. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Johnson: In the west members' gallery I have the mother of page Brigid Goulem. Heather Stauble is here today from my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The mother of Anika Chowdhury, who's our page, is here to witness the proceedings, and we welcome her here today.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: It's my pleasure today. I'm delighted to introduce representatives in attendance from Professional Engineers Ontario—it's their day here today at Queen's Park: the president, Diane L. Freeman; CEO and registrar, Kim Allen; Diane's son Scott Hicks, a high school student in Waterloo; executive intern Laura

Jewell; and Marc-André Simard. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'd be remiss if we didn't recognize Howard Brown, who is visiting us today in the gallery as part of the delegation of engineers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Ms. Ann Hamilton, a member of the Monarchist League of Canada, Toronto branch, seated in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Visiting Queen's Park today from Saskatchewan is my cousin Theresa Anderson and her husband, Dale Anderson, seated in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ANNUAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I've laid upon the table the 2009-10 annual report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario entitled Redefining Conservation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. Premier, three weeks ago your Minister of Energy said that the Ontario Power Authority was putting together your long-term energy plan and that plan would come out in the early fall. Then this Monday, to the surprise of many, Minister Duguid backtracked, telling the energy sector that you're not going to release that long-term plan until probably well after the next election.

Premier, what changed in three weeks to cause you to backtrack yet again and to keep your real plan from Ontario families until after the next election?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to receive the question and very pleased to speak about our plan. The first piece of good news is that we have a plan. The second piece of good news is that our plan is dedicated to keeping the lights on in the province of Ontario. Thirdly, we are making massive investments in new generation and new transmission. An important part of our focus, as part of our plan, is to invest in energy from renewables: the wind, sun, biomass and the like. That has the additional benefit of creating a whole new industry here in the province of Ontario which is creating new jobs for Ontarians. Ultimately, we are going to be a powerful manufacturing base to export to the rest of North America. That's all part of a comprehensive, long-term plan to make sure we keep the lights on here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, with all due respect—back to the Premier—nobody buys that line anymore.

Seven years of chaos, dithering and delay: I remind the Premier that back in 2006, Hansard for June 20 shows that they were all set to release their long-term energy plan with then-Energy Minister George Smitherman. You boasted that you had five rounds of consultations, including town halls, listening on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry. You had a website. You had public hearings by the OPA. All that time, all that money developing your plan, and you ripped it up four years ago, and you're backtracking once again.

Premier, what's with all this chaos at your Ministry of Energy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'm delighted to speak to this. I think my honourable colleague, in fact, understands that there is in place a 20-year long-term plan. I think he also understands that we're required to revisit that plan every three years and modify it in accordance with our changed view of the future outlook. That's exactly what we're doing.

I will remind my honourable colleague as well that we are not in a panic mode the way that their government was. Their long-term plan, so to speak, at the time when we were experiencing brownouts, at the time when we were risking big blackouts, was to put in place diesel generators in our cities. That was their plan to deal with our electricity shortage in the province of Ontario.

We have a solid, reliable, comprehensive, intelligent long-term plan, and Ontarians can go to bed having confidence we've got a plan. We're going to keep the lights on.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, while Ontario families are coping with spiking energy bills, Dalton McGuinty has turned backtracking into an art form. You backtracked four years ago. You're backtracking again today. Premier, while you have dithered and delayed, your Ontario Power Authority has ballooned from 15 employees to over 300. The number of employees making \$100,000 a year has skyrocketed from six to 75 in 2009. That is a spectacular 1,300% increase.

Premier, that same rot, that same bloat and waste we saw at eHealth, you're now injecting in our energy sector. Why is it that Ontario families are stuck with a bill for your expensive energy experiments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, just so we understand our history together, in 2003 we were desperately short of electricity in the province of Ontario. We were experiencing brownouts, and we were in danger of blackouts. Their approach to that, in panic mode, was to put diesel generators in our cities; I remember that.

So far we've brought 8,000 megawatts of new generation online. We've invested in over 5,000 kilometres of transmission upgrades. We're making a massive investment in clean and green electricity. We're creating thousands and thousands of new jobs—all this in addition to ensuring that there's enough electricity to keep the lights

on. That's good news for Ontario families, and it's good news for Ontario businesses.

1040

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I think you know that Ontario families understand that you're kicking down the road your long-term energy plan because you don't want Ontario families to know how many more rate hikes you have up your sleeve, how many more expensive experiments you're going to put on families in our province in your penchant for trying to socially engineer households across this province. I suspect Dalton McGuinty's so-called plan will also show how you have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member of the comments I made last week on references to other members in the House. I will lay this out to all members that, as a warning, if this persists, I'm just going to bypass to the next question.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you've bungled your smart meter scheme, turning them into nothing more than tax machines. You've failed to set out any path to renewing our nuclear capacity. You have signed expensive sweetheart deals to build more jobs in Korea through Samsung and stuck us with the bills for 20 years.

The PCs believe in stable, reliable and affordable energy. Why do you take a path that involves chaos, expensive experiments—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to revisit this issue again. There's some really good news here for the people of Ontario, both families and businesses. We have a plan. It's a plan to keep the lights on. It does not consist of that silly approach brought by the former government, which was to put diesel generators into our cities. We're making investments of new generation and new transmission.

The other thing we've done is we've made heavy investments in conservation. In fact, in 2003, a national organization gave our province a C- as a grade. This past year, our grade for conservation is A+. So in addition to massive investments, new transmission, new generation and renewable electricity, we're working very hard on the conservation front as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your approach has been clear. Ontario PCs believe in stable, reliable and affordable energy prices for Ontario families, and all we see from the McGuinty government is chaos, expensive experiments, dithering and delay, and Ontario families have been stuck with the bill. We need to look no farther than your new eHealth of the energy sector—

Interjections.

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

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your Ontario Power Authority has ballooned beyond proportions, and they can't get the job done. Your smart meters have become an expensive experiment in taking more money out of Ontario families' pockets. Why is it that when you back-track, whenever you flip-flop, whenever you add to the bloated bureaucracy, it's hard-working Ontario families that are stuck with the bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think I made it very clear that we have a plan. It's a long-term plan. It's designed to ensure that we can keep the lights on.

The other thing that we are going to keep working on is, we understand that because of the new investments that we're making in modernizing our electricity system, there are some costs associated with that, and we understand that consumers, ratepayers, moms and dads in our homes, families, have to deal with some of those costs. We are going to continue to work with families to address those costs. I want to make that perfectly clear.

I also want families to keep in mind the alternative put forward by my honourable colleague, such as it is. They have no plan. What we can draw from their past experience is that they believe in diesel generators; they believe in burning dirty coal. We don't support that. They don't believe in investing in conservation. We do believe in that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew, please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And Durham.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And Halton.
Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Folks from the Ottawa Valley sometimes bring a great deal of enthusiasm to this place; that's not always a bad thing, I say to my honourable colleague opposite.

The point I was making is that we are bringing forward a thoughtful, comprehensive, intelligent, long-term plan investing heavily in generation and transmission; we understand there are costs associated with that. We have no choice but to move forward and modernize our system.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, come on. Your only plan is to say that some day you'll have a plan coming. You said you had a plan back in 2006. Then you ripped it up and said you'd come back later. Three weeks ago, your energy minister said, "We'll have a plan this fall." This Monday he tossed that aside and said, "Well, maybe we'll have a plan after the next election."

In the meantime, chaos reigns in the energy sector. The OPA has bloated beyond all proportion. You paid Bruce Power, Premier, almost \$60 million not to produce any power whatsoever. You surprised families with a \$50-million backdoor energy tax grab. We're going to

pay for 20 years for your massive subsidy to the multi-national Korea-based corporation, Samsung. Then you piled the HST on top of it all.

Premier, why is it that Ontario families always get stuck with the bill for your bungling in the energy sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think we might ask ourselves what created the absolute necessity for us to act so quickly and make these massive investments? It's because they sat on their hands—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please retrieve the item that the member from Nepean–Carleton had on her desk. She very clearly knows the rules.

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A lot of energy over there and not too much light.

I think it's important that we compare and contrast. Remember, their electricity plan was to put in place diesel generators in our cities. We're expanding Niagara Falls. We're expanding capacity on the Mattagami River. We're building new gas-fired turbines. We're investing in wind turbines. We're investing in solar panels. We're creating a whole new industry of renewable electricity. We're investing heavily in conservation. We know there are costs—

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

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Households across Ontario are being shocked by huge increases in the cost of electricity, yet this government seems intent on making hydro even more expensive. Last year it paid Bruce nuclear \$56 million not to generate electricity. With more and more Ontario families struggling just to make ends meet, why did this government cut a deal that adds another \$15 to each and every hydro bill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. John Yakabuski: When are you guys going to expand Lake Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the member from Renfrew to please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The fact of the matter is, our government is absolutely committed to ensuring the reliability of our energy system so that the power that Ontario families and businesses count on is there when they need it, and that's what this is all about.

Nuclear power is a critical component of our energy mix. It's an emissions-free, cost-effective source of

power. We know the NDP doesn't support that but it's a critical part of our energy system.

This agreement provides the flexibility to ensure that there's enough power there when we need it. You don't build a fire hall and buy a fire truck just when the fire happens. You need to invest in that ahead of time. The NDP obviously doesn't get that.

We need to invest in our system to ensure that the strength in our system is there when we need it, and that's what this is all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Fifteen bucks out of each household's family budget might not seem much to this Premier or to his minister, but that's an extra \$15 that's not going to the groceries of those families.

This Premier keeps saying that hydro bills need to go up if we're going to keep the lights on. At a time when the Ontario families already feel they are being nickelled and dimed to death, why is each and every household in Ontario being forced to pay Bruce nuclear \$15 to do absolutely nothing?

1050

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me be very, very clear about this: This agreement between the Ontario Power Authority and Bruce nuclear provides protection for Ontario ratepayers. That's what it's all about. Unlike in the past when the Tories and the NDP were managing the system, Ontario ratepayers will not be on the hook for overruns for the refurbishment of Bruce beyond the \$3.4 billion. That's important. That's responsible. That's protecting ratepayers as we engage in the refurbishment of our nuclear industry, a refurbishment that is absolutely necessary to ensure that we have the reliability in the system that we did not have seven years ago.

We're committed to building a stronger, more reliable and cleaner energy system. We will continue to be committed to that with or without the support of the NDP.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I want to remind the honourable members again—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton—that it is important that they speak in the third person, that they speak through the Chair and that they not speak directly across the chamber to one another.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier and his minister just don't seem to get it. His government quietly renegotiated a deal with Bruce. Now Ontario families are forced to pay more, even if Bruce isn't generating any power. It's yet another slap in the face for the people of this province on top of the HST on hydro and on top of not-so-smart meters.

At a time when Ontarians are finding it harder and harder just to keep their heads above water, why is this Premier asking them to dig even deeper into their pockets for essentials like hydro?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We believe in protecting ratepayers when it comes to making these investments.

That's what that agreement between the OPA and Bruce was all about.

We operate in reality. It's very clear that the NDP do not. They voice opposition to all sources of power, in particular nuclear. We know that we need that baseload capacity for the sake of the power that our families rely on in their day-to-day lives and for the sake of the businesses that drive our economy.

The NDP's vacuous and unrealistic energy policy would be absolutely devastating for our economy. It would be absolutely devastating to our efforts to create jobs. It would also be devastating for the 70,000 people across this country who make their living in the nuclear industry—jobs that would be extinct if that party had its way.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier, but I'd have to say his minister needs to know that people tell me they want the government to actually protect their interests and their pocketbooks for a change.

The McGuinty government's electricity equation is not pretty for the people of Ontario. Ontario families don't think it's pretty at all: \$15 per household for private nuclear power that we don't use, more than \$1 billion on smart meters that don't work and an HST that adds another 8% on top of all of that.

When will enough finally be enough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question, but frankly I'm a little bit surprised that the leader of the NDP, a representative of a long-standing Ontario political organization, is not supportive of a plan that puts such a heavy emphasis on drawing energy from the renewables sector. This is a party that always stood for harnessing the power of the wind and the sun and biomass, that used to stand for investing heavily in conservation, that used to stand for creating the good new jobs that are associated with energy from renewables. I'm not sure what happened to that party. But, on behalf of the people of Ontario, I would welcome the return of that party that supported a progressive energy policy in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier forgot our long-standing policy against nuclear energy. I don't know why he forgot about that.

But families in Ontario are what I care about, and they are being zapped by higher electricity bills, and affordability is simply becoming out of reach. Davida Girard from the GTA writes this: "We just received a hydro bill for \$300.... I realize it's been a very hot summer but am at a loss to understand why our hydro has more than doubled!"

On Monday, the government announced a public consultation on their energy plans but said they won't consider a second look at their nuclear program. Why is the Premier shutting the door on a public conversation about his expensive nuclear expansion dreams?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: All right, I think we've got the nub of it here finally: The NDP remains opposed to nuclear energy in Ontario. I understand that. I reject that, and of course I can't accept it. Nuclear generation makes up about 50% of the electricity supply that we rely on today. It's the foundation for a very strong industry, with thousands of well-paying jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I certainly do appreciate the efforts of individuals in here to assist the Speaker in his role, and I thank them for that. I do remind the honourable members that there's nothing wrong with sitting in another seat, but if you're going to be sitting in another seat, you must not be in any way heckling.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I was saying that obviously I can't accept my colleague's approach with respect to the nuclear industry in Ontario. It's a very important part of the foundation of our electricity supply. It contributes about 50% of our electricity. It stands for thousands and thousands of jobs here, and we think it has an important and bright future for all of us. So as far as we're concerned, it will remain an important part of the foundation of electricity generation in Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Jocelyne Drapeau writes, "I received my highest bill this month: \$426.77, compared to \$295 last year." Patricia Austin in Etobicoke adds: "My hydro which was already skyrocketing is outrageous. I ... live from paycheque to paycheque." Yet this government plows ahead with a nuclear plan that is billions and billions of dollars over budget, even after a recent report found that the cost of nuclear power has tripled.

With the lives of people like Ms. Austin and Ms. Drapeau becoming more and more expensive each and every day, why is the Premier afraid to have a public conversation about his costly long-term nuclear plans?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There will be important consultations on the latest revision of a 20-year long-term plan, and we look forward to hearing from all Ontarians in that regard.

Again, I think Ontarians know that we were in a desperate circumstance in 2003, given the fragility, vulnerability and unreliability of the electricity system that we inherited. We've been making massive investments in order to change those circumstances. We understand that there's a cost associated with that. We understand that families, in particular, have to help pick up some of the costs associated with that. We're going to continue to find ways to work with our families to keep those costs down. But I think that the first and foremost responsibility we owe to all Ontarians—families and businesses alike—is to make sure that when they go to the wall and flick on the switch, the lights come on, and we're going to keep doing that.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Freedom-of-information records obtained by the Ontario PC caucus show that the same Liberal-friendly consultants who got rich from the sole-source-contract spending spree at eHealth also benefited from Cancer Care Ontario. John Ronson and Courtyard Group scooped up \$15 million, while Will Falk and Accenture were handed almost \$9 million. Ronson is the Premier's former election campaign director. Falk is the former Liberal staffer they had on speed-dial back when they hired Sarah Kramer as the CEO of eHealth.

How could the Premier not know about all the money members of the Liberal family were making from the funds that Ontario families thought they were paying for health care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. It gives me an opportunity to say thank you to the people at Cancer Care Ontario and the people who deliver cancer care right across this province. We are extremely proud of the cancer care that is provided in this province, and we owe a big thank you to Cancer Care Ontario.

When it comes to the issue that you're talking about, I think people understand that this is old news; there's nothing new here. This was released some time ago. We changed the rules. Since the issues that you're talking about we've got very clear accountability rules, and Cancer Care Ontario is a leader in following those rules.

We're very proud of the changes that we've made. We have ended sole-source contracting. We have significantly more accountability and transparency when it comes to these contracts, and that's all moving in the right direction. The people of Ontario deserve that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We agree that Cancer Care Ontario is doing a great job; that's not the point. The point is about the consultant spending spree that's been going on, and at Cancer Care Ontario it's even worse than it was in the eHealth boondoggle. This government handed Courtyard \$10 million from eHealth Ontario and \$10 million more from the Ministry of Health. Accenture was handed just under \$2 million from eHealth Ontario plus an eye-popping \$72 million from different cabinet ministers.

1100

A pattern has developed where, in eHealth, the LHINs and Cancer Care Ontario, it's all been used as a slush fund for Liberal-friendly consultants rather than improving front-line health care. So my question to the Premier would be, how many different treatments could have been funded or emergency rooms kept open if this money had been used instead for developing proper front-line health care that Ontario families expect and deserve?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: With the greatest respect to the member opposite, she needs to understand that this is very old news. In fact, we requested an internal audit

of Cancer Care Ontario. That audit was posted online in October 2009. So a year ago we released all this information. We have changed the rules when it comes to procurements and consultants. We think the people of Ontario demand that the money they spend on health care be used on health care. That's why we've changed the rules.

I think it's noteworthy that in the last year that the party opposite was in power, they spent \$662 million on consultants.

SOLDIERS' REMAINS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Tourism and Culture. The Premier said he would look into funding for the reburial of the War of 1812 soldiers' remains. Instead, this minister refused funding, telling Hamilton to utilize its one-ninth share of the western corridor bicentennial alliance, which is an amount of \$50,000.

Instead of taking decisive, positive action, why are the Premier and this minister turning their backs on fallen soldiers by telling Hamilton it can lobby for its \$5,500 share, which will in no way help this re-interment?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question and also for the opportunity to talk about 1812. The War of 1812 is an important part of our history and heritage. With regard to the city of Hamilton's request, it is not within my ministry's mandate.

Let me read the letter that I received from the mayor of Hamilton:

"That council direct staff to file a request for funding to the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Michael Chan, in the amount of \$200,000 as the province's contribution to the Smith's Knoll project which includes the property purchase, demolition, archaeological dig, site restoration...site interpretation and expansion of the parkette."

As I said before, it is not within my ministry's mandate to fund purchasing land and excavation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: That's an interesting response. The minister asked me to ask Hamilton city council to request these funds in writing, which I did. The minister then picked one small bit from the background notes—property acquisition—to refuse funding even though funding wasn't requested for that piece of the project. In fact, the deal for the land closed by the city on Friday.

