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**Official Report
of Debates
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**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Thursday 7 October 2010

Jeudi 7 octobre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONTARIO
ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT
FOR SENIORS AND ONTARIO
FAMILIES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION
DU CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT DE L'ONTARIO
POUR LES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE
ET LES IMPÔTS FONCIERS
À L'INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
ET DES FAMILLES DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 6, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.

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

Seeing none, Ms. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 109. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Interjection: No

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister without portfolio?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I guess I had anticipated a vote on this particular bill. I'm not sure whether the House leaders are ordering this for committee or not. Was it the intent to—

Interjections.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I think this is going to finance and economic affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT
CORPORATIONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES ORGANISATIONS
SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Mr. Gerretsen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to revise the law in respect of not-for-profit corporations / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les organisations sans but lucratif.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Since the member from Wel-land asked a question, I pay full tribute to my predecessors in this post, who include the Minister of Revenue, the member from Hamilton Mountain, as well as her predecessor, the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, Mr. Ted McMeekin. Both of them were intricately involved in trying to update the not-for-profit corporations law.

As well, I would like to pay tribute to my parliamentary assistant, Mr. Jim Brownell, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and Mr. Rick Johnson, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who did a yeoman's work in making sure that this bill got through committee and really shepherded it to where it is today.

As a practising lawyer, I had the opportunity to probably incorporate over the years at least 12 not-for-profit corporations. Let me tell you, under the old system, it was burdensome and tough, much tougher than to incorporate a for-profit corporation. I think the bill we have in front of us, which is at least 50 years in coming, I would say, is a great improvement to the large not-for-profit sector that we have in Ontario.

We have approximately 46,000 not-for-profit corporations in Ontario and we simply want to make it easier for them to operate and to do business in today's world, in today's marketplace. We want to ensure that they have the legal certainties that they need to operate effectively in today's world.

We've heard from the not-for-profit sector on all of these concerns, and we are convinced that the existing legislation no longer meets the needs of Ontario's dynamic, diverse and growing not-for-profit sector. It's for that reason that our government has introduced the proposed Not-for-Profit Corporations Act as a modern legal framework and effective response to the sector's concerns.

The not-for-profit corporations in operation across Ontario are our museums, art galleries, trade associations,

social clubs, sports clubs and environmental groups—just about any organization that you can think of in the not-for-profit sector.

Almost eight million people volunteer their valuable time for not-for-profits—eight million people in a province of some 13 million to 14 million people. Every second person in this province is in some way or another involved with a not-for-profit organization.

These diverse corporations and their army of volunteers benefit the people in our province in countless ways. They work to relieve poverty, to advance education, to strengthen medical research and to share faiths. They promote awareness of good causes and engage Ontarians in their communities. They build community spirit and truly make Ontario the tremendous place to live in that it is today.

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Just as important, they generate approximately \$50 billion each year in annual revenues and employ about one million people in this province in one way or another. Our goal as a government is to support and strengthen this vital sector.

If the bill is passed, the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act would be far simpler to understand than the legislation that currently governs the not-for-profit corporations sector. It would make it easier for organizations to conduct business in today's marketplace and would allow them to respond better to the diverse needs of their clients. It would enable Ontario to leap to the forefront as a leader in the not-for-profit corporations law sector, and it would help build a stronger province for all of us.

Let me just address some of the key reforms that are contained in this act. I will begin with the incorporation process.

The current incorporation system is complex, cumbersome and lengthy, much more so in the not-for-profit sector than it is in the for-profit sector. For example, it takes approximately six to eight weeks to complete the process. The complicated and time-consuming process results in errors and applications being returned to applicants for revision, which slows the process even further. I can certainly personally attest to that in my former life as a lawyer in this province.

Under our proposed act, incorporation would be streamlined and faster. Our goal is to bring the time to incorporate down to seven working days or less—seven working days or less from the current time period of anywhere from six to eight weeks or, in many cases, even longer than that. Moreover, the proposed new act would allow for electronic incorporation. In the future, when fully implemented, incorporation could be completed in just a few days.

Another benefit of the proposed new act would be the ability for not-for-profits to generate their own revenues with a clear understanding of what is and what is not a permissible profit-generating activity. We have heard that the not-for-profit corporations are uncertain about what kinds of profit-generating activities are permitted. The new proposed act would provide much-needed clarity

that not-for-profit corporations would be allowed to engage in commercial activities as a means of generating revenue. This might include, for example, operating a restaurant or a clothing store in order to provide people who are otherwise unemployable with job skills and a basic income.

Another area where the bill would provide new benefits to not-for-profits is in the area of transparency. This bill, if passed, will generate greater transparency around financial information. Currently, directors must present financial statements to members during the annual meeting. There is no requirement for these financial statements to be distributed to members in advance of the annual meeting. I think we've all been to not-for-profit annual meetings where this happens on a regular basis. The proposed new act would ensure that members, upon request, are entitled to receive financial statements in advance of the annual general meeting. This would obviously allow members to better assess the financial state of the not-for-profit corporation, and it would facilitate greater accountability for directors and the management of the corporation.

In addition, our proposed bill would give members of not-for-profit organizations more tools to ensure that their directors and officers meet their obligations as set out in the corporation's governing documents or in the proposed new act. For example, members would be able to ask a court to order that directors give members reasons for terminations of membership, had they failed to do so. That's currently not the case.

The current act does not provide directors and officers with a clear statement about their duties and obligations to the corporation. Our proposed new act states that directors and officers must act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of the corporation and that they must exercise the care, diligence and skill that a reasonable, prudent person would exercise in similar circumstances.

We have heard from stakeholders that finding qualified directors to serve on boards is and can be challenging, and this is partly due to the fact that under the current act, there's no limitation on the liability of directors and officers. This is a significant disincentive to find directors who would serve under those circumstances. Our bill would increase liability protection by providing a broad due-diligence defence to allow directors to rely on the good faith of professional advisers and skilled managers. This improved protection from personal liability would encourage more qualified people to serve on boards. Now, I understand that some of the not-for-profit sectors feel that we haven't gone far enough, but we feel there are certain protections in the new act that weren't there before that will be extremely helpful in finding new individuals who may want to serve on boards of directors.

Another key benefit of the proposed new act would relate to increased financial accountability. Today, it is costly to meet the audit requirements of the act unless the not-for-profit corporations meet onerous exemption requirements. The proposed new act would allow not-for-

profit corporations to choose a less-expensive financial review instead of a full audit, in appropriate circumstances, and this obviously would reduce the expenses of many smaller not-for-profit corporations.

Stakeholders have identified the lack of a provision in the existing Corporations Act that permits a resolution in lieu of a directors' meeting as an unnecessary burden in conducting the affairs of the business of that not-for-profit organization. Our proposed new act allows that a unanimous resolution would be permitted in place of a directors' meeting. This would provide an important degree of flexibility and help corporations save the cost and expense of holding a meeting when all directors agree on a particular matter.

In another step towards greater flexibility, the proposed new act allows that a member who wishes to participate in decision-making, but who is not physically present at a meeting, would have more options to vote. Proxy voting and voting by mailed-in ballots or by telephone or electronic means would be permitted. It is bringing the situation into the 21st century.

Often, there are serious questions as to the validity of many of the activities of the not-for-profit corporations. This is because many of the not-for-profit corporations have deficient bylaws or none at all. Under the proposed new act, corporations would be able to adopt what we call default organizational bylaws, rather than draft their own bylaws, which would save them the cost of hiring a lawyer. For instance, if a corporation fails to adopt an organizational bylaw within a specific period of time after incorporation, the corporation would be deemed to have adopted a standard-form bylaw approved by the ministry. In many cases, a lawyer would not be required to prepare the organizational bylaw, which could benefit the not-for-profit organization with significant cost savings.

Our reforms, as proposed in the new legislation, would create a modern statute that would be transparent, flexible, efficient and fair. It would, indeed, strengthen the sector, and it's a huge sector in Ontario, as I've already indicated, of more than 46,000 organizations in which over a million people are involved.

Much of the proposed new legislative strength comes from the extensive consultations we undertook—and that my predecessors undertook—over a long period of time, and the contributions that our stakeholders have made in helping to develop it. Over two years, our government released three discussion papers to solicit comments and suggestions on the reform of the Corporations Act. We listened to the feedback on the proposed new act from our partners, representing more than 200 organizations, during workshops in Ottawa, London, Toronto and Thunder Bay. Our ministry established a Web advisory panel to consult with key partners on preliminary policy recommendations. We also formed an interministerial working group, representing 15 ministries, in order to reach as broad a stakeholder base as possible. This proposed act that we are debating today reflects this feedback.

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Most recently, the Standing Committee on Social Policy made a number of amendments to Bill 65 to respond to the presentations that were made at public hearings held here in Toronto on August 23 of this year. As a result, the bill, amongst others, provides for an alternative to the use of proxy voting. It removes the requirement that at least two thirds of directors must be members and it also removes the requirement that no more than one third of the directors may be officers of a public benefit corporation.

Once again, I would like to thank all my the colleagues on both sides of the House, the parliamentary assistant and the previous Ministers of Consumer Services for supporting our efforts and for ensuring comprehensive input to the legislation from the broader government perspective. I'd also, of course, like to thank all of those organizations that provided very valuable input in this process.

Reaction to our proposed Not-for-Profit Corporations Act has been and continues to be positive. It doesn't do everything that some people wanted us to do, but I think that as a general approach, it is a milestone ahead—

Mr. Peter Kormos: It didn't change the polling, did it, John? It didn't change that 76% who don't live down in Toronto.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, you know, it's always interesting to listen to the interjections from the member from Welland. But of course, as he well knows, I think everybody in this House supports this bill, as do the people of Ontario and as does the not-for-profit sector in Ontario.

Let me just tell you a little bit about some of the people and some of the organizations that support this effort to modernize the situation that existed in Ontario over the last 50 years. The United Way has indicated its support of Bill 65—and let me also just encourage everyone at this time of the year to support the United Way in your local community. They do a tremendous amount of good work with a lot of charitable and not-for-profit organizations. The Ontario Bar Association applauds the ministry for its initiative in bringing Bill 65 forward. We have heard from not-for-profit organizations across the province. They are eager for a simpler, more relevant and clearer act.

As you know, our government has committed to modernizing Ontario's business laws. It's necessary to meet all the challenges and opportunities that are there for us in the 21st century, and it's our responsibility as leaders to ensure that Ontario attracts investments and jobs, remains an efficient place to do business and is able to effectively compete in the global economy. Modernizing the Corporations Act and the laws that govern the not-for-profit sector is an important part of this process. It would further enhance the efficiency of Ontario's business laws and it would also support our government's Open for Business initiative.

Let me just sum up: Our bill, the bill that's currently before the House and that has broad support, reduces

burdens on organizations. We want not-for-profit organizations to be concerned and to be involved in the kind of activities that they're involved in rather than to worry about whether or not their governance structure is up to date.

This bill reduces the burdens on those organizations. It ensures government services such as the processing of applications are delivered in a faster and smarter way: from the six to eight weeks that it would normally take to what we hope to have in place very soon, one or two days through electronic registration. It would streamline operational and administrative requirements, facilitate the effective operations of our not-for-profit organizations and help them do more of the good work that they do so well in this province.

Finally, the approximately 46,000 not-for-profit corporations across Ontario deserve a modern statute that reflects their unique characteristics and complexity. They deserve to have certainty and clarity in their operations as they work to benefit Ontarians and contribute to the economic strength of this province. They deserve to be able to grow in the best way possible, and by moving forward on the proposed bill that's before the House today, this Legislature and this province will be supporting their strength and their success. We would be providing this vibrant and innovative sector with the legislation that it needs in order to progress in the 21st century, and we will be taking another step forward in modernizing corporate and commercial statutes for the benefit of Ontario's businesses as well as for the not-for-profit communities. Quite simply, this bill will enhance and help us build a stronger Ontario.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to take a few minutes to offer a few comments on this bill.

I think everyone agrees that it is an important initiative and that the role of not-for-profits in our communities is very significant. There have been several economic studies demonstrating the kind of value that volunteers provide in our community—that is, economic value in terms of hours provided, never mind the social benefit of not-for-profit organizations—and the army of people who stand behind those organizations. So I don't think that there's anyone who disputes the importance of a bill such as this which, I would argue, has a very worthy goal—that of helping the not-for-profit organizations organize themselves and operate in a better fashion. So certainly we will be supporting the bill.

But there are a few things that I think need to be pointed out about the bill, and one of those is the process this bill has taken through the Legislature. The government has certainly used, to be the most generous, a variable speed in dealing with this bill. By their own admission, the government started consultations three years ago and produced a bill to be introduced last spring. One would think that after this kind of a lengthy consultation process, you'd have virtually a perfect bill before this. But after these three years of consultation, then we get a

very, very speeded-up part of the process where we're actually discussing third reading in the confines of a time allocation motion for this bill.

On the one hand, we have three years of sort of snail-like consultation. Then the guillotine comes down, and we are to debate the bill and put it through very, very quickly. We had one day of hearings.

In my discussions with members of not-for-profits, both in my own riding and province-wide organizations, they don't even know about this bill. Some of these organizations that I spoke to are certainly ones that have a provincial component, a provincial area of jurisdiction, and are very credible organizations. I was very surprised, and by the way, so were they, that they knew nothing about the bill.

A couple of people in my casual conversations about this bill have said that, yes, they've heard about it and they've heard about the changes in directors' liability. One mentioned that they were aware of the changes with regard to the presentation of treasurer's materials prior to an annual general meeting. But it's pretty sketchy, or there's downright total ignorance about this bill.

So while the minister, and I appreciate that he would, wants to emphasize the three years of consultation, it just strikes me as rather surprising that these province-wide organizations certainly were never part of the consultation and were quite surprised and were eager to learn more about it, given that they would be the "beneficiaries" of this legislation.

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The final chapter on the question of the manner in which this bill has been consulted on and presented in the House, and now the guillotine brought down—we learned in committee that, due to the negligent way in which the government approached this bill, even if it is passed in the days coming, it can't be proclaimed for two years. This is just astounding. It's like somebody has to make a career out of this, because this will mean five years of basically behind-the-scenes consultation.

As I mentioned a moment ago, the consultation for publicly elected people like me was one day, but we're going to have five years of closed-door work on this bill—three that the minister explains have taken place, and now two more after we've debated it. It's quite a remarkable thing.

I want to just reiterate what I mentioned a moment ago, the fact that I will be voting in favour of the bill because I do think it is important that not-for-profits can get ready for change. But I must say that the process raises more questions than answers in my mind.