Will the Premier and this minister stop playing us and commit to all veterans across Ontario that they will provide \$200,000 for the proper interment of these fallen soldiers?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question again. We are determined to celebrate 1812 come 2012. Our government so far has invested \$27 million in funding to celebrate 1812. On top of that, we have funded \$1 million to local organizations. We have aligned the province into seven regions and the region that is representing the city of Hamilton—the organization is called the western corridor bicentennial alliance. I would encourage the

city of Hamilton to engage this western corridor bicentennial alliance to come up with a proposal so that we can, come 2012, celebrate 1812 in Stoney Creek.

TUITION

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Last week, Statistics Canada released a report on provincial university tuition fees. They found that Canadian full-time students in undergraduate programs this fall paid 4% more, on average, in tuition fees for the 2010-11 academic year compared to what they did a year earlier. Statistics Canada also reported that Ontario had the highest undergraduate university tuition fee increase in Canada, at 5.4%.

Minister, it was my understanding that Ontario university tuition was capped at 5% annually. If this is the case, why is Statistics Canada reporting that Ontario's undergraduate tuition is higher than 5%?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the honourable member's question. It gives me an opportunity to reassure this House that, as well as having one of the most generous student assistance programs in Canada, we also do cap tuition here in the province of Ontario. For first-year undergraduate students, it's capped at 4%; for upper-year students, 4.5%; and for graduate and professional programs, at 8%. The way StatsCan reported its data, it mixed both professional and undergraduate programs; hence the higher number.

I want to further assure members that we work very closely with our institutions to make sure that they follow these guidelines. If they step over, we will take action against them. But I think it's very important to stress to the House that since the tuition framework has come in place, there has not been a single instance of a college or university that has not followed the guidelines.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: My main concern is for the students studying here in Ontario. Students know they need to obtain a good education in order to compete in today's high-skills economy. However, there are many people who feel that post-secondary institutions have become too expensive. My fear is that potential students will be discouraged from applying to our institutions because they don't think they could afford it, and the debt they could accumulate is just too high. I know that Ontario houses some of the best universities and colleges in the country, but the reputation of a particular institution alone wouldn't retain students. What is the government doing to limit tuition fees and keep post-secondary education accessible?

Hon. John Milloy: As I noted in the first question, we have, experts tell us, one of the most generous, if not the most generous, student assistance program here in the province of Ontario. Through the Reaching Higher plan, we contributed \$1.5 billion to enhancing student assistance, and a few months ago we announced further enhancements of \$81 million to ensure that students have

the resources they need to move forward. I also mentioned the student access guarantee, where we mandate institutions to automatically provide a student who is facing a high-cost program with additional funding.

We have an affordable system, and the numbers speak for themselves: Since we came to office, we have 140,000 more students in our colleges and universities, and the default rate on student loans is at the lowest rate that it has ever been. We will continue to work to make sure that no student is ever denied access to college or university for financial reasons.

OLD AGE SECURITY PAYMENTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. When the federal government introduced legislation to stop old age security pension cheques from going to jailed criminals, they asked the Premier of this province to help apply the same changes to the provincial rules, so that criminals in our provincial jails here in Ontario would no longer receive old age security. The changes have pitted child killers like Clifford Olson against hard-working Ontario seniors, who deserve this extra assistance above their Canada pension plan. So I ask: Whose side is the Premier on, hard-working Ontarians' or criminals like Clifford Olson?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The question was a bit incendiary, I think, when he asked it of us, but I'm aware that the federal government has recently introduced the bill that's called C-31. It pertains to people who are sentenced collecting old age security benefits.

As you know, I think there are 22 prisoners in our system who are eligible for any kind of benefits. In Ontario we have legislation now, as you would know, that suspends the entitlement to recipients who are in prison for more than 90 days. Such things as guaranteed annual income system, Ontario sales tax credits and HST transition cheques—all these are suspended for those who are serving 90 days and over. So we do that in the province of Ontario.

We have indicated our support for the federal legislation in principle. We want to, of course, see the details and work with our federal partners whenever we can.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, the federal government hasn't heard you, I say to the minister.

You mentioned payments that are no longer going to criminals, but I'm asking specifically about old age security, which is to cover food and rent for Ontario seniors, not criminals in Ontario's jails. Criminals like Clifford Olson already have their room and board covered: covered for life by the taxpayers. They do not deserve this extra assistance.

Could you please convey in a very clear way to the federal government that you will support the legislation, and will you stand up here today and say you will support

the legislation and bring in the necessary changes here in this Parliament to make sure OAS cheques stop going to criminals?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think it's reasonable that the federal government is, in fact, following our lead in the province of Ontario because, as I've mentioned to my friend, the guaranteed annual income system—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That is it. The Ontario sales tax credits, the HST transition cheques—we already do that in the province of Ontario, so it certainly would be consistent that we would not want to see them receive the federal cheque as well. All we have to do is get some detail from the feds. In principle, we're there; we already do it. We want to look at any funding costs there might be to provincial governments, technical implications and other possible implications.

But listen: We already do it, so why on earth would we oppose what they're doing? Of course we're in favour of it. I don't know why the member is trying to stir something up on this other than, perhaps—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: No, don't say it. Don't say it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No, I wouldn't say it's for partisan reasons.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Don't suggest anything about Jim.

Hon. James J. Bradley: My friend across would not do that.

But we already do it, therefore—

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

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Premier, today's annual report from Ontario's Environmental Commissioner is an indictment of Liberal inaction on the environment. Ontarians are already paying big money to deal with extreme storms and other impacts of global warming. Why doesn't your government have a plan to achieve your promised reductions in greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my critic for the question.

First of all, we want to thank the Environmental Commissioner for his annual report. He has the confidence of all three parties in this House. He plays a unique role: Over his 10-year tenure, and including today's report, he has challenged the government of the day to do better. Because of the challenges that he has given all of us in the past, we now have protection for the boreal forest and for the greenbelt. We are protecting Lake Simcoe and have a greenhouse gas reduction plan—all of those things. The fact that we're getting rid of dirty coal-fired generation in this province, that we're banning the use of cosmetic pesticides, is all because of the good work of

the Environmental Commissioner, challenging us always to do better.

I want to say to the commissioner that I look forward to reading his report in detail—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, I do hope that the minister reads the report in detail, because just as last year, when he said that the government, the Liberals, were not actually delivering on the plans and promises they had put forward, it continues to be the case. The government is not enforcing its own laws. Thus we have dirtier lakes, we don't have protection in the north and we don't have the protection on climate change that this government has promised it will give.

When will the Liberals actually deliver on the promises they've made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stop just talking about it?

Hon. John Wilkinson: On this side of the House, that's exactly what we do. We are the first government in North America to say that we will not burn dirty coal to generate electricity in the province of Ontario. It is the single most important thing that our government can do to meet our commitments under the Kyoto accord. That is why we are doing that.

I can assure the House that we are already 71% of the way there, and we have every intention of ensuring that coal-fired generation is a thing of the past. It is something that our children and our grandchildren will thank us for one day.

We want to thank the Environmental Commissioner. Because of the challenges that he lays out progressively to governments of the day, that is why these changes are taking place. I look forward to working closely with him and his office.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Pat Hoy: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Many of my constituents have been worried about access to appropriate care for their elderly parents. They want to ensure that when their parents need help maintaining their health, they will be able to receive it in a timely manner.

I understand that the aging at home strategy has given Ontarians throughout the province access to the care they need without having to leave their home. Could the minister please update the House on the progress that has been made through our aging at home strategy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex for his work for the people of his community.

I'm very pleased to report that the aging at home strategy is successful in bringing long-term-care patients out of hospitals and back home where they get the care they need. They get the care they need so they can live independent and productive lives.

In August, I announced that our government is investing an additional \$143.4 million as part of our aging at

home strategy. It's a \$1.1-billion strategy that's making a difference. It supports a wide range of personalized services to keep people at home as long as possible.

This funding, delivered through the LHINs, assists those who wish to remain at home. In the supplementary, I will talk about some of those investments—

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

Mr. Pat Hoy: My constituents will be pleased with an innovative strategy to help Ontarians get the right care at home or within the community.

Ensuring that we provide access to health care for long-term-care patients is an extremely important aspect in reducing wait times at hospitals throughout all our communities. I know there are programs in my riding that have helped seniors recover through tough surgeries, for example.

My constituents are also interested to know about their local aging-at-home programs. Could the minister please provide the House with some examples of useful programs that my constituents could use within the community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Erie St. Clair LHIN is funding over 100 new and expanded programs through the aging at home strategy. I'm going to talk about two of them—just two examples.

The falls prevention program at the Chatham-Kent community health centre will target seniors who have had a fall or who are at high risk of having a fall because they've had recent hip or knee replacement surgery. In addition, a second program that complements the falls prevention program is a community-based rehabilitation team. It provides individualized rehab care to seniors with osteoarthritis, with a history of falls or seniors who are recovering from hip or knee replacement surgery.

The Erie St. Clair LHIN has the highest rate of knee replacements in the province, and we expect these investments will dramatically reduce ER visits and hospital readmissions. We know that—

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. During the 2007 election campaign, the McGuinty government promised Ontarians an affordable housing strategy which was to be released this past spring. Can the minister answer when this government will follow through on their promise to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order. I would like to hear the question, please, and I'm sure the minister would like to hear the question as well.

Please continue.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is, when will this government follow through on their promise to release the long-awaited affordable housing strategy?

1120

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Affordable housing is very important in the province of Ontario. I want to congratulate the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario for finally standing up and asking a question about affordable housing.

I am very proud of the McGuinty government track record, and we will compare our track record against their track record any day. Ontarians will have a clear choice to make in the future. They will see our long-term housing strategy, implemented for the first time by a government in Ontario, compared to their strategy of disassembling affordable housing, slashing units, making sure that 19,000 of them—

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

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'll take that as no, they're not going to be releasing the report.

The minister's rhetoric doesn't fly with the almost 142,000 people who wait on the affordable housing list; nor does it fly with the almost 600,000 people who pay more than one third of their salary for rent; nor does it fly with the about 20% of tenants who pay half or more of their income on rent. Could the minister please tell Ontarians when he will be releasing this crucial report?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It is a very, very important issue. I am very, very proud of the consultation that we've done over the last little while. I'm very, very proud of how we've engaged the partners in affordable housing. I'm very, very proud that just yesterday, I was in Windsor speaking to the Ontario Home Builders' Association about the importance of affordable housing. They get it. They understand the importance of it.

We're not going to be cancelling 17,000 units as you did—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Member from Nepean. Member from Lanark.

Minister, please continue.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: This is a strategy we will be unfolding after our consultation and our analysis have taken place, because we know the people who are interested in affordable housing know it's the right approach to use. We will continue to use the right approach in developing a strategy, not cancelling 17,000—

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

FOOD SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Twenty-three Ontarians died of listeriosis arising from contaminated meat in 2008, and there are regular reports

in this province of contaminated meat finding its way into Ontario stores.

With food safety at the top of mind, why does the McGuinty government want to reduce the frequency of licensing renewals and audits at abattoirs and meat processing plants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to speak to this because I can tell you that food safety is paramount. When we look at what is important to our farmers and what's important to the people of Ontario—they know that when they buy Ontario product, it is safe. They know that when they make their purchases, that is what they can be guaranteed.

That's why I am very pleased to say that since we formed government, we have implemented the Haines report, we have hired meat inspectors, and we have done that with the understanding of how important the abattoirs and free-standing—are to the local food movement. I can tell you that the people of Ontario get it. They know that our food is safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's what I don't get: It's actually the annual licensing and auditing that keep Ontario families safe. In 2008 the Auditor General reported that "major and serious deficiencies" at abattoirs and meat processing plants were uncovered during audits.

Bob Lowry, a government meat inspector, is here with us today. He is worried. He's very worried that reducing the frequency of audits from one year to three years will threaten public health in this province.

Will the Premier agree with this expert and with the Auditor General of Ontario and pull the plug on this very, very bad idea?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Food safety is our first priority. It always has been, and it will continue to be the case.

I want to say that we've provided \$25 million in transition assistance for our processors in order to meet the regulations. We've worked with the Ontario Independent Meat Processors to provide on-the-ground understanding of the risks that are faced in our production of meat.

Let's speak to what happened in the past and what we see today: under the previous government, 10 full-time meat inspectors prior to 2004. Today, our government has 170 inspector positions.

We understand how critical it is that food is safe; we know that it is. Everybody wins when you buy Ontario, and food safety—

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

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Ontario's universities are world-renowned for the quality of their education and the calibre of their graduates. Our universities attract stu-

dents from around the world to study science, engineering, medicine and other academic disciplines.

In my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, international students have approached me seeking career opportunities here in Ontario. They want to remain in our province after they graduate to contribute their skills, talent and education. However, these international students are concerned that they must first secure a job offer if they want to stay and work in Ontario.

Can the minister tell this House what the government is doing to retain more highly educated international students when they graduate?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I very much appreciate the question. Attracting the best and brightest talent in the world is a priority for the McGuinty government.

We recognize that in an open Ontario, a highly skilled workforce is absolutely essential to ensure that our province remains strong and prosperous. That's why our government is taking action to ensure that high-value international students stay in our province when they graduate.

Our expanded provincial nominee program will make it even easier for international students to remain in Ontario after they have obtained an advanced degree from an Ontario university. International students who have earned a master's or a Ph.D. degree in Ontario will no longer need an offer of employment in order to apply to be fast-tracked for permanent citizenship.

These changes are part of our Open Ontario plan to build a strong economy by creating opportunities for international students to pursue their professional aspirations—

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: As experts have been reaffirming for some time now, our economy is going to be dependent on the production of highly skilled educated graduates. The provincial nominee program is one way to help Ontario retain this talent.

Would the minister tell us what other incentives this government is planning to offer to reach a goal of increasing the presence of international students at our institutions by 50%?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to report to the House that during the last academic year, we had over 38,000 international students in the province of Ontario, which makes it about a billion-dollar contribution to our economy.

As was outlined in the Open Ontario plan, we're working aggressively with our colleges and universities to promote Ontario internationally and undertaking a number of programs and initiatives, including those that my colleague outlined in his first question.

Just to give you one other example, I visited U of T earlier this summer to announce our support for MITACS's Globalink India-Ontario program. This international internship program brought 45 students from

India to work in research and with our leading-edge companies for the summer. It's a way to acquaint some of the best and brightest students with what Ontario has to offer, and we are confident that it will attract—

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

1130

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last fall, the Auditor General reported what everyone has long known: The WSIB is broke, it's broken, and it's an utter failure. Because of the mountainous WSIB debt, worker benefits are in jeopardy.

We are all too familiar with the shenanigans of the Liberals' old friend, the nebbish WSIB chair Steve Mahoney. Remember him? He billed taxpayers for more days than there are in a year. Under Mr. Mahoney's keen and frugal eye, the WSIB unfunded liability has doubled from \$6 billion to \$12 billion.

Minister, why is Steve Mahoney still the chair of the WSIB, even though he has defrauded the workers of Ontario? Is it because he is a member in good standing of the Ontario Liberal Party?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honorable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First off, I'm not going to engage with that member in a personal smear of an individual. That's his approach. I think the member should speak to the leader of his party, who actually gave the chair of the WSIB a pat on the back with a letter saying he's doing a commendable job. So speak to your member.

But further, the WSIB is such an important institution to the health and safety of Ontario workers, and that will be our top priority: to ensure that the WSIB is financially stable and sound, that they have a plan moving forward, that they are that security for when workers go to work, so they know, if they are to get injured, that the WSIB is there for them so they can get those benefits—

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Minister of Labour: The people of Ontario are sick and tired of your sweet-heart deals for your Liberal friends. Ontarians want accountability.

In February, Tom Teahen, a failed Liberal candidate and former aide to the Minister of Labour, was anointed as chief of corporate services at the WSIB without any external competition.

You promised Ontario better, but one year later we're still getting more of the same: Liberal friends getting rich off the broken backs of Ontario workers. One year later, your friends are still getting untendered contracts. Minister, when you promise something and you break that promise, what does that make you?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. I just would caution the member that even implying something can be unparliamentary.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We've all seen where they on that side of the floor stand when it comes to workers' health and safety, and it's shameful. It's shameful that I'm getting a question from that party that cut injured worker benefits by close to 30% when they were in government.

That is not the approach that we are taking. We understand the importance of the WSIB as an institution to provide those benefits to injured workers, to be that safety net for workers so that when they go to work, they know that if something happens, they are going to be taken care of.

It is also an important institution for businesses, as it provides businesses with no-fault insurance. We don't want to see the litigation that we've seen in other jurisdictions when it comes to health and safety in the workplace.

That party cut—

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

TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Two years ago, the Premier warned parents to limit their children's cellphone use until the health effects are better understood. Now he is encouraging cellphones in the classroom. Does the Premier still stand by his warning? And if so, what has his government done to communicate this message to parents?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I have had a great deal of opportunity to speak to this, and I would say that the position that we've taken is that clearly, technology in the classroom is ever-evolving. I believe that there was an excellent example used last week when we talked about calculators. I had an opportunity to remind some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that when I was in school, calculators weren't allowed. Now I know that many families get lists home, and that is a requirement for students in many classes.

What we do encourage is that whenever there are opportunities to improve student learning by considering new technology, we—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: My question was about the safety of cellphones. The Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion just released a much-anticipated report on the health effects of wireless technology. The study did raise a red flag about the health impact of cellphones. It said that "there is emerging evidence that long-term frequent use of cell-

phones may be associated with an increased risk of tumours on the side of the head where the phone is used."

Given these findings, will the government clearly communicate the risk of cellphone use to the public so that Ontarians can protect themselves from the risks that the experts have identified?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, I think it's important that I clarify for the honourable member that we're talking about technology. There's technology where students can use an iPod, for example. They don't put it up to their ear; they use it in front of them.

I know that school communities and health officials across Ontario are very aware of these issues that parents—

Interjections.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: iPhones—I apologize.

We're talking about technology, and if it supports student learning I think that we do have a responsibility to ensure that we work with families to ensure that we can support student learning with—

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

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. John Milloy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In answering an earlier question, I inadvertently reversed two numbers, and just for the record, I want to explain. Ontario's tuition cap is 4.5% in the first year, 4% for upper years of undergraduate and 8% for graduate and professional, with the overall average per institution not to exceed 5%.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm sorry to hear that the Liberals have lost their rump.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not a point of order.

VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier today, I wanted to, but I wasn't here, introduce Guy Boone and Ray Barton, both from Ottawa, professional engineers. I welcome them to the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That was not a point of order, but welcome.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given last Thursday by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade concerning the closure of Abbott Labs in Brockville. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have three visitors here in the members' gallery west from the Armenian National Committee. They were Sam Manougian, Art Hagopian and Hratch Abrahamian. Thank you for joining us.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARMENIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. John Yakabuski: September 21 marked the 19th anniversary of Armenian Independence Day, when Armenia broke away from the former Soviet Union and proudly unfurled her revered flag, the Yerakooyun, over the holy city of Etchmiadzin and the land of the descendants of Aram.