Bill 65 replaces legislation governing non-profits that, in fact, has changed little in 50 years, and at the same time the responsibility of the non-profits and the charitable organizations has grown immensely over a number of years. Much more complex services are provided by not-for-profits. There's also the fact that there's a very big difference between non-profit organizations like private clubs or organizations that are simply providing an umbrella for a group of people engaged in a particular

interest or activity and those which provide services to the community—very complex services, in some cases.

I think of the kind of training that volunteers undertake to participate. Whether it's something like the York Region Abuse Program or something like hospice, these organizations have quite extensive training for volunteers, as do many others. So it seems to me that it's appropriate that the government should be looking at these kinds of complex organizations that exist throughout the province because, quite frankly, we couldn't do without them.

One of the most important things about this bill is the creation of a new concept for Ontarians: the public benefit corporation. I think we need to understand that this is perhaps, in broad terms, the most important part of this piece of legislation, so much so that I want to take a moment just to give you the definition according to the bill itself. It says: “‘public benefit corporation’ means:

“(a) a charitable corporation, or

“(b) a non-charitable corporation that receives more than \$10,000 in a financial year,

“(i) in the form of donations or gifts from persons who are not members, directors, officers or employees of the corporation, or

“(ii) in the form of grants or similar financial assistance from the federal government or a provincial or municipal government or an agency of any such government....”

I think it's really important to understand this creation of a public benefit corporation. In committee, the government amended the definition of a charitable corporation under the act to include “other charitable purpose” as part of the definition. At the committee hearing, the legal counsel from the Ministry of Consumer Services stated, “Over the years, the courts have expanded the category of types of activities that are considered charitable. For example, many years ago, environmental activities would not have been considered charitable, and they are now. So it's flexible enough to accommodate future judicial decisions as to what constitutes a charitable activity or not.”

This means that the definition of a not-for-profit corporation is now out of the government's hands and in the hands of the courts. I found that extremely unusual and certainly, I think, somewhat disturbing, because obviously what this tells us is that you now have the power in the courts to determine what is charitable. When I think about the vast range of not-for-profits that operate in our community—in the arts, in sports and in so many fields—are they going to have to line up and go to court to find out whether they are, in fact, legally able to create this public benefit corporation? Maybe that's why they need another two years.

But it certainly has great impact, the creation of the public benefit corporation, because the advantage of the public benefit corporation is that it can have a sort of sister or companion entity that would operate as a for-profit and support the activities of the not-for-profit. I think that we need to look at that, because this could have

a great effect, obviously, on one of the concerns I have with the bill: the ability of non-profits to compete with the private sector without a level playing field. Obviously, this could apply to many more areas of activity than currently depend on court judgments in the future.

This bill raises another area, and that is the growing field of social entrepreneurship. The Ontario Nonprofit Network told the committee: “Social enterprise is a growing component of our sector. The ability to earn funds and to try and make our own way, as government funding decreases and as charitable donations stagnate, is critical, especially for the small and medium-sized organizations—that they are able to forge their enterprises in local communities.”

This is a significant departure from what we have today, and again, it raises a number of questions in terms of the role that this entity would play and how it might affect not only the question of government funding, the question of the role of the voluntary sector and the donations—all of that obviously has serious implications. It also raises issues with regard to the private sector.

I think that the best picture of this was presented in the committee for us and to us by the Ontario Funeral Service Association. They explained the risk that allowing social entrepreneurship to compete on an uneven playing field poses to the private sector: “This act has significant impact on our business”—that is the funeral service association. “We are concerned about the blurring of lines between not-for-profits and for-profits as it relates specifically to the bereavement sector and specifically funeral services. Unlike in the past, funeral homes and cemeteries will soon be permitted to operate in combination.

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“To explain further, the bereavement sector includes funeral homes and cemeteries. The problem that follows is that the cemetery industry is dominated by not-for-profits and charitable organizations. These cemetery operators are looking to increase their revenues by entering into the commercial funeral service businesses. As operators under not-for-profit or charitable status, these entities have significant tax advantages over the for-profit funeral operators. We are concerned and we need you to be aware of the unintended consequences of this decision and this” bill.

“When not-for-profit enterprises and for-profit enterprises compete, not-for-profit enterprises act more like for-profit enterprises....

“A heightened revenue focus and the new-found ability to sell funeral services have forced several not-for-profit cemeteries to adopt aggressive marketing practices. Most large charitable and non-profit cemeteries in Ontario now require all families to attend their cemetery offices in person in order to authorize prepaid opening of graves. Upon entering the cemetery offices, families are required to meet with family services counsellors, who are commissioned sales agents charged with the responsibility of selling, upselling and cross-selling families on cemetery properties, vaults, crypts, visitation services, urns, flowers and the like. Traditionally, these

at-need cemetery arrangements were arranged by fax or by phone.

“Further, the recent implementation of the HST has resulted in religious cemeteries with charitable status having a 13% advantage over their not-for-profit and for-profit competitors on cemetery services. This 13% advantage will spill over to funeral services when regulation permits these same cemeteries to enter into the funeral service industry.

“Pricing at these cemeteries is in line with their for-profit competitors. However, they benefit from tax advantages—income tax, property tax and, in the case of charities, also HST. The cost savings from their preferred tax status is not passed on to consumers, but used for large-scale marketing campaigns. We’ve circulated some of those marketing materials. They also use billboards and so forth in many of the communities.

“Clearly, if the not-for-profit and charitable cemetery service providers continue to enter the funeral service industry under an unfair taxation regime, a significant shift will occur in Ontario’s funeral service industry within just a few years. Main Street funeral homes will not be able to compete.”

I quote this because I think it gives people an idea of how something that has the good intentions of updating the not-for-profit sector, of updating the question of charitable status, of being able to provide an entity such as the public benefit corporation—all of which people, I think, appreciate in its intent. But when you start looking at the potentially devastating impact these kinds of ideas have on legitimate service industries or other for-profit activities, then we have a concern, because then we’re looking at a bill that is going to pick winners and losers; that’s going to have issues for the viability of legitimate industry. We have concerns about that, and certainly, I wish that in the three years of consultation that the government undertook, it included not only those agencies that I referenced at the beginning but also the private sector. Where is the ground upon which everyone can benefit?

At this particular point, I’m very much in favour of the two years the government needs before they proclaim the bill. It’s really hard to imagine that they have not done a consultation in those three years that would have included such issues as this.

I should also say that I did, in the clause-by-clause, suggest some amendments to the bill that were suggested by the funeral service industry, which obviously appreciates, I think as we do, the intent of having a public benefit corporation but wants to see a level playing field. Their suggestions included things like:

- a requirement that the dominant purpose of a not-for-profit or charitable corporation be non-commercial;

- a requirement that the business activity of a not-for-profit or charitable corporation be exclusively limited to those business activities that are incidental or ancillary to its objective;

- any incidental or ancillary business activity should be subject to an express cap of \$500,000, in keeping with the audit requirements already set out in the act;

- revenue over and above the \$500,000 cap should be taxed on par with regular commercial income;

- all commercial activities not incidental and ancillary to the dominant purpose of the not-for-profit or charitable corporation should not receive beneficial tax treatment and should be subject to regulations appropriate to such activities. This could involve the mandatory use of subsidiary or affiliate corporations; and finally

- a requirement of full public financial reporting in keeping with the public interest in the use and preservation of publicly subsidized assets.

These amendments were presented by me in the clause-by-clause, and I had hoped that the government might see fit to look at some of these, particularly the question of providing transparency in financial dealings. Unfortunately, the government chose not to pass any of these.