This historic day of pride for Armenian families across Ontario is an opportunity to remember the peaceful unity protests in February 1988 and to reflect on the immense challenges that were overcome to achieve freedom and democracy.

The Armenian community is firmly rooted in Canada. In 1922, prominent Ontarians such as Sir Henry Pellatt, Toronto Catholic Archbishop Neil McNeil and Anglican Archdeacon Cody organized the Armenian Relief Association of Canada, under the patronage of the Governor General of Canada, to bring orphans of the Armenian genocide to Ontario.

On June 29, 1923, the first group of Armenian orphans arrived here and settled in Georgetown, where they came to be known as the Georgetown Boys. Since that time, thousands of Armenian genocide survivors came to reside in Canada, to lay the foundations of today's vibrant Armenian-Canadian community, which continues to enrich our cultural mosaic to this day.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to our entire Armenian community on Armenian Independence Day.

YOM KIPPUR

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Last week, Jews around the world observed Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the most solemn of Jewish religious holidays.

Yom Kippur is observed on the 10th day of the lunar month of Tishrei, and is when Jews seek to atone for their sins and achieve reconciliation with God.

Yom Kippur concluded the 10 days of repentance that begin with Rosh Hashanah, which is New Year's Day, on the first day of Tishrei. It is on Yom Kippur that solemnity and cessation of work are most complete.

The purpose of Yom Kippur is to effect individual and collective purification by the practice of the forgiveness of the sins of others and by sincere repentance for one's own sins against God.

Yom Kippur is marked by abstention from food and drink. Jewish congregations spend the eve of Yom Kippur and the entire day in prayer and meditation. On the eve of Yom Kippur the Kol Nidre, famous for its beautiful melody, is recited. Friends also ask and accept forgiveness for one another for past offences on the evening before Yom Kippur.

The services on Yom Kippur itself last continuously from morning to evening and include readings from the Torah.

Yizkor, which are memorial prayers for the recently deceased, are also recited. The service concludes with the Ne'ilah, the closing prayers.

Yom Kippur comes to an end with the recitation of Shema Yisrael, and the blowing of the ritual ram's horn, known as the shofar, which marks the conclusion of the fast.

L'Shana Tova to all.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize yesterday's launch by Bell Canada of a \$50-million, four-year program to support mental health across Canada. This represents the largest investment ever by a Canadian corporation in support of mental health and it's meant to spark a debate about mental illness; its impact on individual Canadians, their families and on our national economy; and how we can better support those living with a mental illness.

George Cope, president and CEO of Bell, announced yesterday that the \$50 million will be used towards initiatives such as reducing the stigma associated with mental illness, supporting community care and access to mental health services, research initiatives and to the improvement of workplace mental health programs.

Mr. Cope also announced Bell Let's Talk Day, which will work to raise awareness of mental illness each year. Bell will hold its first Let's Talk Day on February 9, 2011. For every text message sent and long distance call placed by customers that day, five cents will be donated to mental health programs across the country.

I would like to applaud Bell Canada for recognizing and supporting this very important issue, and to thank them for leading the way to healthier, happier lives for Canadians now and in the years to come.

SCHOOL IN HORNEPAYNE

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Yesterday, a significant event took place in Hornepayne, the wonderful town at the northwestern border of the Algoma district. Its economy is anchored by Canadian National Railway and Haavaldsrud lumber. Their most important asset, however, is their young people.

Yesterday, the Algoma District School Board met in Hornepayne. The last time they had done that, I was with them to announce a new school for the community, a new school which had the support of town council, the

principal, teachers and parents, and most importantly, the students. There was great excitement from the students about their new school. The new school will now include the elementary school in this brand new structure.

This project signifies the commitment of the school board, the community and the town council to Hornepayne's future. But more than that, this totally provincially funded capital investment demonstrates the province's commitment to young people and the north, and in particular, the rural north.

The new school will have plenty of natural light throughout, especially in the common areas; new and updated computer technologies; a modern library; specialty rooms for art, music, computers and science; spacious and well-equipped manufacturing and construction rooms; a combined forum, cafeteria, activity room and storage area, which will be in the heart of the school; and plenty of play areas, including hard surface areas and sports fields.

The kids can hardly wait.

RAY TIMMONS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I rise to pay tribute to Ray Timmons, executive director of the Almonte General Hospital. After 30 years in that role and many great accomplishments for the people of Almonte and surrounding area, Ray is retiring.

Ray has led the Almonte hospital from being an aging, small-town hospital to being an innovative health care institution offering the highest quality of care from birth to long-term care at one location. I should tell you about Almonte General's partnership and then ownership of the Fairview Manor long-term-care home, and the \$29-million redevelopment of the hospital and construction of a new 112-bed Fairview Manor long-term centre.

1510

I could talk about the outstanding patient satisfaction ratings Almonte General received under Ray's leadership, but I want to tell you why I believe Ray has been so successful. Unlike most hospital administrators, Ray comes from the community he serves. He was on the hospital board before being appointed executive director in the 1970s. Every time Ray and his wife, June, left their home, people approached them with questions and suggestions about their hospital.

Because he comes from the community and cares so much about the community, Ray stayed on the job as executive director for 30 years. His longevity meant that the hospital has enjoyed great consistency, vision and direction.

Tomorrow night I will be attending Ray's retirement dinner. On behalf of members of this Legislature and all residents of Almonte and surrounding area, I want to thank Ray Timmons for his years of service, and I wish him and June all the best in the future.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Over the summer, I had the opportunity to meet with hundreds of people in my riding of Nickel Belt. Whether it was at their doorstep, at a community function or in meetings, there was an overwhelming concern over people's hydro bills and the added cost of the HST.

I met with constituents who are scared over hydro increases. Seniors on fixed incomes are shocked when they see their hydro bill. Small business owners are telling me that they just can't afford their hydro bill and question if they're going to stay in business.

People in Nickel Belt are afraid to open their bills. And those people are taking a double hit: Not only is hydro going up 8%, but also every home improvement. Right now, what I hear about the most about is ice time—how much more expensive it is to do figure skating or hockey in Nickel Belt because of the compounded effect of the HST. Life is getting more expensive for people right across my riding, and I'm sure it's the same right across Ontario.

Meanwhile, during the summer, I heard reports of Liberal-friendly lobbyists making tremendous money lobbying ministers on behalf of publicly funded hospitals. There seems to be a disconnect here. Some people are doing quite well while others are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet and to just get by.

People in my riding simply can't afford—

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

CANCER FUNDRAISER

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, it's not unusual to see tractors on the road. But on July 24, it was really unusual to see 1,231 tractors on the road, with their drivers.

They came from all over Ontario and the state of Michigan, and they were there to promote and to break a Guinness book world record. The record was 601. They were able to not only do that, but double that record. At the same time they raised \$104,000 for cancer. That was very—

Interjection.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: They started the parade at the Glasgow farm and went from there to the Dresden fairgrounds.

The organizer of the event is Ken Richards. Ken actually had his tractor painted in pink, yellow and blue to represent all the forms of cancer. Ken is himself a survivor of prostate cancer, and this was his effort to not only break a record, but to also bring awareness to the whole issue of cancer.

I'm very proud of my constituents and all the organizing committee. McGrail Farm Equipment actually volunteered tractors for the MPs and MPPs to ride in. I have to say I was impressed, because I got to ride in something with computers in the dash, and I hadn't really seen a tractor like that. It was a very proud moment for me as

well. They were also there with antique tractors and all kinds of tractors.

It was the most important event that happened in my riding this summer. I was very pleased with what happened there.

WELLESLEY APPLE BUTTER AND CHEESE FESTIVAL

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to highlight the 35th annual Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival, which is taking place this Saturday, September 25, in the village of Wellesley in the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. We invite one and all to come.

I know Mom and Dad are watching right now, so I say hi to them. They're in the riding and they're thinking about all the culinary food that is available Saturday in Wellesley, like the pork schnitzel, the pancake breakfast at 6 a.m., the apple dumplings, the fritters—I did have lunch, Speaker.

Also, there are wonderful things to be involved in: the cider mill tours, the model boat regatta, the stagecoach rides, the antique car and tractor displays, parades, and the horseshoe tournament, just to name a few.

Proceeds in the past from this event have helped to fund a new arena, a new ball diamond, equipment for the fire department and, of course, financial assistance for the Inspiring Minds Early Learning Centre in Wellesley, to name a few.

I want to take a moment to thank Bob Reid for his years of service and dedication, and all of the volunteers who work with Bob. It's under his leadership that the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival has become such a wonderful event, attracting thousands of people from across Canada and around the world.

So I stand here proud to thank people like Bob Reid and Verna Metcalf, Ron and Teresa Bisch, Barb and Joe Nowak from Wellesley, Gerry Leis, Margaret Runstedler, Tara Blackwell, Steve and Faye Jantzi, Mayor Ross Kelterborn and hundreds more.

I invite everyone to please come to Wellesley this Saturday and enjoy the apple butter and cheese festival.

ASSOCIATION OF PROGRESSIVE MUSLIMS OF CANADA

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to take this opportunity to recognize the Association of Progressive Muslims of Canada and its very hard-working president, Mr. Mobeen Khaja.

Tonight, the association is celebrating its 16th annual Eid dinner at Parliament Hill in the great riding of Ottawa Centre. The master of ceremonies, for 16 years in a row, is MP Dan McTeague. This year, the association is honouring the Speaker of the House of Commons, Peter Milliken. As we all know, he has decided to retire. He'll be honoured for his long record of public service and as the longest-serving Speaker in Canadian history. Also at-

tending tonight, as I understand it, is the US ambassador, David Jacobson.

The association's objective is to project a positive image of Muslims and to promote the core Islamic values of peace, justice, respect, understanding, equality and appealing to people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The association's mandate is to build bridges of understanding among communities, governments and faith groups and to serve the social, cultural and educational needs of the Muslim community of Canada.

The 14th annual Eid celebrations at Queen's Park will be held on Friday, November 26, 2010, and I encourage all members to attend that important event, which will be chaired by former MPP Janet Ecker.

The association will also be hosting an Eid dinner, their fifth annual, at Toronto city hall, which will be hosted by Mayor David Miller.

Once again, congratulations to the Association of Progressive Muslims of Canada for all their good work.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REPRESENTATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2005 / Projet de loi 107, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Pat Hoy: The purpose of this bill is to change the name of the electoral district of Chatham–Kent–Essex to Chatham–Kent–Leamington.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding committee membership.

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

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

—on the Standing Committee on Estimates, Ms. Van Bommel replaces Ms. Mangat;

—on the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Mr. Balkissoon replaces Ms. Pendergast;

—on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Ms. Pendergast replaces Mr. Arthurs and Mr. Delaney replaces Mr. Murray;

—on the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, Ms. Van Bommel replaces Mr. Delaney;

—on the Standing Committee on General Government, Ms. Mangat replaces Mr. Chiarelli; and

—on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mr. Arthurs replaces Ms. Van Bommel.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1520

RICHARD POTTER

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated for each party to speak in remembrance of the late Dr. Richard Potter.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats to say a few words about Richard Potter, a person who was here way before I was and, quite frankly, before all the members of this present caucus were here. But I've had a chance to talk to Mr. Ferrier, one of my predecessors who was a New Democrat in Timmins–James Bay and who knew him because he served in the House at somewhat the same time.

I just want to say first of all that we, on behalf of New Democrats, want to extend to the family our condolences on the passing of Richard Potter, who was a former member of this House, and a member of the Conservative caucus and of cabinet at the time.

Mr. Potter was an individual who was born at a time when public service meant something; when the public, when they got the call to serve their nation, did so without thinking and without any concern for their own safety. Mr. Potter, as we know, had studied medicine prior to the Second World War and, when the war was called, was one of the people who volunteered to use his experience and expertise as a doctor in order to treat and care for soldiers who were injured as a result of the battles they fought on the battlefields of Europe. Mr. Potter joined the Canadian Armed Forces and served in an advance mobile unit to care for those individuals who had gotten injured.

I can tell you, as a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, that I was lucky to have served at a time of peace, where the worst thing we ever had was an injury rolling out of the bar at night. I say that in light, in the sense that we served at a time when we didn't have conflict and didn't have these types of things to worry about. At the time of the Second World War, for the soldiers back then it was very real.

Mr. Potter understood that there was something to be gained by putting forward his services as a doctor to try to preserve and save the lives of those men and women who decided to go forward for this country and basically try to fight for what they believed in; that is, a democratic state here in Canada.

He came back from the war, luckily uninjured, decided he would continue in public service and eventually decided that he would take up the call, as we call it in our business. He ran for municipal council in the 1950s and was elected as an alderman in Belleville, where he came from. Interestingly enough, he became the mayor within a year. I think it says something about an individual who runs for office as an alderman—a bit of an unknown in the sense of being a political neophyte, as we know it today—and a year later gets the support of his council and his community to serve as mayor. He did so for a long period of time and was known as a tireless worker for the people he represented on his municipal council.

Lo and behold, something happened: something that was called redistribution. Redistribution brought along a new riding in his area, Quinte Potter—excuse me, the riding of Quinte; we call it Quinte Potter because he was the first one to run. He ran in the inaugural election and was elected in 1967 as a member of the assembly.

You've got to remember that Ontario and Canada were a very different province and a very different country in the 1960s. All of us in this House today—New Democrats, Liberals and Conservatives—take for granted the thing we call public health care. But back in those days, it was not something you took for granted. For some, it was a mission to bring public health care to this country and to the provinces of Canada, specifically Ontario. Mr. Potter was way ahead of his time and, as a Conservative, was a tireless champion of public health care.

He understood, in the day, that if we were going to be able to serve our communities and if people were to be able to live without the fear of going into poverty because they got sick, we would need a public health care system that didn't just look at how you got your doctor's bill paid when you went to the doctor's office for whatever it might be, but that your system of health care included the hospital, long-term-care facilities and such things as prescription drugs.

In that fact, I think Mr. Potter was way ahead of most people—maybe not of most of the people but of most politicians—when it came to what was needed in a public health care system. We forget that public health care in Ontario didn't come until the 1960s. So he was very much at the beginning in a Conservative government that had to make the decision of the day to opt in to the Canada health care plan back in the 1960s, and was part of that discussion about what health care should look like in this province, based on what had happened first with Tommy Douglas in Saskatchewan, but eventually happened in this province under the Conservative government of the day.

Mr. Potter was known and was respected, I believe, by all sides of the House—this is the message that I got from the former representative, Mr. Ferrier, who sat in this House as a member from Cochrane South—as somebody who was sort of seen as the go-to person on the health care file when it came to the Conservatives, who played his role and understood what his role was in regard to that debate over the years, and who continued, even after public health care was introduced in Ontario and made law, to advocate for the type of things that he thought needed to be included in a public health care system.

He served in various cabinet positions in the Conservative government, and I'll let Mr. Sterling, who I believe will be here a little bit later, speak to that, because I know he would have known him at the time—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mr. Miller.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Miller; excuse me. I always say Mr. Sterling because he has been around here for so long.

Mr. Miller will speak at some length, because he would have known him through a family connection and others. But he was known as a minister who really took an interest in his ministry and understood that if anything was going to happen when it came to the delivery of services, he needed to have people in the ministry who were on side, who were part of the plan and respected him as minister enough to be able to move things forward, and certainly that's something that he had.

He decided, as some members in this House do, of his own volition, to leave this place. There are very few of us who get that opportunity. Unfortunately, for too many people in this assembly, the choice is made for you by your constituents. But he decided in 1975—he had done his public service and had been in public life for many years—after some 26 or 27 years, to move out of public life and to take his retirement. He returned back into Belleville in order to spend more time with his family and his community. He ended that career, but he continued in public service, eventually became the coroner serving his hometown and surrounding communities, and continued to serve as he did in his community in the ways that he was able to by being involved in a number of activities and organizations back home.

I want to say on behalf of Andrea Horwath, the leader of the New Democratic Party, my colleagues here in the New Democratic Party, and those who served before me who had the pleasure of serving with Mr. Potter, job well done—the respect from our caucus to you as a person who had contributed to what we know now as Ontario and take for granted, and we say to you thank you for your time in this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to rise on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to Dr. Dick Potter, who was, as my good friend from Timmins–James Bay was saying, a wonderful legislator here at Queen's Park.

I read a quote from the Belleville Intelligencer when Dr. Potter passed away, from his good friend Dr. Bruce

Cronk, who said, "He had no hesitation to say what he thought. There was no sham or artificiality... He called things as he saw them." And for the people who knew Dick Potter, that was who he was.

Yes, he was a family physician, and he served as an anesthesiologist. Because he was a doctor, he called it the way he saw it, and he had an overarching passion for health care. When he got here in 1967, the same year that my good friend Hugh Edighoffer became the member for Perth, he got right to work on so many committees, but if you look at his career prior to becoming a minister of the crown, he always served on the Standing Committee on Health, dealing with the very issues that the member from Timmins–James Bay was talking about: having universal, accessible health care for all in the province of Ontario.

You know, it has been said that in his military career he also was outspoken. His good friend Dr. Cronk said that he would say in the military to his superiors, whom he would challenge, "The only way they could get rid of me was promote me and send me somewhere else." That's why he left the service of the military as a lieutenant colonel, getting himself promoted in the field repeatedly, because he called it the way he saw it.

I recall speaking to my father—my mom and dad knew Enid and Dick quite well, and he had the opportunity, as the Minister of Health, to speak to the Trenton Rotary Club. Of course, I grew up in Trenton and then went to high school in Belleville. Dick was over at our family home prior to this Rotary Club meeting.

1530

Dick would always tell you what he thought about health care. One of the things he would always say was, "Premier Davis is spending too much money on education and not enough money on health care." That was said by the Minister of Health. Isn't that amazing, that he would actually say that? Perhaps he ran afoul, but that's who Dick was. He would say that he was a straight shooter and he had no problem telling people where he thought our province should go.

He served with distinction as a minister without portfolio, then became the Minister of Health, which I think was a dream job for him here in this Legislature. He also served as the Minister of Correctional Services. He decided in 1975 not to run again. I was talking to my own personal mentor, Hugh O'Neil, who served in the House with distinction from 1975 to 1990 as the MPP for Quinte, first in opposition and then as a cabinet minister—someone that Premier Peterson used to go to to get things fixed, I remember. He's been a wonderful mentor to me. But Hugh O'Neil said that if Dick Potter had not decided to leave public service, he would never have become the MPP for Quinte because Dick Potter was unbeatable in the riding. That's how well he was respected and loved.

Because of his decision not to run, it resulted in a rather acrimonious nomination battle on the Conservative side of the fence, which led, according to Hugh O'Neil, to that ability for him to win a riding that many people

thought a Liberal could not win. Then, of course, Hugh became a very well-entrenched MPP because of his public service.

I want to end the tribute by saying that I'm here particularly on behalf of my good friends the MPP for Northumberland–Quinte West and the Minister of Education, who is now, of course, the MPP for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Dick was a true elder statesman when it came to public health care. Many people don't know that our former Minister of Health, George Smitherman, would have Dick come from his new home in Oakville, where he retired to be close to his family, to Queen's Park to have lunch with him at least once a year while he served as Minister of Health, just to get advice from an elder statesman, a person in this House who had fought the battle to have universal public health care in this province. I find that a telling anecdote about how well he was regarded by his colleagues.

I would say that today in Ontario, when we have about half of our operating budget devoted to the Ministry of Health, his legacy of being a family physician and an anesthesiologist and coming to this place to serve has set a tradition which we see today. There are four members of our caucus, colleagues of mine, who are family physicians and who have decided to take some time out of their very busy medical practices to serve in this House because health care is so vitally important. I know that for my colleagues the member for Oak Ridges–Markham, Dr. Jaczek, who serves as my parliamentary assistant; my good friend the MPP for Etobicoke North, Dr. Qaadri; my friend the MPP for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Dr. Kular; and the member for St. Paul's and our Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Dr. Hoskins.

Dick Potter called it the way he saw it. We in this place are indebted to his contribution. On behalf of all of our caucus, we want to extend to his family our deepest condolences and our unending admiration for the service that he provided to this place and to the province that we love.

Mr. Norm Miller: On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I am honoured to say a few words in tribute to the late Dr. Richard Thomas Potter. Dr. Potter died on February 17, 2010, in hospital in Oakville, Ontario. He was 93 years of age.

He distinguished himself throughout his life serving in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps; as mayor of Belleville; as the MPP for Quinte; as a family doctor and anaesthetist; as the loving husband of Enid Grace Weaver, to whom he was married for 68 years; the devoted father of four children, Tom, Frances, Andy and Karen; and the caring grandfather of 11 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Dr. Potter attended Queen's University medical school, graduating in 1939. He immediately enlisted as a military medic in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. When he retired from the military in 1945, he held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Dr. Potter returned to Belleville following his military service, where he worked as a family doctor and anaesthetist. In 1950, Dr. Potter entered municipal politics when he was elected alderman in Belleville. A year later, he ran for mayor on a campaign promise to establish a municipal health unit and expand community recreation facilities, a promise he kept.

In 1967, Dr. Potter successfully ran for member of provincial Parliament as the Progressive Conservative candidate in Quinte. During the eight years he served as MPP for Quinte, he held three ministerial positions: minister without portfolio, Minister of Health from 1972 to 1974, and, finally, Minister of Correctional Services until 1975.

My father, Frank Miller, was named Dr. Potter's parliamentary assistant at health on October 1972. In his memoirs, my father said of him, "Dr. Potter had been a MASH colonel and treated the ministry as if he was a wartime commander. He was honest, intelligent and determined to bring his ideas to the ministry, like having insured nursing home care as a lower-cost alternative to hospitals."

Dr. Potter recommended my father to Premier Bill Davis to take over as health minister, despite Father's only three years' experience as MPP and no cabinet experience. My father told this story in his memoirs:

"I was flying on a windy winter day at Muskoka in a Cherokee 180 when the control tower told me to land and take an important call. It was from Dr. Potter. He simply said, 'How are you, Minister?' I said, 'What are you talking about?' He told me I was replacing him and he had asked Bill Davis if he could be the first to tell me. I was in shock."

The other personal connection I have with Dr. Potter is a reflection of his generosity. In about 1976 he gave us the use of his Port Charlotte, Florida, home for a week. I had the privilege of driving my parents and sister down to Florida and back for the holiday.

During his assignment to the Ministry of Correctional Services, he continued his predecessor's commitment to take corrections into the community and bring volunteers from communities into correctional work.

According to Dr. Bruce Cronk, Dr. Potter's straight-talking nature got him into trouble, and the military was no exception. During his military service, Dr. Potter would joke that the only way they could get rid of him was to promote him and send him somewhere else.

Sometimes labelled a rebel, Dr. Potter said of himself that he wasn't trying to fight the establishment but was just trying to encourage government to make changes. As a result, his political career was not always smooth. For example, without waiting for his cabinet posting, he called for the integration of medical and hospital insurance and the inclusion of nursing home care, dental treatment and prescription drugs. His strong philosophical attachment to this policy caused him to be removed from the chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Health.

Dr. Potter fought for health reforms that to some extent conflicted with the policies of his own government.

During the Conservative leadership race in 1971, he urged delegates not to commit their votes unless candidates shared their intentions and goals on important issues. He wanted assurances from leadership candidates that untapped backbenchers' resources would be utilized and that the standing committees would be more effective. He also wanted the government to take a realistic view of the staggering costs in government programs.

Despite his love of and dedication to politics, he decided to retire at the tender age of 60 in 1975. On the day he announced his retirement from politics, he expressed his desire to spend more time with his family. Though his decision was met with relief from his family, the staff at the Ministry of Correctional Services expressed disappointment.

When Dr. Potter was asked how he would sum up his political life, he said, "I wouldn't have missed it but I'd hate like hell to go through it again."

Laughter.

Mr. Norm Miller: I think we can all relate to that.

He always said that the reason he went into politics was not to jump like a trained seal and ring a bell but to get some badly needed changes in the health and welfare departments. I believe he made his contribution on these files.

In 1976, shortly after retirement from politics, he was appointed the regional coroner. This position allowed him to be near his family in Belleville; however, it did require him to close his private medical practice and serve as a full-time public servant.

Former mayor of Belleville George Zegouras once said of Richard, "You knew where you stood with him ... he wasn't telling you one thing to your face and another at your back."

His closest friend, Dr. Bruce Cronk, commented that "there was no sham or artificiality ... he called things as he saw them."

Dr. Potter's unwavering efforts to change government for the better may not always have succeeded, but it was not due to his lack of will. He didn't allow anything to stand in his way, even when it meant confronting his own political party.

1540

Today, Dr. Richard Potter is being remembered as a man of integrity, intelligence and boundless energy. He devoted himself to every role he assumed. He is the embodiment of the ideal of service to others: service to his family, his community, his province and his country. He is an example to all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank all the members for participating in the tribute to Dr. Potter and would say that condolences will be expressed to the family, with copies of the Hansard and a DVD of the proceedings.

PETITIONS

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: "Whereas the Ontario government is making PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients; and

"Whereas" since "October 2009, insured PET scans" are "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 Clerk with page Brandon.

RECYCLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, provided to me by some of the grade 7H students at Lisgar Middle School. I'd particularly like to recognize Tricia Beazer of Cactus Gate and Leslie Todd-Bruin of Sundew Court for their efforts in collecting the signatures. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials.... This initiative fits directly into the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do. We implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give the proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval;

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

"To support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and to pass into law such" an initiative.

This is a well-drafted petition, and I'd like to commend the grade 7H students at Lisgar Middle School, to affix my own signature and to ask the page to carry it for me.

HIGHWAY 15

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition that has been certified by the table from the good folks—by hundreds

of residents of the township of Rideau Lakes in my riding. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the point that Highway 15 intersects with County Road 42 has been considered by many to be a hazardous intersection, particularly when local residents travel over the provincial highway; and

"Whereas in 2007 the Ministry of Transportation staff presented design plans which showed a dramatic reduction in the curvature of this portion of Highway 15, which would have considerably improved the level of visibility and safety to our residents crossing over Highway 15; and

"Whereas in late 2008/early 2009, the Ministry of Transportation revised the 2007 design plans for this intersection, which would only minimally improve the visibility and safety of this intersection but would result in a significant reduction in the amount of funds expended by the province of Ontario;

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

"That the Minister of Transportation be respectfully requested to direct staff to recommend the 2007 design plan for the intersection of Highway 15 and County Road 42."

I'll affix my signature.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the United States, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

"Whereas not all people with MS will have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

"Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

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

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

This has been signed by hundreds of people in northwestern Ontario, and I affix my signature as well.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition containing 605 signatures from Lori Emmell, an MS sufferer in my riding, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

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

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

As I am in favour, I've affixed my signature and will send it with page Brandon.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Pat Hoy: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas grandparents often become a family’s first reserves in time of crisis. Grandparents act as fun play-mates for children, role models, family historians and mentors, and help establish self-esteem and security for children;

“One potential aspect of the divorce is the disruption or severance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship;

“Also, in cases of the death of a parent, (the maternal or paternal grandparents’ child) should continue to enjoy access to the grandparent by the living parent, as visitation and access was fully established prior to death of parent;

“Due to the increase in life expectancy, most children have living grandparents. Coupled with the fact that 60% of divorced couples have at least one minor child, the potential for severed contact could be quite substantial;

“In Canada, the issue of grandparents’ rights of access to grandchildren has not been given recognition in legislation, with the exception of the provinces of Quebec, Alberta and BC. In all other provinces, grandparents may only petition the courts for rights to access as interested third parties. In the absence of a specific statute providing grandparents with legal standing to access, there are continuing difficulties in obtaining contact with grandchildren;

1550

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

“That grandparents have legal rights to access to visitation with their grandchildren in the event of parental divorce or death of a parent.”

This petition is signed by hundreds from my riding, and I too have signed it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“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.”

Pursuant to the rules of the House, I affix my name thereto.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed these laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Nick.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today that was presented to me by Mr. Ken Sharp.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

“Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Emily.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by members of the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Memorial Group, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

“Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

“Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada’s British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario’s economy and prosperity; and

“Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

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

“Enact Bill 12, a private member’s bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day.”

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

“Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

“Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

“Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

“Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

“Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

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

“That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector.”

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature and given it to page Megan.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have here a petition from the Poplar Hill First Nation.

“Whereas we oppose Bill 191, the Far North Act, and call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw it;

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

“Bill 191 violates the treaties and disrespects our jurisdiction. It imposes a massive interconnected, protected area over our homelands without any compensation. It splits our northern First Nations from our southern First Nations.

“Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect our treaties and our inherent jurisdiction. All development and protection decisions within NAN territory require free, prior and informed consent of NAN First Nations.

“We call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately withdraw Bill 191 and, instead, initiate a respectful government-to-government dialogue with NAN First Nations.”

I take it I will sign the petition and the government will not call it as the order of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 14, 2010, on the motion for adoption of the recommendations contained in the final report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

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

On September 13, Mr. Flynn moved the adoption of the recommendations contained in the report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions entitled *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*.

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

Report adopted.

FAR NORTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE GRAND NORD

Mrs. Jeffrey moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 191, An Act with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North/ *Projet de loi 191, Loi relative à l’aménagement et à la protection du Grand Nord*.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?
Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I’m proud to rise today in the House to move third reading of Bill 191, the Far North Act, 2010. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Today we have an unprecedented opportunity to initiate progress and positive change in Ontario’s Far North. This proposed legislation is a significant milestone on a journey that began more than two years ago, when Premier Dalton McGuinty laid out a new vision for the Far North of Ontario, a vision to work jointly with First Nations in striking the right balance between

environmental protection and sustainable economic development.

In 2006, the Premier attended the opening of the Victor diamond mine. His visit to Attawapiskat prior to the opening was a recognition of the historic partnership that developed between Ontario, First Nations and industry in opening Ontario's first diamond mine. His visit also set the stage for the Premier's vision for the Far North.

1600

The Premier understands that responsible development in the Far North is the key to Ontario's future prosperity, and the Premier understands that land use planning can help protect areas of cultural value and ecological systems in the Far North, as well as provide a sustainable future for First Nations and northern communities. I want to thank the Premier for making his commitment to the Far North a priority for this government.

Today, I also want to acknowledge the leadership of my predecessor in this portfolio, Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre, who stood beside Premier McGuinty when he laid out his vision for the Far North. I would also like to take this opportunity to offer a personal thank you to assistant deputy minister David de Launay for giving up his summer vacation with his family and for providing invaluable advice and assistance over the last seven months.

I'd also like to thank my deputy, Virginia West, as well as all the members of my team at the Ministry of Natural Resources for their wise counsel and their patience over the last couple of months; it has been a challenging summer with lots of twists and turns. The staff at the ministry have put in very long hours. They've travelled to various locations throughout the Far North and across this province, gathering information and making sure that all voices and viewpoints were heard and included. This was truly a team effort, and I want you to know that your dedication has not gone unnoticed. Your attention to detail and your willingness to find a better way to describe the new partnership we were trying to build with First Nations and the government of Ontario, I believe, only improved the final language and amendments in the legislation we are debating this afternoon. Thank you.

We're at a defining moment with regard to the future of the Far North of Ontario. This region is under increasing pressure for new development. Although the Far North makes up more than 40% of the province, this vast area has never seen the kind of comprehensive land use planning that we traditionally take for granted in the rest of Ontario. Bill 191 would give us the framework for land use planning that meets the special requirements of this vast and unique part of the province.

Getting to this point has been challenging, I'll admit. There are those who have been critical of the process and who say it has been flawed. Some claim that the government hasn't listened. This is simply not the case. Traditionally, bills only go out for hearings once. From the beginning, this government committed to carry out

additional hearings. I was lucky enough, as a backbencher, to travel with the Standing Committee on General Government to Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout, Chapleau and Timmins in the summer of 2009. These conversations helped guide our first round of amendments. More than 40 separate outreach sessions were held by my ministry, reaching representatives of all First Nations communities who stood to benefit in community land use planning in the Far North.

This past May, we held a workshop in Thunder Bay for First Nations to share information and ideas on land use planning. We had tremendous interest and uptake in this training session. In fact, 28 communities from across the Far North sent representatives to this meeting. We've also met with mayors and councillors from many northern communities, including Pickle Lake, Moosonee, Thunder Bay and Timmins, to ensure that we heard and addressed their specific concerns about how land use planning might have an impact on the chromite development in the Far North. As well, we saw comments and feedback through a posting on the Environmental Registry.

The proposed legislation includes valuable input from members of the Far North Advisory Council and the Far North Science Advisory Panel, some of whom have joined us today. Thank you. These two advisory bodies provided essential perspectives, from both environmental and resource industry positions, and increased our understanding of the many complex issues we needed to address in the Far North.

After second reading of the bill, plans were made to travel again, only this time to Slate Falls, Sandy Lake, Attawapiskat, Moosonee and Webequie. Unfortunately, we learned shortly after the House rose that these First Nations were not able to host standing committee hearings on the dates set out by the Legislature. At first, I was disappointed by the news, but soon I saw this setback as a golden opportunity to personally visit more communities in the Far North and to engage community leaders on their own terms, without time constraints, to carry out these in-depth discussions.

My team listened to First Nation leaders, elders and youths from every corner of the Far North. They spoke of their fears and the dreams they had for their communities, and we used these discussions to guide the way that we crafted the amendments to this bill.

I'm proud to say that as a result of this outreach with First Nation communities, resource development stakeholders and environmental organizations, our government presented 43 amendments for the committee's consideration. These amendments, I believe, make Bill 191 a stronger, more inclusive piece of legislation.

I would like to take some time today to set the record straight about what Bill 191 will and will not do. First and foremost, Bill 191 is about land use planning in the Far North. The subject matter of the bill is not about First Nations' jurisdiction over the land, nor does the bill address treaty interpretation. These issues are substantial in nature and are clearly part of a much larger conver-

sation outside the scope of this bill and would more properly require the involvement of the federal government.

Existing aboriginal and treaty rights are recognized and affirmed in the Constitution, and the province must and will meet its obligations. Bill 191 cannot change this reality. To emphasize this point, we have stated right in the purpose statement of the bill that land use planning in the Far North is to be done in a manner that is consistent with the recognition and affirmation of original and existing aboriginal treaty rights. We can't get clearer than that.

What the bill does do is set out a joint land use planning process between First Nations and Ontario. The bill confirms a leadership role for First Nations through community-based land use planning in deciding which lands in the Far North will be protected and where development may occur. It would put into law, for the first time in Ontario's history, a requirement for First Nations' approval of land use plans on public lands.

Since becoming Minister of Natural Resources, I have come to appreciate the special relationship that exists between First Nations and the land. The land is an integral part of the cultural, economic and spiritual existence of First Nations. The relationship between the people and the land must and will be the cornerstone of all future decision-making.

Some have speculated that Bill 191 would hinder economic development in the north. Land use planning is about orderly development, not shutting down development. Land use planning guides the development in the rest of Ontario, and we believe proper land use planning is also important for the Far North. Our government remains committed to supporting investment and development in the Far North in co-operation with First Nations, creating new jobs and exciting long-term economic prospects. By opening the door to sustainable development of the region's rich natural resource potential, we know that Bill 191 will provide a more prosperous future for the people of the Far North as well as economic benefits for the province as a whole.

Bill 191 will also support new economic activity in the Far North by providing resource industries who want to invest in the north with much-needed clarity and certainty about how and where economic development such as forestry, mining and renewable energy may take place. We've also read some editorials predicting that the ultimate implementation of this bill would potentially shut down development and economic opportunities until community land use plans are in place. We've taken proactive steps to address those concerns. We've amended the bill to allow the pursuit of specific types of developments that have the support of First Nations to take place concurrently with planning processes.

I'm confident that Bill 191, as it stands now, will help transform the Far North in a positive way and can strengthen the relationship between First Nations and Ontario based on principles of joint responsibility and accountability.

Since becoming the Minister of Natural Resources, I have carefully listened to and learned from the people who are most touched by this bill: the people of the Far North. I had a wonderful summer, and I'd like to share with you some of my experiences in the Far North that helped shape my thinking about how to proceed with this legislation.

1610

As minister, I've been fortunate enough to visit eight remote communities in the Far North. I met many elders and learned about their central role in each community. I saw a chief seek the advice of elders to help inform and guide their decisions on behalf of the community. This respect for elders is a truly humbling thing to witness.

I was also struck by how each community values and considers its young people when making decisions. Young adults make up the majority of many First Nations communities. I met many very impressive young people, but I'm just going to tell you about two of them today.

In Muskrat Dam, I met 18-year-old Ginger. She presented as a thoughtful young woman who's planning a career in travel and tourism. Ginger took the time to articulate her community's views and suggestions on how to improve the Far North Act.