I think that it’s really important that the government, by its own admission, is looking at another two years for this bill. They’ve got to look at and have to ask about what other private sector industries will find themselves in competition with untaxed non-profits in the future. This is why it’s unfortunate that this conversation didn’t take place in the three years preceding, but given that they are looking at another two years, it would be my hope that they will consider those things that we have brought to the public eye and will use the time.

The reason that the ministry gave to the committee: “There have been discussions with just about every ministry in the Ontario government about working together to do a comprehensive review of all the statutes that contain cross-references to the current Corporations Act.” The senior counsel then went on to explain the fact that this cross-referencing process will take approximately two years. He also went on to say, “Each ministry will review its own statutes and regulations that contain such cross-references and consult with appropriate stakeholders with a view to recommending that all these changes be made prior to proclamation of the bill, which, as the parliamentary assistant mentioned, will take approximately two years.”

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As I conclude my remarks, I’m still left with the question of why the government didn’t figure this out beforehand. What did they do for those three years? Clearly, it’s a demonstration of a very sloppy approach to what I believe is not only an appropriate move, in terms of bringing this legislation up to date, but also one that has to be done in consultation with everybody. You can’t have people affected adversely by this. I do believe that the intent is appropriate, but it behooves government to answer the question of unintended consequences. Clearly, this bill demonstrates that there has been little, if no regard, to the issue of unintended consequences.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: This is, at the end of the day, a pretty benign bit of legislation—hardly the second com-

ing of Christ, as was suggested in its introduction. New Democrats are going to support it.

I wonder if the member from York–Simcoe would please lend me her references to the comments made by the Ontario Funeral Service Association, because I do want to speak to those.

I do note that the bill, when it was first introduced—I should mention that when it was first introduced, of course, it was in the name of the member for Hamilton Mountain, who was then the Minister of Consumer Services and who, as Minister of Revenue, is in the House. She does more House duty than any other member of that cabinet. She does. There's some slackers in that cabinet and the Minister of Revenue has to pick up their slack.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, the slackers are the ones who are never here, Mr. Delaney. It's just mind-boggling—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Two things: One is that we don't refer to whether other members are here or not—they could be in committee or in their offices, working hard; secondly, please use the honourable member's title or riding name.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're as astute a Speaker as this chamber has ever had. You're quick on your feet; that's why we like you. We need you to keep that up.

Here we've got the Minister of Revenue who does far more than her share of House duty, while other members of the Premier McGuinty cabinet are slackers. She's here. Perhaps the sponsor of the bill would like to hear the comments during third reading. Here's the Minister of Revenue, who introduced the bill, and I know for a fact that in her heart she thought this bill—because that's what she had been told by her bureaucrats. That's what she had been told by her political staffers, that this bill was as complete and perfect a package as could ever be presented to any assembly.

I note that on third reading it's no longer the member for Hamilton Mountain who is identified as the sponsor of the bill, but the current Minister of Consumer Services, who became the Minister of Consumer Services after the member for Hamilton Mountain was promoted to Minister of Revenue from Minister of Consumer Services. Then the member from Kingston moved from the Ministry of the Environment, after the fiasco around those fees, to the Ministry of Consumer Services. His name is now on the bill.

It suggests the sort of tension that takes place in Hollywood from time to time, where a scriptwriter or a director or a producer is so disgusted at the final product that they insist that their name no longer be on the movie titles; where they literally sue to have their name taken off the end of the movie where it shows producer, scriptwriter and so on, because they say, "I don't want my name associated with that anymore. It's a dog's breakfast after that film editor got finished with it. It's not what I envisioned."

I can't speak for her; she will speak for herself in a capable way. But I suspect the Minister of Revenue is as pleased as anybody could be that it's no longer her name

on this bill but rather, it's the name of the new Minister of Consumer Services. This was a most inelegant process that we witnessed in committee.

Let's put it in context. You'll recall we were just about wrapping up for the summer break, and the government was bungling the Marin affair, the matter of the appointment of a new Ombudsman here in the province of Ontario. The government was engaged in a smear campaign of Mr. Marin. And Mr. Marin was being subjected to some of the most scurrilous and libellous accusations imaginable from government sources and Liberal insiders—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, that's the problem. The interjection will be noted on Hansard.

These sources didn't name their own names. They were gutless Liberal insiders and gutless government sources. They didn't have the courage of their convictions, although most of them should have been convicted for what they attempted to do to Mr. Marin. At the end of the day, the government was engaged in this rather futile effort to block the reappointment of outstandingly and eminently capable André Marin as Ombudsman. In the course of that, the government House leader had engaged in some of the public discourse in the media about Mr. Marin and purported to indicate what had happened in the course of the hiring process in the Speaker's committee. That was the tripartite committee that was charged with interviewing candidates and recommending the next Ombudsman.

At some point, a point of privilege was made in the House which alleged that the government House leader had breached parliamentary convention, that it demonstrated contempt of Parliament by her public proclamation of what she purported to be events within the committee. At the same time, the official opposition got into a real kicking, biting, gouging tussle with the government House leader over an opposition day—the proverbial all Hades broke loose. The government House leader was fit to be tied. She wasn't in good humour at all and I understand that.

This bill that everybody supported, this Bill 65, got time allocated. Whacko, isn't it? It's nuts. It got time allocated. Time allocate, fine, but then the government in its—I say sarcastically—wisdom, not only time allocated it, but said that during the peak of the summer months, the committee was to go out to Kingston, as I recall, and Kitchener. I think Sudbury was on the list and one other city that I can't even remember.

We got notice, of course, of the time allocation motion. I went over to the government House leader, who was barely speaking to me at the time. The smoke was coming out of her ears. She was really ticked off. She was upset. I understand. She was under a lot of pressure because of the Marin affair and the fight with the official opposition and her inability—because the official opposition was digging in its heels—that's the Tories—and not letting her bills pass smoothly. People had to stay here into the evening, as I recall. People get cranky in the

evening, and sometimes they have inappropriate suppers, and all that does is fuel—I use that word advisably—the temperament or ill temper of the chamber.

I suggested to her, “Look, why don’t you let the committee decide where it’s going to go. Let’s see what the response is.” I mean, I don’t mind Kitchener. I don’t mind Kingston. I don’t mind Sudbury. Heck, I don’t mind Cochrane. I don’t mind Timmins. I don’t mind anywhere in Ontario. I’ve been to darned near most of it. Far be it for me to badmouth any part of it. I mean, I think I’m blessed to be from probably one of the nicest parts of Ontario, the Niagara region, but, heck, those other places are nice too.

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The government House leader snorted and was very curt in saying, “No,” or words to that effect. “No.” Okay, fine. God bless.

We have a subcommittee meeting. Of course, the government advertises. The government spends a huge amount of money advertising in each one of these communities—taxpayers’ money—this government that insists it’s so frugal. Well, hell’s bells. At the end of the day, there was nobody who wanted to meet with the committee in Kitchener, and I think one person from Sudbury; I don’t know if there were any from Kingston. At the end of the day, the committee didn’t go anywhere but sit in Toronto.

It could have been so much more effective. I was enthusiastic about public hearings. I thought there would be a whole lot of organizations that would have an interest in this bill, because they’re these non-profit organizations that the bill is designed to accommodate.