In Webequie, I met Travis, who, at 22 years old, is already a councillor in his community and is clearly wise beyond his years. He was particularly eloquent about the need for job opportunities in the Far North and the need to focus on training, trades and education for his community. Travis wanted to make sure that the decisions we make today provide hope for meaningful long-term employment in the future.

Like every other young person in Ontario, Travis and Ginger have hopes and dreams for the future. Bill 191 could be part of opening that door to realizing their dreams and providing that future they so clearly want and need.

When I was in the Far North, I visited some First Nation communities that have taken the lead and are already working with the province to develop community-based land use plans for their areas. In fact, I'm happy to report that almost 90% of First Nations who wish to develop community land-based plans are already involved to some degree, ranging from initial engagement to the more advanced stages of planning.

Pikangikum First Nation has a completed community base plan in place. So far, eight other communities are at the advanced stages of planning and are making significant progress towards the preparation of land use plans. Just last week, I had the opportunity to sign a letter of intent with my colleague Minister Gravelle and Chief Eli Moonias of Marten Falls First Nation and Chief Cornelius of Wabasse First Nation. This letter of intent reaffirmed a commitment to work together on economic development and land use planning in the Far North and a commitment to address issues related to the development of mineral-rich deposits in the Ring of Fire. This is a great example of what we can achieve when we work together. The Ring of Fire will help build a stronger

economy and create jobs for First Nations communities in the Far North.

Right now, there are 25 communities at various stages of engagement with my ministry in preparation for initiating plans. In one of the communities I visited, I listened to an oral presentation on the status of the community's land use plan. The first presenter was an elder. He was very candid, and he shared with us the fact that he was initially afraid of what this bill would mean to his community. He felt that before he understood what his role was going to be in creating the land use plan, initially he'd wanted to run for his life, that changes were something to run away from. He joked that at first he'd renamed the bill "Bill 911."

But then he shared with me that his opinion had changed over time and that he'd become comfortable with the concepts and the process, and he transitioned back to calling the bill by its right name, Bill 191. He told us that he felt that the planning process between his community and the staff at the ministry had actually developed into a true partnership with no hidden agenda. He shared the fact that at the community monthly meeting, members share the mapping that they've done on traditional uses of the land, combining the traditions of the oral history with the technological tools of the new generation.

The result is an evolving blueprint, a living document that tells the story of the community: its past, its present and its future. For example, when the community decided they wanted to protect the waterways in their community with buffer zones larger than the ones recommended by the ministry, the community decision was the one that went forward, and they now have the buffer zones they chose in their plan. When the young people in the community decided that they wanted to address the need to protect species at risk, they put that component of protection in their plan. That presentation was so interesting and dynamic, it was clear to me that these community-led plans are not dry documents; they're full of rich history and they demonstrate the special relationship First Nations have with the land.

It's essential that we continue to provide First Nations communities with the resources and the tools that they need to fully participate in land use planning. Taking part in this process will build skills and expertise within communities and help create new jobs for First Nations.

To date, we've provided funding to all communities that have come forward to work with us on land use planning. This past July, I was pleased to announce \$2 million annually over three years for skills training related to Far North community-based land use planning as part of the government's northern partnership training fund. And more recently, we were able to secure an additional \$10 million which will provide funding to Far North communities and tribal councils who wish to work with Ontario on land use planning. This funding will be used to support community engagement and mapping of planning areas as well as to build First Nations' capacity and skills. Through these agreements, we're putting in

place essential building blocks for sound and effective land use planning.

As community-based land use planning moves forward, we want to be confident that plans are built on the best science and knowledge available in order to address the many complex ecological, social and resource-based issues of the Far North. Because the Far North is so remote, there's a lot about this vast and varied region we don't know. When we began two years ago there was limited mapping. The information available for the Far North was very limited, and even those areas that had been mapped were last charted more than 30 years ago, and at a scale where only major features could be seen. I'm happy to report that, through a partnership with the federal government, we have now produced up-to-date topographic maps for all of the Far North. We're also in the process of mapping the soils, the vegetation and the watersheds, an enormous task that will provide vital information for land use planning.

To fill our knowledge gaps, the province is working closely with First Nations to increase our overall understanding of the Far North through a variety of knowledge and information projects. We're helping First Nations receive local training in how to use GIS technology, a skill that will be applied to collecting traditional aboriginal knowledge related to lands and resources as well as cultural areas.

Aboriginal traditional knowledge, as handed down from generation to generation over many centuries, will also play a key role in increasing overall understanding of the Far North and will make an essential contribution to land use planning. Because traditional knowledge is so important to land use planning, we proposed a stand-alone clause in the legislation to formally recognize its importance and value.

The Far North of Ontario is, without question, one of the last great wilderness spaces on our planet: a boreal landscape so vast it takes in a staggering 42% of Ontario's land base. It is a beautiful and remote region of our province and contains the largest intact forest in Canada and the third-largest wetland in the world. It's home to hundreds of species of birds, plants and wildlife, including many species that are at risk. The Far North plays a key role in fighting the effects of climate change by acting as a giant carbon sink, and its rich abundance of forests, minerals and green energy opportunities has the potential to provide a sustainable and more prosperous future for the people of the Far North as well as economic benefits for the province as a whole.

The passage of Bill 191 would mark the end of one journey and the beginning of another. The actions we take today will have a lasting impact on the Far North environment and will make a difference to the health and prosperity of its people for generations to come. Today, every member of this Legislature can help to realize an extraordinary vision for the Far North of Ontario, a vision where First Nations and Ontario work together as partners to share joint responsibility for community land

use planning; a vision where First Nations can plan a better future for their young people.

In my travels to the Far North I have come to better understand the significance of having thousands of years of history on the land. I've seen first-hand how a whole community thinks about their youth and how decisions are guided by what is best for these young people and for future generations. While most Ontarians do not have thousands of years of history on this land, I think we all understand and share the vision of a secure and prosperous future for our children.

1620

With Bill 191, we have an opportunity to try something ambitious, something unprecedented, an opportunity to usher in a new era of social prosperity, economic certainty and environmental protection for all of Ontario, but in particular for the incredible part of the province we call the Far North. We all recognize that Ontario's northern ecosystem is very important to the world. How we manage our north has direct consequences not only for individual communities, but for the entire planet. The rest of Canada, indeed, the rest of the world is closely watching the implementation of Bill 191.

It's not an easy task, but it is our responsibility as members of this Legislature to rise to this challenge. Not only do we owe this to the province we currently represent but to future generations. If we succeed, Ontario will be a shining example for others in Canada and around the world.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Here we have Bill 191. I listened with interest to the minister. She was going to set the record straight about her consultations that failed and were cancelled this summer. She was going to set the record straight about how much consultation this Liberal Party was involved with. But I want to put on the record what was actually said in committee last Monday, September 13.

In response to a question from the member for Timmins–James Bay, the minister said:

“Mr. Bisson, I have spent the last month trying to get people to talk about the bill and to talk about the proposed amendments. I've had some difficulty getting people to return my phone calls and to have a discussion about it.... There hasn't been a lot of that conversation happening. The improvement to the bill could have been made in the last month had chiefs attempted to provide me with that advice.” That's what the minister said on the record last Monday, September 13, just a week ago.

Now, of course, the spin and the rhetoric that we hear is that she's been talking with everybody. Nobody would return her call last week or last month, but now they've done their due diligence of consultations.

I think what's important for everybody to understand with this bill is when we talk about legislation, when we enact legislation in this House, we always talk about balance, compromise and recognizing competing interests—that a good bill is well-balanced, recognizes those com-

peting interests, and, eventually, we get agreement on Bill 191 or on any bill.

Let's put this in balance. Let's hold up the scales and allow everybody to look at the balance of probabilities on this bill. Bill 191 has been denounced by the Environmental Commissioner of the province of Ontario. It's been denounced by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. It's been denounced by the Anglican Church and by the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. The Ontario Mining Association has denounced it. The Ontario Forestry Association has denounced it. The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce has denounced it. The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, the northwestern Ontario associated chambers of commerce, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities—every northern municipality has denounced it, every northern industry group has denounced it and every First Nation that actually lives there has denounced it. That's on one side of the equation. It's pretty heavy, who's denounced this bill.

But then, on the other side, what do we balance that with? We balance it with one: the World Wildlife Fund. Monte Hummel has endorsed Bill 191. He put out a press release last week, on September 15. He says, “We felt the conservation objectives were secure in the proposed legislation....” Monte Hummel on one side and every northern municipality, every northern business group, every northern native community on the other side—and this minister is pleased with the result. She's happy with the result, because when this bill is finished with, when it's enacted and proclaimed into law, it will be the largest land swindle that this province has ever seen.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw.

But we can see that we have a transfer of ownership and control of a quarter-million square kilometres of land. We've taken it away from all the people in northern Ontario and we're giving ownership and control to the green friends of the Liberal Party. Monte Hummel is happy; everybody else is upset, everybody else is outraged. But Monte Hummel is happy, so it must be a good bill.

A quarter of a million square kilometres of land taken out of production, taken out of exploration; it precludes and excludes every individual from any opportunity in that land. We don't know what's there. We do know that there are valuable resources in the north. I know the minister said that they've mapped the soils there now, but they don't know what's underneath the soil, do they? They don't know where the chromite is, they don't know where the gold is, they don't know where the opportunities are, but nobody's going to find them. Nobody's going to be allowed to go looking for them because you've got your park for Monte Hummel. The Monte Hummel grand park of Ontario: That's what we've got here.

When we look at the deficit position that the province is in, we know that this Liberal government has a little difficulty with addition and subtraction. But they do

understand where votes are. They do understand mathematics when it comes to votes. They understand that Monte Hummel and the World Wildlife Fund have more votes that they can get than the people in northern Ontario—that there's more votes with Monte Hummel than there is for NAN; that there's more votes for Monte Hummel than for the chambers of commerce in northern Ontario or the northern municipalities. The Liberals do understand that simple math. They don't understand about income and expenses, but they do understand votes. That's pretty clear.

So we have all these groups that are opposed and one that is in favour. Of course, I should say two: the Liberal Party. As the minister said, this is not the vision of the north as conveyed to them by NAN or the Cree or the Ojibway or the chambers of commerce or the municipalities up there. What vision is this? This is Dalton McGuinty's vision. The minister said that this is their vision for the north. Who cares about the people who live there on that side of the House? Obviously, none of them. They care about vote-rich Ontario, not resource-rich northern Ontario—not one at all.

We've seen their abject failure when it comes to having consultations with our First Nations people. They refused. On June 3, we asked this House for unanimous consent to amend the schedule so that this House and our standing committee could accommodate the needs of the First Nations. Two parties—the third party and the official opposition—were in favour. One party, the Liberal Party, said no. They refused to grant unanimous consent.

1630

We tried it again last week on our first day back in this House after our summer recess. Once again, we asked for unanimous consent so that we could provide an opportunity for a standing committee of this assembly to travel up north, speak with northerners and listen to them, because the minister has had trouble having phone calls returned. We thought it would be important that we get up there and give the people of northern Ontario a true opportunity. Once again, the Liberals had the choice, had the option. They could have said yea to unanimous consent, but damn the torpedoes, damn the north, they're moving ahead.

I have to say this: The minister was asked last week in committee, "Why are you doing this?" She said, "It's the right thing to do." The chambers of commerce are opposed, the municipalities are opposed, the First Nations are opposed, every industry group is opposed, and the minister has the gall and the arrogance to say she's right, Dalton McGuinty is right and they don't care about anybody else. Don't forget Monte Hummel. They do care about somebody else; they just don't live in the north. That's the truth. That's the record. That's undeniable.

We've seen that the Liberals are pretty good with spin, but it's not truthful. Spin is not truthful. Spin is the omission of pertinent and relevant facts. And those are the facts. That's the record. That's the record the minister

said in Hansard. I have to say that it is not just a few; everyone is opposed to this.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: This is the new relationship, the new partnership this Liberal government has gone out and told everybody they are building. They're creating this new relationship and partnership with our First Nations: "We won't take your phone call, we don't want to speak to you, we don't care what you want, but this is our new relationship."

We know that with Bill 191—what the north needs is certainty. The north needs certainty, and now it's creating uncertainty. The First Nations have said, and this is a quote from Grand Chief Stan Beardy, "We will do whatever is necessary to protect our interests, and if that calls for direct action, that's what's going to take place." That's what the Liberal Party is doing. They're creating an antagonistic relationship. They have no regard and no concern for this real partnership. They're driving their ship to their vision; they're driving it propelled with Monte Hummel blowing in the wind, I guess—in the sails. That's what we are seeing with this government.

Listen to what Harold Wilson, president of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, said. He said that part of the problem with the legislation is that it has been given to the Ministry of Natural Resources: "The MNR has never in my time shown evidence of being able to foster economic development." Well, that's pretty bloody true. I've had lots of opportunities to work with the MNR, and they don't know how to work. The Ministry of Natural Resources doesn't know how to work. They know how to obstruct and they know how to impede, but they do not know how to work. They do not know how to work in northern Ontario or in rural Ontario. They are just a ministry of obstruction.

If this really was about economic development in the north, if this really was about economic development—

Hon. John Gerretsen: How about the landowners?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister, you're not in your seat, number one, and then, even if you were, you can't heckle from there, so order, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I believe that the members opposite were speaking highly of that great rural institution, the Ontario Landowners Association. Anyway, thank you, Minister, for recommending how good a voice and advocate the landowners are. You should do that a little bit more often.

Anyway, let's see. I also want to talk—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member from Peterborough, it's not necessary to yell.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Mr. Speaker, it's difficult with all the heckling from the minister—

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The minister on the front bench here has a little bit of trouble controlling his mouthpiece.

If this bill is about economic development in northern Ontario, why is it not with the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry? Why is that not the case? The minister has never explained that to anybody. Why is the Ministry of Natural Resources, this group that is hogtied with the World Wildlife Fund, in control of this bill? Minister Gravelle of Northern Development—I think everybody would have been a little bit more at ease if Northern Development had been the author of a northern development bill, but to have the downtown MNR be the author of this bill is too much, and we have seen—you know, the minister said it very clearly. The minister said it very clearly when she said she has gaps in her knowledge. You mentioned that right in your speech. Listen, I won't disagree with the minister on that one. There are huge gaps of knowledge at the MNR, huge gaps, and I don't think there are enough trees in northern Ontario to fill that gap in their knowledge at the MNR. We've seen this time and time and time again.

I would like to say this and put this on the record: A quarter of a million square kilometres of land, 42% of Ontario's land mass, is off limits. It's the World Wildlife Fund museum and zoo. That's what that is. I would like people, the members on the opposite side, to think of this—and I thank God we didn't have this government when we first got settled in this province, because they would have just had half of southern Ontario as a zoo or a park or a museum. There would have been no settlement. There would have been no opportunities. There would be nothing. It's a zoo.

Can you imagine if southern Ontario was under the onerous restrictions of Bill 191? Can you imagine if half our land was off limits to people? Off limits: off limits to business, off limits to anybody except, of course, Monte Hummel. He would still be allowed to get there. But this is what we're seeing: all these land use plans that are under the direction of the MNR and their environmental friends. They are the ones who are driving this bill. They are the ones who are driving this transfer of ownership from northern people to their downtown environmental friends.

It was interesting last week in committee when the minister said that the natives are the driving force. I'm sure the members in the gallery would remember this, that the minister said the First Nations are the drivers. However, if and when the First Nations ask to do a land use plan, the terms of reference will have to be approved by who? The Minister of Natural Resources. If the land use plan gets developed, who's going to approve it? The Minister of Natural Resources. Of course, maybe there's a few other people in the background there, but we won't mention those right at this moment. But at each step of the line, the minister is holding the public purse, holding a bag of money, saying, "First Nations, come and sign on to your enslavement and we'll give you your 13 pieces of silver here." That's what they're saying: "Here's your bag of money, but you've got to do it the way we want you to, not what you want us to do."

Interjection.

1640

Mr. Randy Hillier: But we're talking about Liberals here, Minister.

The Minister of Natural Resources and her bureaucracy, her environmental friends, are the ones who are going to control and dictate development in northern Ontario. The people in the north are disregarded from any influence in the decision-making. Any influence is down here with, of course, Monte Hummel and the Minister of Natural Resources—they're driving this ship. The minister said it herself: "If there can't be agreement, if the native community chooses not to have a land use plan"—what did the minister say? She said, "There will be no development." That's what she said last week in committee. If you don't comply with our view of a land use plan, you will not get any development. There will be no mine. There will be no tourism. There will be no road. There will be no transmission corridor. There will be no hydroelectric power. Nothing will happen unless they succumb and agree.

It's not just myself. It's interesting, I think the members opposite should read some of the papers in the north. Read the Thunder Bay paper.

Here's an interesting one in the Thunder Bay paper: "Mauro and Gravelle won't flip-flop. They'll hold their ground, even when they're proved wrong, like the good Liberals they are." That's a quote from the Thunder Bay paper. We see that and, of course, we know who they're referencing in Thunder Bay. There are only two members up there.

Here's another one: "Lack of consultation and bullying by the province. But remember, our Mickie and Billie have stated that it is a good thing," in reference to Bill 191.

Those are the comments that are coming from northern Ontario—not just the industry, not just the municipalities, not just the First Nations. Every individual who lives in northern Ontario understands the failure of Bill 191. A quarter of a million square kilometres—that's a lot of territory to be handing off to the environmental people, that they now have control.

I'd like to just say, this government—all of Ontario, all our land is held in trust by the crown for the benefit of the people of Ontario, for everybody. They've not discharged their duty when they take nearly half of the land and put it in the control and use of a very small group: themselves, the bureaucracy at MNR and the environmental group. I guess Dalton McGuinty never watched Robin Hood when he was a kid. Or maybe Dalton just got it confused. He thinks he should take from everybody to give to a couple, a few. That's what Bill 191 is about—

Hon. James J. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The Speaker a few days ago indicated in this House that we're supposed to refer to people by their riding name or their title and not by their individual names.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That is a point order, but you will recall that the Speaker also said

that the Premier could be addressed by name, as the McGuinty government, something like that, so I'll be listening very carefully.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see that the minister has not fallen asleep, has woken up there and is keenly listening to the debate. Of course, Speaker, I will be cognizant and try to be reflective.

It was interesting at the press conference today that the member from Timmins—James Bay held with members of the First Nations. There were two very interesting comments, that—and this is a quote—“McGuinty lied to us.” That's what was said at the press conference this morning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'll caution the member that you can't say indirectly what you can't say directly. So please, be very careful of the context of your comment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I understand, Speaker. This was a direct quote from the press conference today in the Legislative Assembly, but I think it's important.

The Liberal Party and the minister have said all along, “We're going to protect this land.” That's what they've said all along. They're going protect the land. I want to know who they're protecting it from. Is it protecting it from the Cree and Ojibway? Is that who they're protecting it from? Who are they protecting this plan from? Do they think the land is going to get up and walk away and that they have to do something to hold it there? I'll have to explain: The land is not going to go away, and neither are the Cree or Ojibway. They're not going to go away. You don't need to protect the land from them. What we need to do is protect them from you. That's what really needs to happen: to protect northern Ontario from the actions of the MNR, the actions of Monte Hummel and the actions of Bill 191. That's what we really to have protect them from.

This is sheer and complete colonialism being demonstrated with Bill 191. It's nothing less than colonialism and a socialist undertaking to move over ownership of a quarter-million square kilometres of land.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Mr. Speaker, I guess we've woken them up again over there.

Even the Anglican Church is opposed to this Bill 191. Here it is: The Most Reverend Fred J. Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, sent me a note that he is opposed to Bill 191.

Go back to the beginning, Minister. All the people are opposed and one person—we have to elevate him up pretty high—is in favour: Monte Hummel. That's what we see here. That is balancing competing interests by this Liberal government. Competing interests—that's how they balance it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm going to phone the John Tory show.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Minister of Municipal Affairs. I see that you are in favour of John Tory. It's

good that you're moving off your socialist bench there a little bit.

We know that the future for northern Ontario is in peril and being jeopardized by Bill 191. First Nations have said very clearly that they will defend their interests, they will defend their territories. This partnership—what is a partnership when one side has to say we will defend against the other side. Is that really a partnership? Is that a partnership of respect?

The minister thinks she's got it right, and that's—I don't know. I know she mentioned that she had some gaps in knowledge, but how can anybody say that she's got it right when everybody is opposed? I think it's important that the Liberal Party reflect on just what damage you're doing with Bill 191, reflect on the consequences of your actions, reflect on this partnership that you are poisoning, not building. Bill 191 is—

Interjections.

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

1650

Mr. Randy Hillier: Bill 191 is a travesty for northern Ontario. It's why the Liberals used time allocation to shut off debate, to prevent proper discussion and consultation with our northern First Nations. We now see what the motivator behind Bill 191 truly is. The Ontario PC Party has said—our leader has said—that come October 2011, when we're successful in the election, we will repeal Bill 191.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words on this bill, on behalf of the New Democrats, but mostly on behalf of the First Nations peoples in the constituency of Kenora—Rainy River, whom I can say are unanimously opposed to this legislation. But I want to begin with a letter from the United Church. It reads as follows:

“Premier McGuinty,

“As president and executive secretary of Manitou Conference of the United Church of Canada, representing 83 United Church congregations in northeastern Ontario, we are writing to express our deep concern over the proposed Bill 191, the Far North Act.

“Manitou Conference stands in solidarity with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation in opposing Bill 191, which we believe disrespects First Nations' jurisdiction in our area and may indeed violate existing treaties.

“We respectfully call on the government of Ontario to postpone introduction of Bill 191 until informed consent is received from the affected NAN First Nations.”

I want to say that the United Church doesn't have any interest in this. It doesn't own any mining stocks that I'm aware of; it's not interested in developing a mine somewhere.

I want to read from the Anglican Church of Canada:

“To all members of the provincial Parliament of Ontario,

“The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, September 13, 2007, article 32:

“(1) Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

“(2) States shall consult and co-operate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.

“(3) States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact.”

“So in solidarity with Nishnawbe Aski Nation, I make this appeal: Respect the rights of indigenous peoples, honour the Canadian constitution, keep your promises as Premier and legislators, and renew commitment to consultation.

“Yours sincerely,

“The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz, Primate,

“The Anglican Church of Canada.”

As far as I know, the Anglican Church doesn't own any mining stocks, either. They don't have any hot properties north of the 51st parallel in Ontario. But they're trying to offer this government their hard experience. I say “their hard experience,” because they were part of the last ugly exercise of neo-colonialism on First Nations. I'm speaking here of the residential schools, where some people in Ottawa who thought they were really, really smart said, “We're going to tell you how your kids are going to be educated, you people who live in remote First Nations. They're going to go to residential schools.” And, yes, the Anglican Church was part of that sorry history, and the United Church and the Catholic Church. And First Nations who said, “We don't like this; we don't think it's right” were told, “You just shut up. We'll tell you. We're the morally and intellectually superior people in Ottawa, and we'll tell you what's good for you.”

You go and talk to the Anglican Church today about how they feel about that experience, something which is a social debacle, which has affected the lives of literally thousands of young people and continues to go on, the after-effects. It was people who thought that they were socially and intellectually superior and that they could tell First Nations people living on remote reserves what was good for them. Well, I ask you: Sit down and compare this legislation with the residential schools and tell me where the difference is.

First Nations have unanimously come to you and said, “Don't do this.” What this government is doing is exactly what happened with the residential schools. Someone who thinks that they are intellectually and morally superior, here in Toronto, thinks that you can decide what is

good and what is not good for First Nations who live north of the 51st parallel: where they can do something, where they can't do something, how it shall be done.

This is the greatest exercise of neo-colonialism since the residential schools. I can say, and First Nations have been saying to you, the British Colonial Office lives today in the McGuinty government.

Interjections.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to remind the members opposite of what First Nations have been saying.

The McGuinty government says that the Far North Act creates a partnership with First Nations. This is what First Nations say: They say the government isn't telling the truth. The act does not create a partnership; it creates a rigged game where Ontario holds all the cards. At every single step of the planning process, Ontario's approval is necessary to proceed. Once a plan is approved and in place, Ontario can overrule it. Ontario controls the purse strings for the costs of planning, so Ontario can sabotage the process whenever it likes.

The act doesn't create a new relationship. It cements the old one, where First Nations are treated like wards of the state. That's what NAN is saying.

“Can you give some examples of how Ontario has rigged the game?” This is what NAN says: The first step in the planning process is to create a terms of reference for the land use plan. To do this, the minister must make an order, at her discretion. So if Ontario doesn't like the way the terms of reference look, the minister won't approve them and the planning process dies right there.

Once the terms of reference are approved, the land use plan gets drafted and presented for approval, but once again the minister has the discretion. The minister can approve or reject the plan. If the minister rejects, the process dies and the land use plan never goes into effect.

First Nations are asking, “How is this a partnership?” How is this a partnership when all of the discretion sits with a minister in Toronto?

Next question: “Can the First Nations plan the way they want to plan?” NAN's response: “No.” The act ensures that Ontario can control the whole planning process through a set of policies and regulations that Ontario calls the Far North land use strategy. Land use plans have to conform to the Far North land use strategy. It's the rule book by which the game is played. And who controls the Far North land use strategy? Do First Nations have any control? None. Ontario controls it.

“Don't First Nations have some say in the policies and strategies for land use planning?” NAN's position: not really. The act allows for First Nations' participation, but if you read the act closely, all Ontario has to do is listen. Ultimately, the minister retains sole discretion to decide what does and doesn't go into the Far North land use strategy.

1700

Now, some might be wondering, “Well, why would First Nations not trust the government on these things?” We need only look at some recent history. Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug—it's a First Nation

community—said to a company called Platinex, “Look, our community is not ready for mining exploration or mining development. We don’t want you in our territory.” The response of Platinex was to sue the First Nation for \$11 billion and then to go to court and ask that the leadership of the First Nation be put in jail. Who was part and parcel with the mining company, asking that the judge impose a penalty to hurt the First Nation? Why, it was the McGuinty government; they’re part and parcel. What happened? The chief, who is a very reasonable guy, a very thoughtful fellow, a very quiet fellow, spent over two months in jail; so did most of his councillors. My God, a 65-year-old great-grandmother was put in jail by this government because she dared to stand up to a mining company.

Now, when the court of appeal got a hold of this decision, they threw it out. I happened to go down to Queen Street to the court that day, to hear the judges question this government’s lawyer—the government sent a junior lawyer, I think because they recognized they didn’t have a leg to stand on. But the justices who heard the appeal were embarrassed by this government’s position.

But it didn’t end there. This government later signed an agreement with the mining company giving the mining company millions of dollars of compensation. Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, who had to use money from their health budget, their education budget, even their sports and recreation budget to fight the McGuinty government in court, what did they get? Nada. Nothing. No compensation whatsoever. And what was the audacity of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug? To stand up and defend their constitutional and aboriginal rights. The mining company gets millions of dollars of compensation and the poor First Nation is almost bankrupted by that company and this government.

But it doesn’t end there. The Environmental Commissioner points out—and he had a study of what has been going on: “The report also found that ineffective government oversight allowed service companies to illegally construct a mining camp and airstrips without approvals. These cases raise legitimate concerns that the government is either unaware of, or turning a blind eye to, mining-related activities that undermine the effectiveness of land use planning in the Far North.”

Do you know what? Do you know who finally had to force the government to take action against the illegal airstrip that they allowed to be created? The chief of Neskantaga First Nation had to write to the Minister of Natural Resources and say, “Why don’t you enforce your own regulations?” And you wonder why First Nations don’t trust this government? You wonder why they say this is another exercise in neo-colonialism, the greatest exercise in neo-colonialism since the imposition of residential schools on First Nations? Look at the sorry record of this government.

This government peddles to the Toronto Star that they’ve been consulting with First Nations when unanimously, First Nations leaders come here and say, “No such consultation has taken place.” None, zero. That’s

why they don’t trust this government. Any government that would run around southern Ontario peddling that they’ve consulted with First Nations and that they have the consent of First Nations when those First Nations come here in person and say, “There has been no such consultation”—small wonder that they don’t trust the government of the day.

So I will be voting against this legislation. I will vote against it because it is such a travesty. First Nations are not opposed to protected areas. God knows, they’ve done a far better job protecting the area north of the 51st parallel than all of us, in our moral and intellectual superiority, have done south of the 51st parallel. That’s evident. Just look at the map.

I will be voting against this because it is an offence against the United Nations declaration, because it’s an offence against Canadian constitutional law, but mostly, I’ll vote against it because colonialism should have died a long, long, long time ago. The day when some bureaucrat or indeed some self-styled environmentalist in Toronto can stand up and say, “Well, I’m morally and intellectually superior to you and I’ll tell you what’s good for you. I’ll tell you what can happen here and what can’t happen there,” and all you’re allowed to do is to state your opposition—“But we don’t have to listen to you; we can overrule you”—that’s wrong. That is wrong. Every member of this Legislature who votes for this legislation should hang their head in shame.

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

Mr. David Oraziatti: I’m pleased to rise today with respect to third reading debate on Bill 191. I will address some of the comments that were made by the members that have spoken—the members from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and Kenora–Rainy River—in a few minutes.

But first I want to get some comments on the record with respect to the bill. First of all, this is a tremendously important bill for the province of Ontario and, in particular, for the peoples of the Far North. I want to take a minute and just recognize the efforts of our Minister of Natural Resources, her personal efforts and the lengths that she has gone to to travel to many locations in the Far North and sit down for days and days and days and discuss this particular bill and the contents of this bill with First Nations in the Far North.

This bill, as you know, went out for consultation in between first and second reading; that is something that rarely takes place in the Legislature. Many bills don’t travel. For many bills, the hearings are held here, if there are hearings. So this bill travelled to the Far North between first and second reading. The result of that and ongoing discussions were 43 amendments—

Mr. Howard Hampton: Which First Nations?

Mr. David Oraziatti: I can hear the member opposite talking about this process, and I am so surprised that despite all of the opposition and the rhetoric from the member opposite, there was not a single amendment proposed by the member opposite—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Kenora–Rainy River, I think you've asked enough times, and I've let you ask, so, please.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Can we hear?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm not sure whether you can or not, but when everyone is speaking out, I can't.

Member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. David Oraziotti: Thank you, Speaker. It would be great to be able to get some of these comments on the record.

As I was saying, following the discussions, visits, calls and meetings, we ended up with 43 amendments, 43 changes to this particular bill, because we're listening. Despite the opposition and the passionate plea that this bill not be passed, the opposition members proposed none, zero; no amendments, no proposed changes, because they didn't think they had any ideas to offer that were constructive to this bill—none; no amendments. So I think that it's really important that the First Nations know that these individuals are purportedly representing them, but they offered nothing constructive to this bill, no proposed amendments. In fact, they walked out of committee without any proposed amendments.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the process that got us to the point today, and some of the many benefits that can be gained from this historic legislation. The potential benefits of this legislation are very clear: first of all, protection of the Far North region that would set an example for the rest of the world in terms of biodiversity and conservation and the fight against global climate change; also, community-based land use planning that would give First Nations in the Far North the leading decision-making ability to make decisions around their land use planning as it affects their communities, their culture and their way of life. It would also mean sustainable development in the Far North with respect to the rich natural resources that we have in our province. That would help to promote a more prosperous economic future for the people of the Far North and benefit the province as a whole.

1710

The reality is that the Far North is facing immense development pressure today. The member from Kenora–Rainy River referenced Platinex. In his Far North world, these types of conflicts would continue to go on. They would go on and on and on, because he offers no constructive solutions, no land use planning, no opportunity for First Nations to decide for themselves how to plan their communities. Instead, we'd continue to have conflicts. That's the member opposite's view of where we should go.

It's important that we provide the tools and resources that would allow the people who live in the Far North to plan their development. Ontario has waited long enough and the people of the Far North have waited long enough for the joint planning process they need to ensure that

this vast and remarkable region remains an environmental and economic asset. The best way to make certain we are on the right path is to have the First Nations communities in the Far North lead the planning of their communities. Working jointly with First Nations on community land use planning is central to the purpose of Bill 191 and key to its success.

Despite the vast natural resource potential in the Far North, there is currently very little economic and industrial activity. But there is tremendous potential, and opportunity is knocking. In the coming decades, the region will undoubtedly see more people, more pressure and more economic development. We need to act now and certainly with some urgency to establish clear and open land use planning directions that would ensure that development of the Far North's resources is orderly and sustainable, meets our protection objectives and provides certainty for both First Nations and industry. Bill 191 would work in conjunction with policies and legislation already in place, including the northern growth plan, the Green Energy Act and the Mining Act, to provide an unparalleled opportunity to act strategically and ensure that development in the Far North is environmentally sustainable.

As a northerner, I understand the importance of creating opportunities for regional and community infrastructure development in northern Ontario. I'm excited about the potential for jobs for local First Nations communities and for the increased value-added manufacturing opportunities throughout the Far North. We've already seen the economic spin-off potential and the benefits from the development of the De Beers diamond mine near Attawapiskat. Having had the opportunity to visit the mine site and talk to the local First Nations working there, they, too, are excited about the new opportunities that have come to their community.

We're looking forward to similar mineral development in the Ring of Fire area, which alone could mean thousands of direct and indirect permanent jobs, construction jobs over the next five years and significant economic development opportunities for many First Nation communities in the region. In fact, last week Minister Jeffrey and Minister Gravelle signed a letter of intent with two First Nations in proximity to the Ring of Fire area: Marten Falls and Webequie First Nations, the two largest and most affected Ring of Fire communities. This document is the first formal step toward a memorandum of co-operation for mineral development, including land use planning, in the area.

The two First Nation communities in the Ring of Fire have expressed their interest in both economic development and environmental protection, the two core premises of the bill. MNR is working with communities and the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry to address the opportunities and challenges in the Ring of Fire area. The land use planning process in the Ring of Fire area will help make wise decisions about the environmentally sustainable use of natural resources while protecting areas of ecological and cultural value.

Through community land use planning, Ontario will work jointly with First Nations to establish a collaborative approach to planning that will guide development on lands in the Ring of Fire area and throughout the Far North.

Minister Jeffrey has outlined for us the bill before the House today and that it reflects significant input and collaboration from many sources and interests. As said earlier, that reflection has allowed for 43 amendments to move forward. Some of the amendments—probably the most pertinent—include giving First Nations the opportunity to have final approval of community land use plans. First Nations will have the opportunity to finalize and approve, with their chiefs and band councils, those land use plans. Referencing the aboriginal treaty rights in the “purpose” statement of the legislation was also critically important, and that was added.

Again, we want to be crystal clear: This legislation is about land use planning, and in fact, 34 of 38 First Nations in the Far North are already engaged in land use planning. This is happening today; this is not something new. Land use planning, in partnership with the Ontario government and 34 First Nations in the province of Ontario, is taking place today. This legislation provides a framework for that discussion and for those land use plans. This is really important: 90% of First Nations in the Far North are already engaged in land use planning.

Part of the issue—and I know that the opposition raised this—is that this bill will somehow supersede constitutional treaty rights of First Nations. The fact of the matter is, it won't. It's not designed to do that and it can't do that. The priority is obviously that constitutional rights for First Nations in the Far North supersede this legislation. We understand that. That's why it's in the “purpose” statement.

Important amendments also include having discussions with First Nations in the Far North on establishing a joint body with equal representation from the province and First Nations to advise them on land use planning issues. Adding the recognition of the First Nations' contribution of their traditional knowledge and perspectives on protection and conservation is also key to this bill and has been added as part of that series or group of amendments, expanding the types of development that may be pursued, such as wind and water power facilities and hydro transmission lines, while land use planning is underway—contrary to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington's comments around “shutting down” development in the Far North, “stopping” development in the Far North.

We know that First Nations want development in the Far North. They want to participate fully in the economy of this province and they want the opportunity for their young people and their families to grow up with those opportunities. We want to make sure that happens as well.

I want to talk a little bit about the joint advisory body. After first reading, an amendment was made to Bill 191 to provide for a joint body to advise on land use plan-

ning, with equal representation from First Nations and the province. The amendment also included a commitment to talk with interested First Nations before setting up the joint body, and that it would only be established once there was agreement on its role and its functions. This is not something that's being imposed; we want to know from the First Nations how they want to do this, how many members they would like and what the role and function of this committee is going to be so that this truly is a joint process.

First Nations have requested that their role in land use planning be extended to all aspects of planning, such as developing the Far North land use strategy. We are proposing changes that would tie the joint body to making recommendations on policy statements and providing advice on other components of the Far North land use strategy. The proposed amendment stipulates that the joint body may provide advice on matters such as the allocation of funding and appropriate dispute resolution processes to support land use planning in the Far North. With this proposed motion, we are responding to First Nations' interests in working with Ontario to develop broad policy direction for the Far North that will support their community-based land use planning efforts.