Let me tell you about the decidedly inelegant process that we witnessed in committee. But before I do that, first of all, let me thank the member from York–Simcoe, who just spoke on behalf of the Conservatives, who was a delight to work with on the committee. Let me thank the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who had to fill in for the parliamentary assistant with short notice, and he did a very good job. It was a pleasure to work with him on the committee. He was a gentleman, he was co-operative and he made the process work far better than it would have, had there been any other number of people, who I will not name, because everybody knows who they are. Of course, it would be unparliamentary for me to name Rick Johnson as the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, so I won’t. But I do appreciate the cordial way in which—and he’s not in. Somebody can refer him to the Hansard, and he can feel free to use it in a householder if he wishes.

So here we are: We had this committee process and we had a Chair—I’ve got to tell you about the Chair. The Chair had his stopwatch and he was going to use military precision. He was very anal about the whole thing, to the point of stopping—I don’t mind if somebody’s telling me my time’s up. Good for them, and fine for me. But we’d have public presenters, and mid-sentence he’d say, “Oh, that’s it,” almost Mussoliniesque—except the day when he showed up late. Of course, those who live by the

sword die by the sword. Apparently, his stopwatch wasn’t working that day. People who want to be so anally timely have got to be careful, because, like Bob Dylan said, if you live outside the law, you must be honest.

What we learned in committee, though, were some interesting things, not so much about what was in the bill, but about what wasn’t in the bill.

But before I get to that, let’s talk a little bit about the Ontario Funeral Service Association presentation. I thought this was going to be pretty bland stuff, pretty mediocre. I thought it was going to be unlikely to generate any excitement on my part, because I’m not a particularly excitable kind of guy. But the Ontario Funeral Service Association provided one of the more bizarre presentations. It was very, very interesting.

I think that industry is interesting in and of itself: all the feigned interest in the welfare of families of dead people, when in fact the interest is to sell them the most expensive package available, and a coffin that costs far more than most families can afford and will be buried in the vault and will rot away, just like the body does.

So here’s the Ontario Funeral Service Association worried about the blurring of lines between not-for-profits and for-profits and then moaning and groaning and whinging about not-for-profits being in the industry, and then actually explaining how these charitable and non-profit cemeteries require families to attend their cemetery offices in person in order to authorize prepaid opening of graves and require them to meet with family services counsellors—the industry creates these labels. “Family services counsellor” sounds very benign and supportive. You know the demeanour—I don’t know the exact gesture, but sort of hands like this—in the funeral industry, the sotto voce, soft-spoken, and the light touches on the shoulder.

Look, car salesmen have their gig; people in the funeral industry have their gig. I understand it.

But then, the shock and horror of the Ontario Funeral Service Association in saying that these family services counsellors, who are really commissioned sales agents—oh, my—they’re charged with the responsibility of up-selling and cross-selling families on cemetery properties, vaults, crypts, visitation services, urns, flowers and the like. Well, when it came time to question this presenter on behalf of the Ontario Funeral Service Association, I said, “But isn’t that what the private sector does?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Well, why is it so cheesy for the non-profit to do it, but it’s not cheesy when you guys do it? Cut it out.” It is cheesy across the board.

This presenter gave us—and again, he was selective in what he gave us—a couple of the glossy, multicoloured brochures that are used by the Catholic cemeteries in Toronto. They’re not the best-prepared pamphlets. They breached some of the basic copyrighting rules in terms of how you prepare a brochure or a pamphlet. One of them was this hard text, and you cut the postcard out and mail it in—because, of course, they want your name on a mailing list. Politicians know that. We do that all the time. We send out a householder or a pamphlet that has a

tear-off on it. We want to collect the names. And increasingly valuable are the email addresses, because it's far less expensive to contact people by email than by post. A posted letter ends up costing as much as a buck a pop, whereas email is almost free, other than the cost of the service. You build up these—I know there are people here who can help me with the language—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Databases.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —databases, my mentor on IT tells me. You can gang-email or you can blast—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Broadcast.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —broadcast—thank you—1,000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000. Obama used it very successfully in the United States during his presidential campaign, and it's obviously going to become au courant increasingly in Ontario and Canada.

So they want you to clip out the card. It says, "Please send me your free DVD, Holy Ground, and Catholic cemetery planning package with information" about any number of cemeteries. The postcard isn't so that they can send you a DVD; it's so that they can get your name, address and—oh, yes—email. This isn't about offering you the service of a free DVD; it's about adding you to their database.

Interjection: It's the same thing your party does.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But you get the free DVD.

This is very much like those early Sunday mornings on the high channels of UHF—there used to be UHF; everybody's got cable now—with the obscure southern preachers who are going to send you some holy water in a little vial that came from Jerusalem, like Ernest Angley. He's got a wig now. He's the guy who whacks you on the forehead. You put your forehead against the TV screen; he's going to heal you. People watch this stuff. These shysters milk people out of thousands and thousands of millions of dollars. From time to time, they appropriately go to jail, like Jim Bakker did. Jim Bakker went to jail and did a little bit of cell time. Tammy Bakker walked—but she's dead. Let's not speak ill of the dead. She collapsed under all that makeup, I suppose.

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So you get a free DVD, and basically all they want is your death.

But take a look at this: "If you make prearrangements with Catholic Cemeteries, we will enter both of your names in a draw to receive a pilgrimage to Rome in 2010." This is incredible. I guess the goal is that they want you to make the prearrangements early enough so that you live long enough to do the pilgrimage. This was cheesy. There are better words, but they're probably unparliamentary. This is cheesy stuff. This guy is whining but he's acknowledging that the private sector does this, too.

"Our mausoleums offer sacred ground that is consecrated by the Catholic church." I don't know what the heck that means. I don't know what that means.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: If you were a Catholic, you would.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I am a Catholic, and I don't know what difference it makes when you're rotting in the

ground. I have no idea how it makes a difference that the ground is consecrated or not, especially if you've been—when you're burned, when you go in—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Cremation.

Mr. Peter Kormos: When you're cremated. And I'm not even convinced that in a cremation it's really grandma's dust. It's like a shovelful for this urn and a shovelful for that urn.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: How are they going to tell the difference?

And then the closing line: "At the end of life, the church makes one last act of love by providing holy ground for us to rest and await the resurrection." Does anybody really believe that you're resting at that point? You're dead, and I think fair-minded and enlightened Ontarians, when they die, expect their bodies to be opened up so you can retrieve any organs that are useful. Maybe you consider whether or not that body or cadaver is of any use to a medical school like McMaster University medical school.

And then, when push comes to shove—and I can't speak for other people—take my organs, take my 1995 Chev S10 pickup truck. It's running far better than I am. Then cremate me and spread my dust or whoever's ashes they happen to be over, I don't know, the bush down in Cooks Mills. It would be fine by me.

But I found it remarkable that the private funeral service association would take offence at the Catholic Cemeteries for their pitch, when their pitch is no different from what the Ontario Funeral Service Association admittedly do in their own right in the for-profit sector.

I would hope that if you have non-profit funeral services, they would help reduce the cost. I understand that these promotions are for prearranged funerals, but families are suffering. They're mourning when somebody dies in the family, and they go to a funeral service arranger, a funeral service whatever, and with all the feigned sympathy and comforting—"because we're counsellors; we help you through your grief"—the goal of the agenda is to take as much of your money as they can. I find that offensive. Send letters if you want, but don't bother. It's not going to change my mind. I believe this.

I've witnessed, sadly, families who have been lured into spending far more on a funeral. Funerals are expensive to begin with. For me, a funeral has this function: It's all about public safety. You don't want to bury bodies in the ground—that's why we have regulations around cemeteries and funerals, because presumably it causes and spreads disease and death and so on.