With respect to the northern growth plan, another amendment that was put forward was added in response to First Nations' concerns with respect to the northern growth plan, that it may somehow override land use planning. It will clearly not. Ontario has been clear that the government's intent is that the northern growth plan will not take priority over community land use plans but, in fact, incorporate their land use plans into the northern growth plan.

Development with concurrent planning: In response to concerns that land use planning could hold up economic development until community-based plans are in place, an amendment was proposed that would allow for a broader range of developments to be pursued while planning is underway. These could include a wind or water power generation facility, transmission facilities and lines, and all-weather transportation infrastructure. Typically, these developments would require the support of First Nations and a draft plan to be completed before construction begins.

1720

There are also special alternatives for wind and water power and electrical transmission distribution systems. This approach would allow more types of development to proceed concurrently with land use planning.

Another key amendment was put forward in response to First Nations' concern over cabinet's ability to override the joint planning process. Ontario is proposing that before the Lieutenant Governor in Council could make an exception, the Minister of Natural Resources must seek to work through a six-month plan with the First Nation group. First Nations will obviously play the leading role in developing the land use plan, and before making an exception to a community land use plan, the Lieutenant Governor in Council would continue to have

to take into account those objectives of the First Nations for land use planning and determine whether or not the development is in the social and economic interests of the province.

I think it's very, very important to be clear on a couple of things. This bill does not supersede in any way the constitutional rights that have been entrenched in this country for First Nations. This bill proposed 43 amendments and, despite the opposition from the other side, there was not a single amendment proposed for this bill. So I have some concerns about the opposition railing against a bill and offering nothing constructive with respect to the direction of this bill.

We've got 43 amendments. We've got those amendments because we sat down with First Nation communities across the province and in the Far North and discussed those and came up with these amendments.

I think it's important to be clear that in the Far North it is incredibly pressing at this point that we provide some assurances for all who live in the Far North. First Nation communities, economic development interests, the government of Ontario—everyone wants certainty. If we didn't want certainty in the Far North, we wouldn't have 34 First Nation groups engaged with the province on land use planning. So let's not twist the bill out of context. Let's not say it has some kind of other implication to First Nation jurisdiction, because it doesn't, and let's be clear about what we're talking about. This bill is talking about land use planning for First Nations. This is about the province of Ontario providing the First Nations with the resources they need so they can develop land use plans that they want to see in place. We cannot continue in the province to have conflict in the Far North.

The other side of the House might think that's okay, might think the situations that arose with Platinex are acceptable. On this side of the House we don't agree with that. We want to make sure there's certainty.

Support the bill. I call on the other members opposite to support this bill, because we cannot go on in this province, with the opposition's position on this, to continue to ignore the conflicts that arise around a lack of land use planning and a lack of certainty. This bill supports First Nations' interests and puts their priorities when it comes to land use planning front and centre.

I want to encourage all members in the House to support this bill. It's a good bill.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on third reading of Bill 191, in the limited time that I have for this debate. I listened attentively to the member for Sault Ste. Marie and his address. I did hear a bit of the minister earlier; unfortunately, I had to be out of the House for a good portion of that.

The minister talked about the extensive consultations. In the limited time I did hear, I heard the phrase "First Nations." I lost count of the number of times she used the term "First Nations," implying that First Nations somehow have their fingerprints on this bill—and they may,

but it will probably only be because it's been handed to them and they've handed it back and said, "You've got it all wrong."

What I find very troubling about this is why the government would insist on moving ahead with this at the speed that they want to do it when it is so absolutely, unequivocally clear that the people who will be most affected by this legislation do not support it, period. They're not talking about minor amendments—and yes, the government did put forth their 43 amendments, and neither of the opposition parties did propose amendments because they concluded, based on their discussions with stakeholders, including First Nations, that this bill was just all wrong.

Earlier, before we recessed for the summer, the minister talked about—this is the kind of spin my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington talked about. He talked about Liberal spin. I recall when the minister told the House that she had met with Stan Beardy, and then it turned out that the meeting with Stan Beardy was actually—they basically bumped into one another in the Thunder Bay airport. Most people wouldn't consider that a meeting. When they think of a meeting with a minister, they think that it is something that is scheduled and where there's an opportunity for both parties in the discussion to have a substantive exchange of views and ideas on the subject of the day, not a chance meeting in the Thunder Bay airport.

Granted, the minister has been up north through the summer recess, but if she had gotten it right, we wouldn't have the folks from the First Nations visiting Queen's Park on a number of occasions, in the late summer and now into the fall, expressing their absolute opposition to the government's decision to move forward with this legislation at this time.

You'll recall that during the summer there were hearings scheduled in the north. I believe it was five or six communities that were on the docket to be visited for hearings on this bill, and they were cancelled. I believe it was Stan Beardy who sent a letter to the minister saying, "We have not been given adequate time to prepare for these hearings." Instead of looking for a way to make those dates more suitable to the members of First Nations, the minister cancelled the hearings. The hearings were cancelled.

When the member from Sault Ste. Marie talks about trying to avoid conflicts and trying to change the dynamics and the tenor or the tone of the debate—what do you say to someone on the other side of the House or the other side of the argument, if you want to call it that? "We're cancelling your opportunity to present your case."

We presented the government with an option. In my role as opposition House leader, I sent the government House leader a letter asking her to have those hearings re-established so that this bill could have a proper vetting throughout the northern communities that would be most affected—First Nations, yes, and not just First Nations

but all kinds of other stakeholders in the North who unanimously have said that this bill is wrong.

What was the government's response? "No. We're proceeding with our plan." The member for Sault Ste. Marie talked about conflict. Why would a government want to move forward on a piece of legislation where the only people who were consulted prior to the introduction of this bill were people who wanted to see stoppage or, at the very least, significant limits, to development in the north? There were no discussions with those people who actually live in the north, no discussions with those people who actually depend upon the north to make their living. Those kinds of one-sided discussions only make people in the north more dubious and suspicious when it comes to examining the motives of the government. Is the government looking at what is best for the north, the future of the north and its ability to develop in a proper way, or was it counting votes?

1730

We understand that the north is not very well populated. Everyone knows that: It's a vast tract of land. I haven't had the privilege—maybe it's something I should take the opportunity to do someday—to drive through the entire north and get to western Canada. I haven't done that. But anybody who has just tells me, "You cannot believe how big northern Ontario is." It's farther from Ottawa to the Manitoba border than it is from the eastern Manitoba border to British Columbia. That's how big it is.

Why don't these people who want to take control of the north actually spend some time in the north talking to those people who are going to be so dramatically affected? This is going to change the way life is in the north for decades to come, so why would the government not ensure that the people who are most directly affected be the ones—if they're not signing off on this bill, there must be a good reason.

We've never gotten this far in a bill where those stakeholders who are so greatly affected have not in some way said, "You know what? We're ready to proceed. We think we can work with this. We're not entirely happy." Nobody's ever entirely happy with a government bill, because there are going to be some winners, there are going to be some losers and there are going to be some people who gain less or more, but at the end of the day the rest of the people might be able to say, "We can work with this." But that's not what you're hearing on this bill. It's unilateral: The people in the north do not support this bill. You folks have not gotten to the people who are actually affected by this bill.

When you're bringing forth a piece of legislation, your motivation should not simply be, "Okay, what does Toronto want? What do the five million people in and around the GTA want?" And when you use words and phrases—I listened to the minister and I'll paraphrase, because I didn't exactly get it—like "economic" or "environmentally sound sustainable development"—and I read this Toronto Star editorial that supported the Far North Act. When you use phrases like that, you know

what the average person who lives in a condominium—or if you're a landowner in Toronto, you might have an acre. If you have a big lot in Toronto, you might have an acre. Come to the real world up north of the 401 and see what people live on. But when you make statements like this to the average person in Toronto—and I'm not judging them negatively. They just don't understand what life is actually like up there. "Up there," as they say. When you use those kinds of phrases, why wouldn't they say that this is a good thing? Who could ever be opposed to environmentally sound, sustainable development? Who could ever be opposed to that? But you imply that this delivers on that, and the people who are most greatly affected by it are saying to you, "Absolutely not." It is a partnership that is totally—it's not a partnership because you have made it one-sided. A partnership actually has to have some equality of relationship. This one doesn't. We will not support it—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wish I could say that I take pleasure in having to stand here today to speak on this particular bill and this particular initiative. Unfortunately, I can't say it's with any pleasure that I have to participate in this debate because I'm sad for the opportunity that we're missing in trying to do something that I think all of us in this Legislature and everybody, by a vast majority, in the north wants, which is to develop some sort of mechanism so that when there's development to be had in the Far North, it happens in a way that, first of all, benefits First Nations and second of all, ensures the protection of our land for future generations. Unfortunately the bill does neither, so therefore it is, I think, a great failure and is quite frankly missing a great opportunity that we have.

Before I get into debate, I just want to respond to a couple of things that were said by government members in regard to this bill. One of them was made by one of the members who said, "Well, you know, if the opposition was so sincere, if the opposition was so serious and cared so much about this bill, they would have put forward amendments." Listen, it's a simple reason why we didn't put amendments: We don't support the bill. Why should I try to amend what is a flawed bill and something that the First Nations, the chambers of commerce, the municipalities and others across the north—the mining companies and the PDAC—have said is a flawed process? The government has got it wrong, and they're the only ones still standing who think they've got it right. So if we didn't present amendments, that was the reason.

The other thing is that the parliamentary assistant took great pleasure in saying, "Oh, but there are 34 communities in the Far North that are doing land use plans." Yes. But are any of them going to be accepted under this bill? No. Because at the end of the day, the minister has the discretion within the bill to determine when a land use plan is going to start, who is going to sit on these joint committees to deal with it and what will be the values that will be in the plan, and that will be the problem.

Because if any of you knew what a land use plan was from the perspective of a First Nations community—it's not the same type of thing that you see in a municipality. The values they are trying to protect and the things they are trying to achieve are quite different.

So for the parliamentary assistant to say, as a way of rounding out the argument why this legislation is so good, that 34 communities in the Far North working on land use plans is an admission that this is a good act—listen, those are their land use plans that they are working on, based on their values, their needs, their wants and their aspirations. This bill doesn't achieve that, and these communities, quite frankly, will not be able to introduce and keep most of what they've already built into the process of land use planning that they've done.

The other thing I want to say—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member across the way—you're so learned. Not true. Look at Grand Chief Stan Loutit. Take a look at Margaret from Shibogama. Take a look at the people that are here from the chamber of commerce. Tell them it's not true. You'd better wave back. You'd better know what you're talking about, because you don't, sir, and if you don't know what you're talking about, don't participate in the debate. Stand up and say it when you get a chance.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Lou, you should know better.

I say to the members across the way, if there's a land use planning process that is happening now, it's not because it's an admission on the part of First Nations that they support Bill 191. It is the fact that First Nations have been wanting to do land use plans, have been working on land use plans, but the missing component has been that the provincial government has not been there to support their needs.

The government has put forward \$14 million and then another \$10 million to support the land use planning process, to the minister who commented on that when she was making her opening statements—we have put in place all this money in order to support the land use planning process. How many millions of dollars do you think those 34 communities have already spent? Far more than you've put on the table now. So we've probably got about 6% of the money that's needed to do land use plans in all 49 NAN communities. How are we going to be able to achieve land use plans if communities cannot be funded? So I say to the minister across the way, okay, \$14 million plus \$10 million somehow is going to achieve land use planning in all of the Far North communities? Listen, it's a drop in the bucket; it ain't gonna happen.

I say to the minister across the way that if you're serious about land use planning, go back to the drawing board, have discussions with the people it affects, draft legislation that's acceptable by both parties, and properly fund it and allow the proper time needed to make things happen in a way that works for First Nations and works for the province and other interests.

I also want to say, on the issue of the money put forward, that we know that a large percentage of the money that has already been earmarked by the provincial government toward land use planning, that has been announced by this government, has not gone out the door to First Nations. I believe that only about 14% of what has been allocated has actually gone out to the First Nations, from the numbers I've got. I may stand to be corrected. I see a friend of mine from the Ministry of Natural Resources here, and she would know the number. But we have not allocated the full amount of money that was earmarked for land use plans as it is. I just say to the government across the way that this is a half-hearted measure to be seen as doing something that at the end of the day is not achieving the needs you want.

Let me make this point: We have a golden opportunity. There is golden opportunity in northern Ontario to do what's right. I was talking earlier to one of the NAN representatives, and the person said to me, "Are you getting any backlash back home from people who may be opposed to what you're doing in the House in defence of First Nations?" I said, "No. There's been a shift in public opinion in northern Ontario over the last 10 years, where people understand that you cannot have development in these communities without First Nations benefiting."

1740

People understand here, in their gut, that if there's going to be a mine that's developed in Attawapiskat or Marten Falls or wherever it might be, there needs to be some kind of a mechanism that ensures that the First Nations are going to be able to benefit from that economic activity, and that there needs to be some rules about how it happens so that we protect our environment. People understand that. In the north, we have built a consensus around that point. The mining industry understands it. Take a look at the actions of De Beers Canada; take a look at the actions of Detour Gold; take a look at the actions of Lake Shore Gold and other companies that currently have or are currently negotiating impact benefit agreements with those First Nations communities.

This brings me to the point of consultation. The government says that it's gone out and consulted because the minister flew into eight communities, said hi, then met somebody in an airport and had a conversation, and somehow we've consulted. Do you know how much money De Beers spent? You can shake your head, but do you know how much money De Beers spent in consultation that eventually led to an agreement with the community of Attawapiskat and a ratification of that particular agreement? They spent about \$25 million. The private sector, De Beers Canada, said, "We understand. We can't develop a mine in Attawapiskat unless we have an agreement with the community. It has to be done with their consent." Well, God, if De Beers Canada can understand that you don't develop a mine without the consent of First Nations, where the heck is the government of Ontario?

More to the point, De Beers Canada spent \$25 million by flying people in and out of the communities, holding

various types of meetings, bringing in experts, holding community meetings etc. in order to eventually negotiate what became the IBA that was ratified by the community of Attawapiskat. So if they understand what consultation is, Madam Minister, maybe you should go talk to De Beers or Detour Lake or other mining interests or hydro development projects that have actually done real consultation with First Nations on the point of being able to develop.

Ontario Power Generation is now redeveloping the Lower Mattagami River basin. They're spending \$2.7 billion on this redevelopment. They've done that with the agreement of Moose Cree First Nation. And what did it take? It took numerous meetings on the part of Ontario Power Generation with the chief and council, with community members in Moose Factory, in Timmins, in Cochrane, in Kapuskasing and different communities where Moose Cree members live. Then there was an exchange of information, an exchange of ideas. There were negotiations, and eventually there were two votes to finally ratify the agreement that allows OPG to do the development.

If one arm of the government, Ontario Power Generation, can understand that consultation doesn't mean, "Oh, I saw you at the airport. How's it going? I've consulted. And by the way, I flew to eight of your communities, and somehow or other, that's consultation," why doesn't the government of Ontario understand that true consultation, from the perspective of First Nations, means you engage, you discuss, you allow people to think about it, you allow the communities to come back to you and tell you what they think needs to be part of the discussion for a final decision on whatever has to be made, and then there needs to be ratification by the community or the territory if the project is big enough? I just wanted to start my comments by saying that, just for the record.

I want to say that what is really sad about this is that this government has not recognized that First Nations have always understood, since the signing of the treaty in 1905, that they have never ceded the land to Ontario or the Canadian crown. It was an understanding—and the documents prove it, within the treaty and within the documents from the treaty commissioners—that when they signed the treaty with the First Nations in the Far North, there would be a sharing of the land. This is the principle and this is the point that all of this has to do with when it comes to the First Nations. They have never ceded the land. How they see this particular bill, Bill 191, is the government trying to do by stealth what they were not able to do by treaty. That's the effect of this bill.

First Nations have understood from the very beginning that there will be a sharing of the land, but here's the problem: The first 100-plus years of the treaty have not done very well for our First Nations. Some of you have taken up my invitation and have travelled to the Far North, into communities such as Marten Falls, Attawapiskat, Pikangikum, Sandy Lake and others, and have seen how difficult life is in those communities. You have

housing where there are upwards of 20 people who have to live in a house to stay out of the cold and out of the rain. You're trying to have kids in a house of 20 people study so they can go to school and make a better life for themselves in the future. In a house of 20 individuals, how do you do that? You have no recreational facility of sorts in most of the communities. I don't think any of our communities in the Far North have pavement. You have poor infrastructure. You've got high prices. You've got no roads into pretty well all of the communities.

It is really a desperate situation as far as the way of life in a lot of our communities is concerned, and we're talking about poverty. I invite people to come into some of our communities and look around. Great people; resilient—man, the sense of humour. You've got to have a sense of humour if you live in some of these communities, or all of our communities, unfortunately.

But the point is that in the first 100 years of the treaty, there has been no benefit of significance that has been given to the First Nations. We have developed mine after mine. We have developed hydro project after hydro project. We have cut down forest after forest. We have replanted trees. We have done numerous things of economic activity in the north, and the first 100 years of treaty have provided nothing but misery and poverty for our communities.

The new generation that is coming up today is saying, "Not for me." They're telling their leaders not to repeat what has happened to the previous generations; that they will not stand idly by and watch development swoop by their communities and be left in the trail of dust and misery, with no economic opportunity for them.

I listened to Margaret on a conference call that we had just yesterday. The elders are very clear in the direction that they're trying to give the leadership. They're saying, "Listen, what has happened up to now hasn't worked and we need to, ourselves as a nation, get people to understand, first, that we never relinquished title on the land, and that we need to do what needs to be done to protect our interests. And if Ontario is not going to protect our interests insofar as what they do in Bill 191, well then, we're going to have to do what we're going to have to do to protect that interest." That was clear today in the press conference with representatives from Mushkegowuk Tribal Council and Shibogama—I got it right; I always want to say the French word because I'm français, as you know—in regard to where things go from here.

I say to the government: You've missed a golden opportunity. First Nations have told you, the chambers of commerce have told you, the communities in northern Ontario have told you and the citizens have told you that there is a way to move forward that would allow us to achieve all our goals, and that is, to make sure that First Nations are made whole and they can enjoy the benefits of the economic activity that will happen on their land, that they have a say about how the development's going to happen and that we protect the environment for the years to come. The only one who doesn't want to do this,

it would appear, is the government by way of this legislation.