Time is fleeting. I wanted to talk about the inelegance of this legislation. The government was forced into making numerous amendments to the bill, amendments that were demanded by parties like the architects of Ontario; certified general accountants; certified management accountants; chartered accountants; the Law Society of Upper Canada; the professional engineers; parties

affected by the Public Accounting Act, which are all those previous accountants; and by veterinarians.

I don't know who drafted this legislation. I suspect it has been floating around that ministry for a good chunk of time in various forms. Heck, it could even go back to Ernie Eves's day for all I know, because the whole business of updating this Corporations Act is not a particularly new one. But they overlooked the fact that the act could well override the corporate structures of those various bodies.

It was interesting, because here we had second reading of the bill already and we were in committee. Now, first I asked the law society, "Where the heck have you guys been? You've been sitting on your hands? Don't you take a look at this stuff after it receives first reading? What's the matter with you?" You've got all that money that they take from lawyers—I pay mine every year—and they hadn't taken a look at the act.

The government had to move amendments, but I said, "Aha. The problem is that those amendments will probably be out of order because they amend legislation"—because, you see, they amend what was necessary to amend the Law Society Act, the Chartered Accountants Act, the Certified Management Accountants Act or the Architects Act. They were amendments to those acts that had to be incorporated into this act, Bill 65, by way of amendment, but they would be out of order because it would be introducing new areas that Bill 65 hadn't contemplated.

Sure enough, when the government came with the amendments, they were out of order. But, being the kind of accommodating guy I am—because that's my style. You know my style is not confrontational or adversarial; my style is collaborative. It has been that way as long as I can remember. Being the kind of accommodating guy I am, I gave unanimous consent for the government to move those amendments and cleared the path. I'm here to serve, Speaker. Please don't ever misconstrue me as an obstructionist.

I find myself with time left. I'll resume this at the next occasion when this bill is called for the balance of my 13 minutes and 45 seconds.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome John Chan, who is joining us today in the members' gallery. John is here to watch his nephew, page Brandon Chan, who is from my riding of St. Paul's. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'd like to welcome, in the east gallery, Kathleen Rempel, the mother of page Emily Rempel, here from Wilmot township. Welcome today, Kathleen.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm pleased to introduce Elly Vandenberg, who is on her way in at any moment, together with her mum, Margo Vandenberg. They are the mum and grandma of our page Tom Davidson, who is celebrating his last day with us today.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I would like to welcome Rowena Ramos, who is the mother of page Rodney Ramos. Since I have met Rodney on a number of occasions, I can tell his mother, you can be extremely proud of your son Rodney Ramos. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Windsor West and page Ioana Crant, we'd like to welcome her mother, Aurelia Crant, to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Premier, Ontario families want to know who handed out sweetheart deals to Liberal-friendly consultants in the eHealth scandal. Today, the Ontario PC leader announced that, if elected Premier, he will call a public inquiry into the consultant contract spending spree and rot at eHealth. Why won't Premier McGuinty do the same thing today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted, again, to speak to the issue of eHealth and to take the opportunity to impress upon my honourable colleagues opposite why it is we are working so hard to move forward to put in place an electronic record system for health care in the province of Ontario.

What we're talking about is ensuring that your health care provider, whether that's your family doctor, the emergency department doctor, your home care nurse or your pharmacist, has access to the right information at the right time so we can give you the best possible care.

All thoughtful people when it comes to these matters tell us that this is the very foundation for a modern, reliable, efficient, effective health care system. So I would ask my honourable colleague to stand up and say that they will reverse their position; they will now in fact support an electronic health records system in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The choice Ontario families face is clear, and that's what we're really talking about here: They can choose Ontario PCs, who say we need legislation to stop money for front-line care being used by hospitals to lobby government, or Premier McGuinty, who said all week that he deplores the practice, only to have his caucus vote against bringing forward legislation. Ontarians can choose a PC leader, who will call a public inquiry into eHealth, or Premier McGuinty, who will not do so.

Ministers on the Management Board of Cabinet waived competitive bidding rules and paved the way for

eHealth to hand out sweetheart deals to consulting firms with ties to the McGuinty Liberals. Premier, how much did you make Ontario families pay to the Liberal family for sweetheart deals exempted by Management Board?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know my honourable colleague is not prepared to accept the report put out by the Provincial Auditor, but we are. We've accepted that advice, those recommendations, those findings, and we're acting on all of them.

Let me again tell you why it's so important that we move ahead with an eHealth system in the province of Ontario and the progress, in particular, that we are making. In 2006, 770,000 Ontarians had electronic medical records. Today it's nearly five million. By 2011 it will be seven million. By 2012 it will be 10 million. I think that represents real progress and I would ask my honourable colleagues opposite to get on board and help us modernize our electronic health records system in Ontario.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, I'm certainly happy that the Premier mentioned the auditor's report, because the auditor's report also mentions that one consulting firm was given special treatment when it was handed a disproportionate number of sweetheart deals while this government waived the rules. When we asked the Premier who handed how many deals to whom, he just stonewalled. Now the Ontario PC caucus has uncovered documents which reveal that Ontario families paid \$9.5 million for 48 more contracts handed out while the rules were waived. Premier, how much of that was handed to consultants with Liberal ties?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague, because she appears to have forgotten one of the specific statements made by the auditor in his report—

Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: And I know that my honourable colleague from the Ottawa Valley is going to want to pay attention to this.

He said this: "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work." I think it's pretty conclusive.

I think our shared responsibility now is to find a way to move forward on behalf of the people of Ontario and ensure that we have in place an electronic health records system. That's what we are doing. We will not take our eye off the ball. Again, I would encourage my honourable colleagues opposite to join with us in this very important effort.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question, again, is to the Premier. Maybe Premier McGuinty is adamantly opposed to a public inquiry because he has a "more intelligent

understanding" of McGuinty Liberals who helped other McGuinty Liberals get rich in the \$1-billion eHealth scandal.

The documents we uncovered showed that Management Board ministers had a hand in over \$5 million lining the pockets of John Ronson, Karli Farrow and other Liberal-friendly consultants at Courtyard. For anyone who forgets, Ronson was your election campaign chair and Farrow was a senior political advisor in the Premier's office before serving as chief of staff to George Smitherman.

Are Courtyard consultants the only Liberals who cheated Ontario families in the eHealth spending spree?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I can appreciate that my honourable colleagues opposite have their own particular perspective on this and that is, at times, very partisan. I mean, that's just the nature of the work that we do here. But I think Ontarians are entitled to rely from time to time on an objective, third party, expert observer of these matters, and I want to repeat what the auditor specifically said: "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work."

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Notwithstanding the fact that they continue to make the claims, the auditor found otherwise. He's a distinguished officer of this Legislative Assembly. I think we're entitled to place our confidence in him, and I, for one, will continue to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The Premier would know that the issues he's speaking about were outside the Auditor General's mandate.

But here's the reason why the Premier won't call an inquiry into eHealth: The documents our caucus uncovered include a four-month deal worth \$122,000 that was handed to the Premier's friends at Courtyard. The deal was signed off by Phil DeMont. DeMont was a political aide in George Smitherman's office at the time and he later ended up in Minister Papatello's office. Which other McGuinty Liberals handed out sweetheart deals to other McGuinty Liberals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my colleague is not prepared to accept the word of the auditor, and I am. I think there we'll have to part company.