Let me get into the bill quickly, because I've only got about 10 minutes. The government has been saying through all of this that, first of all, they've consulted. I just want to make clear that there really has not been any consultation. I say to the minister, with all respect, yes, you did go to eight communities, and that is appreciated. Any time a minister of the crown or a member of this House goes into the communities, it is greatly appreciated on the part of the communities, but don't think that's consultation. Consultation is quite something else.

But the government time-allocated this bill and then said to us in opposition, "You have a day or two in order to decide which four communities we're going to go to in the Far North to consult." Who am I to decide, as a member of the Legislature, which communities we're going to go to? They're not my 49 NAN communities. We should have allowed NAN to make that decision. I think what they would have come back and said is, "Well, four days isn't enough." But then to make matters worse, the government says, "You have two weeks in order to organize these hearings," and there wasn't enough time, so the hearings never took place. The government says they've consulted—hardly the case.

Next, the government says—and I read this in the Toronto Star with great interest on the weekend. They've said this time and time again through the questions that were answered by the Premier, the minister and the parliamentary assistant on this issue. They say, "You know what? We have amended the legislation. If you look at Bill 191, as printed, we made all these amendments to make it better."

Let's really look at what you've done. Bill 191, as it stands, under section 11 says the following: that if you have a community that has no land use plan, there will be no development. Understand what we're saying in this bill: that if a community decides they're not going to participate in the land use plan, and the First Nations have told you by majority that they won't, there will be no development allowed in their territory.

1750

Already we've got a problem, and that is, it's going to create great uncertainty for the mining and other sectors who are trying to do work in the Far North. Communities are going to be put in the position of saying no because they're not happy with what you've given them under Bill 191. Money is going to fly from Ontario to other jurisdictions when it comes to investment for exploration and others. And who loses? First Nations lose and this province loses as a result.

But here's the thing: Let's say, in the end, that the community decides it's not going to participate in the land use plan and the government decides, "You know what? This mine and the Ring of Fire are really important and we've got to make it go." Under subsection 11(4), the government can do an exemption order that would in fact supersede the refusal of the community to do the land use planning process in order that the project be

allowed to go forward. So what protection does the First Nation really have? You're saying, on the one hand, you can't have development unless you have a land use plan, and I guess that's a way of trying to force them into the land use planning process. It's a bit of a threat: If you want some money to do land use planning and you want development in your community, you've got to do a land use plan, but the government reserves the right under subsection 11(4) to exempt the order in order to allow the development to go forward.

Let's say a community decides they're going to go forward, and that works out in sections 10, 11 and 12. What we have is a rigged game. First of all, who's going to sit on the committee, this joint committee that we talked to on the part of the First Nation, can be refused by the minister in this section of the act. The minister can say, "Well, Moose Cree, you want so-and-so to be on this particular land use planning process? We don't like him," or her. "Nope, they're not on for you." The minister reserves the right.

Let's say that we do get a joint committee done and everybody agrees and we go forward. For the values that are given as far as the terms of reference, of what will be in the land use plan, it's the minister who has the final say about what will be accepted in the terms of reference. Yes, the communities have a say; I accept that. I understand. I've read the act. The community has a real say about what are going to be the terms of reference. But the minister, at the end of the day, has got to sign off, because she too has equal power to the community.

So you have a rigged process right from the start. The Premier of the province or the minister can say, "I can tell you who I will accept, yes or no, on the joint committee," and then once the terms of reference are drawn, can refuse or accept what the terms of reference will be. It's a rigged process, and that's why the First Nations don't want to get into it.

Which brings me to my point on the comments by the Minister of the Environment when he was heckling; comments, I think, to the speech of one of the members in the opposition. I forget which one. He said, "Well, that's how we've done things for 50 years in municipalities." Well, my God, he finally admitted what the minister wouldn't admit, which is that the province controls the process. Because, yes, you're right: In a land use planning process under the Municipal Act, the province controls the process. What the Minister of the Environment finally admitted is what the minister has been trying to deny for this whole time, which is that the province will control the process of land use planning when it comes to First Nations territories. Well, let me tell you, a municipality and—

Hon. John Wilkinson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm not exactly sure whether the member is referring to me, but I would ask him to withdraw that.

Interjection: That's not a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's fine; I'll settle this right now. That's not a point of order.

The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to correct the record: It was the former Minister of the Environment, who is now the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I'm sorry; I got his old title wrong. It was the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr. Gerretsen, the member from—

Mr. Michael Prue: Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Kingston and the Islands, who made that comment.

My point is, he admitted that in fact the minister holds the deck of cards and is able to decide what constitutes a land use plan and how a land use plan will work. My point is this: If you're trying to say that a land use plan in the Far North, in NAN territory, is the same kettle of fish as a plan in a municipality, well, then, there's our problem. There lies the problem: You don't understand the difference. And I think that was a huge admission in the heckling, because it said where the government's at. It tells me that the minister doesn't want to tell us what it is and tries to tell us something that it's not, or they perfectly well understand, or they don't understand at all and should go back to the drawing board.

The other thing, and I touched on it very quickly in the debate, is that the money that's being put forward in order to develop the land use plans—we'll never have the amount of money.

I've got three minutes, and this is the kicker. Let's say a community decides they want a land use plan. So they draft it under section 12, I believe it is, and all of a sudden they now have a land use plan that's in place. Let's say that the community, in drafting that land use plan, says, "I want to protect this particular part of my territory for future generations because there are heritage sites there that we want to protect," or something that they want to protect as far as the natural environment. They protect it in the land use plan, and let's say that the minister accepts it and goes forward and does accept the final land use plan, and it becomes the official plan. Under subsection 13(4), the minister can do an exemption order. The minister is allowed to say, "Hold it a second. We've now found a mine under grandfather's tombstone"—I'm being a little bit dramatic, but you know what I'm getting at—"and we think that the socioeconomic benefits to Ontario are so important that we want to go ahead and develop that mine." First Nations would say, "No, no, no. You can't do it." The minister uses subsection 4 in section 13 of the act and says, "Here's a six-month notice. I'm going to go through a bit of a dog-and-pony show with you, but at the end of the six months, if you haven't agreed, I'm going to override your land use plan." No wonder First Nations are up in arms and don't want to accept Bill 191.

I make the offer again to the government: If you say you want a new relationship with First Nations, if you say that you want to give land use planning to First Nations to do what is right for them and what is right for the environment, if you truly mean all of these things, then you don't call this thing for a vote this evening for third reading. You start back at the beginning and go back to First Nations and do what should have been done

in the first place, and allow First Nations to work with you to develop what could have been a very good product. In the end, we could have all been winners in this process.

I want to make clear that First Nations—and this is not me saying this; First Nations have been saying this. They will not allow development on their land if you allow Bill 191 as it stands. They're going to do what they have to do in order to protect their interests. Whatever happens now is going to be squarely in the lap of Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of this province. He holds the sole responsibility for whatever happens, because he has been forewarned by First Nations, by municipalities across northern Ontario, by chambers of commerce, by the prospectors and developers' association and by the mining industry of this province that this bill is flawed, does not work, doesn't get us to where we want to go. If First Nations—and I know they'll have to protect their interests—end up having to do civil disobedience, it will fall squarely in the lap of this government, which will rue the day that it passed this act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you to all members for this afternoon's debate. Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2010, I am now required to put the question.

Mrs. Jeffrey has moved third reading of Bill 191, An Act with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I have received a document signed by the chief government whip:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on Bill 191, An Act with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North, be deferred until deferred votes. That will occur Thursday morning after question period."

Third reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

MANUFACTURING JOBS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade last Thursday on the closure of Abbott Laboratories in Brockville. The member has five minutes for his presentation, and the minister or

parliamentary assistant may respond for up to five minutes.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Absolutely. Thank you, Minister.

I just want to take this opportunity to talk about my dissatisfaction with the answer that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade gave me last week. My question was a call to action. It was a plea to get the government opposite mobilized to help save 157 good-paying manufacturing jobs at the Abbott Laboratories site in Brockville.

But that wasn't the answer that I heard from the minister. I asked for a commitment to work with me and those in my riding, but instead I got a lecture from the minister for daring to question this government's economic policies.

I have to ask again, as I did in my question: If the government's policies were so wonderful, why are Ontarians, and now Brockvillians, seeing jobs vanish at a time when we should be in recovery?

As members know, it was just over a week ago, on September 14, that the municipality of Brockville, in my riding of Leeds–Grenville, learned about the devastating news that one of the most venerable plants in the city, Abbott Laboratories, was going to close. I have to tell you, that announcement has sent shock waves through that community, a community that's already reeling from a string of plant closures and layoffs as a result of this government. This latest blow to our economy in Leeds–Grenville will see those 157 jobs leave when that plant closes its doors in the fall of 2012.

I know that saving jobs has become a top priority in that community. People know it's critical to maintain that manufacturing presence, to maintain those jobs and to help foster future economic growth in the city. The question that I have to ask today is, does the government opposite understand what's at stake in that community?

My office has been reaching out to the local, the Canadian Auto Workers. We've been talking to the city's economic development plant. As well, I've had conversations with Leeds–Grenville MP Gordon Brown and my predecessor, Bob Runciman, who's the senator for the Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes region. We've done so with the intention of using that two-year window, before the plant is shut down, as an opportunity for us to save jobs. We're not prepared to give up without a fight.

My question that day to the minister was that I needed her and her government to be onside with our effort. I'm calling on the parliamentary assistant, as I did to the minister last week, to join us, to work with all levels of government and the community. I'm asking again to find out what steps the government is prepared to take to work with Abbott officials to maintain that business in Brockville.

Last week my response to the minister's question—she mentioned that she had been in regular contact with the company and that she was “surprised that we were not aware that this may come....” She also stated that her staff were trying to reach out to company officials on the

phone in the wake of the shutdown announcements and that they came as a surprise to her. I know my constituents in Brockville would be interested to hear exactly what the ministry staff have done since then. If they had apparently good relationships with the company, I'd like to hear how those relationships went.

As everyone knows, last week the primary reason given for that plant to close was that they produce adult and infant nutritional formulas and they need to retool the plant to make them available in resealable plastic containers.

We need the ministry to step up. I know that there are funds, like the eastern Ontario development fund—and surely to goodness, we can't use a program like that to help retain that plant.

We're asking the government to roll up their sleeves and join us to be part of our efforts to keep that plant in Brockville. We want you to help formulate the plan with our local community before the lights are out.

I have to say that the parliamentary assistant, I take it, will be responding, obviously, on behalf of the minister. I have the greatest respect for Mr. Kwinter, the member for York Centre. I know that when I was elected mayor of Brockville many, many years ago—I was mayor in 1985, when he was first elected. I know him to be a man of great character. He was a minister who listened, and I'm sure we're very excited about his response on behalf of the government. Plus, he also has a BA in fine arts like I do, so I have the greatest respect for you. I look forward to your response.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for York Centre and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I am delighted to respond. First and foremost, we are concerned about the employees. No one likes to see a plant close down. This is an interesting situation in that everybody was caught by surprise. They had invested, I guess it was in 2007—they added warehouse space, so obviously they thought their business was going forward. In 2010, they increased their water disposal capability, so they thought it was going forward.

This decision, obviously, was not made locally; it was made in Chicago, where the head office is. The reason they gave was because they felt that the market had changed on them and the plant that they had was not equipped to provide the kind of product that the consumer was demanding. That was unfortunate. We are trying to do what we can to see if we can, in fact, work something out with that company.

The bad news is, it's closing in 2012 in the third quarter. The good news is, we have some time. This is something that the ministry is working on, and it's something that, without giving any kind of promises—because we don't control it; this is a decision that's made at the head office, and we have to do what we can to try to get them to change that decision.

Representatives from both the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities have reached out to the com-

pany and the region. We will continue to work these avenues to ease this transition for the workers who are losing their jobs if, in fact, we can't reverse the decision. More specifically, representatives from both of these ministries have contacted the Abbott office in Brockville and the Chicago head office, and both ministries have also been in touch with the Brockville Economic Development Office to see where and how we can be of further service to the laid-off workers.

Ontario is emerging from one of the worst economic downturns of our lifetime, and while there are signs of improvement, we know that we aren't out of the woods just yet. That's why job creation and economic growth remains a priority for this government for all sectors in Ontario.

In terms of the life sciences specifically, we have committed to investing \$161 million into this sector, and we are moving quickly to deploy this support. We invested over \$21 million in the health technology exchange to help develop cutting-edge medical and assistive technologies that can be marketed to the world. This investment is expected to help create more than 130 new jobs and retain additional high tech jobs. Through the Ontario Research Fund, the province committed \$115 million to genomics and gene-related research through the global leadership round in genomics and life sciences. This one-time round of funding is supporting 19 large-scale collaborative projects that aim to discover new therapies and technologies that are improving quality of life as well as protecting our environment and biodiversity.

On August 26, we launched the \$7-million fund to support Ontario biotechnology companies that focus on

early-stage product development. We acted quickly to make funds available to this highly innovative, cash-starved sector. Ontario biotechnology companies that apply for funding may be eligible to receive up to \$1 million in support through this program. We've set aside \$17 million and are currently working with stakeholders to develop a province-wide coordinating infrastructure to streamline administrative process and research and do an ethics review. This will bring more clinical trial investments to Ontario.

This government is also committed to the economic development of eastern Ontario. The eastern Ontario development fund provides grants to businesses, municipalities and not-for-profit associations to support economic development initiatives like capital investment, worker training and investment attraction. To date, the fund has committed over \$24.6 million to 53 announced projects, representing a total project investment of over \$171 million, with 745 new jobs to be created.

In Brockville specifically, the results are impressive. On March 18, 2010, Ontario provided \$1.5 million to Northern Cables Inc. in Brockville to create 20 new full-time jobs. The funding will enable the company to expand its Brockville building space and expand its industrial product line. On January 12, 2010, Ontario provided \$839,835 to Burnbrae Farms Ltd. in the Brockville and Lyn facilities to create 20 new jobs—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday morning, September 23.

The House adjourned at 1811.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
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Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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 Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
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, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	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, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
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)	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	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
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)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) O'Toole, John (PC) Oraziotti, David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Durham Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Kitchener–Conestoga Elgin–Middlesex–London Scarborough–Agincourt	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP) Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Beaches–East York Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London–Fanshawe Timiskaming–Cochrane Northumberland–Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton–Mississippi Mills Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB) Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Perth–Wellington Simcoe–Grey	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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des comptes publics**

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
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Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 22 September 2010 / Mercredi 22 septembre 2010

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Children's Activity Tax Credit Act, 2010, Bill 99, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 sur le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants, projet de loi 99, M. Duncan

Mr. Michael Prue	2183
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	2185
Mr. John O'Toole	2186
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	2186
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	2186
Mr. Michael Prue	2187
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	2187
Mr. John O'Toole	2189
Mr. Michael Prue	2190
Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde	2190
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2190
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	2190
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2191
Mrs. Julia Munro	2192
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	2193

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Helena Jaczek	2193
Mr. Rick Johnson	2193
Mr. Rosario Marchese	2193
Mr. Wayne Arthurs	2193
Hon. John Wilkinson	2193
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	2193

Annual report, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	2193
---------------------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Electricity supply

Mr. Tim Hudak	2193
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	2193

Electricity supply

Mr. Tim Hudak	2194
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	2194

Hydro rates

Ms. Andrea Horwath	2195
Hon. Brad Duguid	2195

Hydro rates

Ms. Andrea Horwath	2196
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	2196

Government consultants

Mrs. Christine Elliott	2197
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2197

Soldiers' remains

Mr. Paul Miller	2198
Hon. Michael Chan	2198

Tuition

Mr. Phil McNeely	2198
Hon. John Milloy	2198

Old age security payments

Mr. Jim Wilson	2199
Hon. James J. Bradley	2199

Greenhouse gas emissions

Mr. Peter Tabuns	2199
Hon. John Wilkinson	2199

Seniors' health services

Mr. Pat Hoy	2200
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2200

Affordable housing

Mrs. Joyce Savoline	2200
Hon. Rick Bartolucci	2201

Food safety

Ms. Andrea Horwath	2201
Hon. Carol Mitchell	2201

International students

Mr. Bas Balkissoon	2201
Hon. Eric Hoskins	2202
Hon. John Milloy	2202

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Mr. Randy Hillier	2202
Hon. Peter Fonseca	2202

Technology in schools

Mme France Gélinas	2203
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	2203

Correction of record

Hon. John Milloy	2203
------------------------	------

Visitors

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2203
------------------------	------

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	2203
---------------------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Mr. John Yakabuski 2204

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Armenian Independence Day

Mr. John Yakabuski 2204

Yom Kippur

Mr. Monte Kwinter 2204

Mental health services

Mrs. Christine Elliott..... 2204

School in Hornepayne

Mr. Michael A. Brown 2204

Ray Timmons

Mr. Norman W. Sterling 2205

Taxation

Mme France Gélinas 2205

Cancer fundraiser

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel 2205

Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast..... 2206

Association of Progressive Muslims of Canada

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 2206

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

Representation Amendment Act, 2010, Bill 107,

**Mr. Hoy / Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur la
représentation électorale, projet de loi 107, M. Hoy**

First reading agreed to..... 2206

Mr. Pat Hoy 2206

MOTIONS

Committee membership

Hon. Gerry Phillips 2206

Motion agreed to 2207

Richard Potter

Mr. Gilles Bisson 2207

Hon. John Wilkinson..... 2208

Mr. Norm Miller 2209

The Speaker..... 2210

Diagnostic services

Mme France Gélinas 2210

Recycling

Mr. Bob Delaney 2210

Highway 15

Mr. Steve Clark 2210

Chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency

Mr. Howard Hampton 2211

Multiple sclerosis treatment

Mr. Jim Brownell 2211

Services for the developmentally disabled

Mrs. Julia Munro 2211

Child custody

Mr. Pat Hoy 2212

Hospital funding

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk..... 2212

Replacement workers

Mme France Gélinas 2212

Kidney disease

Mr. Jeff Leal..... 2212

British home children

Mr. Jim Brownell 2212

Services for the developmentally disabled

Mrs. Julia Munro 2213

Northern Ontario development

Mr. Gilles Bisson 2213

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions

Report adopted 2213

**Far North Act, 2010, Bill 191, Mrs. Jeffrey / Loi de
2010 sur le Grand Nord, projet de loi 191,**

Mme Jeffrey

Hon. Linda Jeffrey 2213

Mr. Randy Hillier 2217

Mr. Howard Hampton 2220

Mr. David Oraziotti 2222

Mr. John Yakabuski 2225

Mr. Gilles Bisson 2226

Third reading vote deferred..... 2230

**ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR
LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT**

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Steve Clark 2231

Mr. Monte Kwinter 2231