With respect to just how important eHealth is for us, so far there are over 7,500 sites in Ontario that have been linked by eHealth. I'm talking about doctors' offices, hospitals, nurse-practitioner-led clinics and the like.

What we're doing here is ensuring, for example, that if you are receiving care in a northern or rural community in the province of Ontario through our eHealth system, that you have access to the best possible expertise that may be found in a larger urban centre.

It's not just a matter of ensuring that every Ontarian has their own electronic medical record, but also ensuring that those doctors and nurses who practise in remote and

northern communities have access to the best expertise. That's what this is all about, and that is why it's so important that we keep moving ahead with it.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We agree that there's no question that electronic health records are absolutely necessary, but the rate at which Ontario is proceeding with the development of eHealth records is laughable in most of the world.

The reason why the Ontario PC leader will call a public inquiry is because the rot in the eHealth scandal has crept right into the McGuinty Liberal ministers' offices. It's highly improper for political staff to approve contracts like these, but you wouldn't know it from what Premier McGuinty has had to say about the eHealth scandal to date.

The documents we obtained show that Phil DeMont is not the only McGuinty Liberal who handed out sweetheart deals to other McGuinty Liberals. Gail Paech, who just endorsed George Smitherman, handed out 20 more sweetheart deals worth \$5.7 million to Courtyard. Why is it that Premier McGuinty is the only one who knows the whole story about eHealth and he's not talking?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm reminded of something once said by former US Senator—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sorry, Premier. The member from Renfrew would be best in his own seat.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's never any shortage of energy from that particular gentleman, Speaker.

I'm reminded of something said by former US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He used to say, "Everyone is entitled to their own opinions but not their own facts."

I think when it comes to the facts, we're entitled to rely on that important finder of facts, the Provincial Auditor. He made a specific finding of fact that there was no political involvement in the awarding of those contracts. Now, we're prepared to accept that finding, but my honourable colleague is not.

Again, I think what our responsibility is today—and I say this is a shared responsibility, a broader responsibility—is to put in place an electronic health records system. It's the foundation for a modern, efficient, effective, reliable system to benefit all Ontarians.

LOBBYISTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Yesterday, the Premier said, "Ontario tax dollars are not to be used by the broader public sector and agencies to lobby their government in order to secure still more funding," and "We believe that is a matter of principle.... We find it unacceptable."

Does the Premier still agree that this is not just unacceptable but also an issue of principle?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We certainly do. There has been a long-standing practice accepted by the previous two governments, and we're saying no to that practice. We want to make a change in Ontario. We intend to introduce a new initiative that will prohibit those kinds of activities. We've been clear that nobody should be using taxpayer dollars to hire a lobbyist to ask for more taxpayer dollars. That's just not sensible. It's not in keeping with our standards and our values.

Families and taxpayers expect that those dollars will go into front-line services. That's what we intend to realize through our new initiative when we present it in this House

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Surely the Premier was not surprised to find out that this practice was going on.

The lobbyist registry shows that from 2007 to 2010, Bob Chiarelli, the Minister of Infrastructure, was a lobbyist for the publicly funded Algonquin College. It turns out he had a lucrative, \$7,500-a-month contract with the college. The Ottawa Citizen went so far as to write an editorial in 2007, condemning the arrangement.

How can the Premier seriously claim that banning lobbyists in the public sector is an issue of principle when he recently promoted to cabinet someone who was doing exactly that just nine months ago?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Hot potato, for sure. Were you sitting on a hot potato there? Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I don't think the member of the third party clearly understands what we're saying. We don't endorse the idea of public entities using public dollars to lobby for public dollars. We've said that over and over and over again.

The minister is going to be introducing legislation with real teeth to it, not motions that are politically based. We're talking about legislation that has real teeth to it, because we understand what the people of Ontario want: not frivolous motions, but real opportunity for growth, real opportunity for opportunity, real opportunity for public dollars to be used in a very effective way.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's surprising that the Premier didn't continue to answer this question, but I will go back to him.

The infrastructure minister announced his intention to run in a by-election on January 18, while he was still an active, registered lobbyist acting on behalf of public sector clients. The Premier yesterday claimed this was an issue of principle for him.

To the Premier: When did it become a principle for him?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me reinforce a message that has been given from this side of the House by the

Premier and by several ministers. We believe that public dollars shouldn't be used to advocate for public dollars.

We believe that by introducing strong legislation, we will not repeat the mistakes of previous governments: the previous NDP government and, for sure, the previous Harris-Hudak regime.

We're not about repeating mistakes; we're about ensuring we build a stronger system for the future that's open and accountable.

LOBBYISTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier's representative on earth is trying to give us the impression that the Premier is surprised to hear that such a practice has gone on in this province.

This week, New Democrats exposed a government that has cultivated a culture that puts insiders ahead of everyone else, a government that is more concerned with rewarding friends than with improving health care or making university education more affordable.

Why hasn't the Premier completely banned the use of lobbyists in the public sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows that in fact we are moving forward on that score and that we look forward to doing that. We're open to any advice and suggestions that they may put forward.

But I want to make it clear again: The practice that had been extant during the previous two governments is unacceptable to us. It's not in keeping with the standards of Ontarians. It's not in keeping with their values, whether in their capacity as families or as taxpayers.

We think it's inappropriate to lobby the provincial government in order to obtain taxpayer dollars when you're working for an organization which is already paid for by taxpayer dollars. We're going to make some changes to prohibit that practice, and again, we're open to suggestions and advice that the opposition may offer.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: For the Premier: StrategyCorp, a lobbying firm made up of former Liberal insiders, has contracts with publicly funded organizations worth at least \$400,000. That's a very generous public subsidy, Premier, money that could be used to hire more nurses or help students get through college.

When will the Premier introduce the legislation that will turn off this tap to lobbyists in the public sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'm concerned that my colleagues opposite can't take yes for an answer.

We are moving forward with specific initiatives to address these very kinds of issues. We are saying that the practice that was permitted by the former NDP and Conservative governments is unacceptable; it's not in keeping with our standards today, so we're going to be making changes to put those values into place and we will prohibit the practice which, as I say, had been acceptable in the past.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: You know, the opposition can understand "yes" when it hears "yes," but it also understands that if it doesn't hear a date, then the "yes" could sort of float off into the future. While the Premier is making vague commitments, Ontario families are wondering when the public subsidy to insider lobbyists will finally end. Later today we'll be introducing a bill to ban the use of lobbyists by publicly funded organizations. Is the government prepared to support the bill today or can we expect more dither and delay?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I appreciate the effort and the initiative pursued by the representative of the third party, and we look forward to seeing the contents of the bill, but I want to assure him and reassure Ontarians that we in government will be moving forward with our own specific initiative.

I also want to remind my honourable colleagues opposite of some of the things that we have already done. We have reduced government-wide use of consultants by more than 54% since 2002. In just the last year, the use of consultants is down by 25%; travel expenses, by the way, are down by 23%; government advertising spending is down by 20%; and when it comes to consulting, our government spending per capita is 30% below the average of all the other provincial governments.

By the way, every time we put forward an initiative to introduce more transparency and more accountability, the opposition has stood in the way of that. Again, I look forward to seeing the initiative, but we look forward to introducing ours as well.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier about another out-of-control agency that could learn a few lessons from an inquiry into eHealth practices that got McGuinty Liberals into trouble. I'm talking about Ontario Electronic Stewardship.

Ontario Electronic Stewardship pays the salary of Gordon Day to be its program manager. Gordon Day is also a director of a consulting company called StewardEdge. Since 2007, Ontario Electronic Stewardship has been handing out and renewing consulting deals to StewardEdge. Does it concern Premier McGuinty at all that Gordon Day is handing out consulting contracts to himself?

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question. First of all, the most important thing we can do is keep hazardous electronic waste out of our landfills. Under the Waste Diversion Act, 2002, that was put into force by the previous government, the solution is found in having an industry-funded organization which is completely run by—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister. Please continue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: As I was saying, Ontario Electronic Stewardship is not an agency of the government of Ontario. It is completely funded by industry and it is completely run by industry.

We've been very clear in our ministry that when it comes to these organizations, we will not allow any lobbyists to come and see us on their behalf. Any money that is used to divert waste, that's its function. Its function is not to come back to—

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: It'd be nice if just once that minister would actually answer a question.

A pattern has developed where agency executives hand out sweetheart deals to their own companies and the McGuinty Liberals do nothing to stop it. The pattern began with Michael Guerriere, the eHealth vice-president who handed out sweetheart deals to his own consulting firm, the Liberal Courtyard Group. This spring, we exposed it happening again with a local health integration network CEO who handed a contract to a company he worked for. Now, Gordon Day is handing his own StewardEdge consulting contracts that expand the scope of its work for OES.

If Premier McGuinty won't call a public inquiry into eHealth, what is he doing to stop the rot he has allowed to spread through that government?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I find it interesting—I'll just remind the member once again that the Ontario Electronic Stewardship is not an agency of the government of Ontario. Why? Because when you were in government you set it up that way, that it would be completely run by industry and completely funded by industry. Now, if the industries funding and running that organization make decisions, then those questions would rightly go to the Ontario Electronic Stewardship and their board of directors, not to the Minister of the Environment.

But to be clear, when it comes to those arm's-length agencies, we will not, have not and will not deal with lobbyists. There is no need for money that is used for waste diversion to be used—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sit down, Pontius Pilate.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'll repeat again: Money that is used to divert waste should not be used to lobby our government, and we've made very clear to all lobbyists that the door is closed at the Ministry of the Environment when it comes to any of these arm's-length, industry-run and industry-funded organizations.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Premier, tenants across Ontario are having a difficult time paying their hydro bills.

Rose Vancea from Fort Erie says: "My electric bill has almost doubled. My daughter's bill for two weeks was \$60 and that was with no air-conditioning or stove as she just moved into the apartment.... She has about \$1,100 a month coming in. Rent is \$600 and then there is cable and food and" the "electric" bill.

When the Ontario Energy Board announces the new winter hydro rates a week from now, will Mrs. Vancea and her daughter get whacked even harder?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you for the question. I think the member was around a few weeks ago when our Premier announced a very significant announcement of relief for Ontario seniors and for 2.8 million middle- and lower-income Ontarians. In total, it's \$1.3 billion in relief that's going to provide some assistance to those families.

That was an indication that we do understand that families across this province have gone through a very difficult time. We've gone through a global recession. We do know that energy rates are rising but we're there to help. We're providing relief for those families.

We're not going to do what the member opposite's leader would want us to do. We're not going to stop investing in our energy system, because that would take us back to where we were seven years ago and the very people he's advocating for now would not have the power they need to raise—

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Here is another incredibly sad story. Mrs. Gautreau from Mississauga writes: "[My father] rents a small house in Clarkson that he may lose ... he has lived there for 17 years, and since my mom passed he is barely making it. His hydro is outrageous.

"His bill is in arrears once again and I wish I could pay it for him, but I'm a single mom on a disability pension myself. I wish there was someone out there who really cared," she says.

Tenants need a predictable, permanent, affordable break on their hydro bill. Taking the HST off hydro would do that. How soon can tenants expect that kind of relief?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I guess the member wasn't listening to my original response. The Ontario energy and property tax credit is a significant level of relief that's going to provide lower- and middle-income families with relief with regard to rising energy costs. It's also going to provide seniors with a significant level of relief. In total, the tax credit which will be going to Ontarians is \$1.3 billion. That's going to help. But we recognize that there's more work to do and we're going to keep working with those families.

1100

What we're not going to do, though, and what the NDP appear to be determined to do, is stop investing in the energy system. That's what the previous government did, as we watched coal go up 127%, as we watched our air being polluted, as we watched the health of the very people that the member advocates for being impacted.

We've got to continue to invest in a stronger, more reliable and cleaner energy—

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

WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Infrastructure. This past summer, Ontarians marked with sadness the 10th anniversary of the Walkerton disaster in the summer of 2000. This occasion should serve as a reminder to all of us of how vitally important safe drinking water infrastructure is.

As the minister knows, Judge Dennis O'Connor's Walkerton inquiry pointed out that it can be difficult for small communities to provide water service that is both safe and affordable.

My constituents in towns like Blind River, Gore Bay and Spanish have just as much right to clean water as urban Ontarians. So my question is, what is the minister doing to make sure that small communities across Ontario receive the support they need to upgrade their drinking water systems?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question.

Over the summer, Mr. Duguid and I spent considerable time consulting across the province with respect to our new 10-year infrastructure program, which is under construction. Water and wastewater infrastructure came up over and over again, especially with the smaller communities' municipal leaders.

The McGuinty government is already providing \$20 million to 166 small communities to help with the cost of operating their drinking water systems. That's through the Ontario small waterworks assistance program, or OSWAP.

In August, we launched OSWAP's third phase. It's the capital phase, which will provide small communities, like the ones the member mentioned, with funding to upgrade their drinking water and wastewater systems.

I'll tell the members more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Providing safe drinking water to just a few, a few hundred or a few thousand people is more expensive than providing it to tens of thousands of people, because either way, you need—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just heard something that was unparliamentary. Withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'll try again. Providing safe drinking water to just a few, a few hundred or a few thousand people is much more expensive than providing it to tens of thousands of people, because either way, you need expensive machinery and equipment, and in a small community there just aren't as many people to foot the bill.

I know that in my constituency, there are many communities that are struggling to keep up, that are struggling to afford the sophisticated technologies they need to provide their citizens with a safe and reliable supply of water.

Minister, how will OSWAP make these technologies and upgrades more affordable?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: OSWAP will help by providing up to two thirds of the necessary funding for water infrastructure projects in small communities. In order to help even more small communities, we are more than doubling the size of OSWAP's capital component from our previous commitment of \$20 million to more than \$50 million. Not only that, we've also expanded it to cover not only drinking water infrastructure, but wastewater infrastructure too. We've also added a focus on water conservation and water system efficiency. For example, small communities can make their systems cheaper to operate and easier on the environment by upgrading maintenance.

The McGuinty government understands that rural and northern Ontarians in small communities deserve safe, reliable and affordable water service. That's what this program and the McGuinty commitment is all about.

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Premier. If Stewardship Ontario has been collecting \$100 of eco tax on cars to cover the cost of diverting antifreeze and fluids in air conditioners for several years now, then why are the McGuinty Liberals planning to introduce a second eco fee on cars?

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the question. I'd be more than happy to hear any other information she may have in the supplementary.

I am in the process of doing a 90-day review in regard to all of those agencies.

We have been listening to people, and they've been telling us that they want to do the right thing. They want to keep hazardous materials out of our landfills to make sure that those hazards are not visited on our children or our grandchildren one day. That's why it's so important that we do things that are best for the environment. I know that I am just finishing up that review, and I look forward to sharing that with my colleagues in government and with the good people of Ontario.

But I might add that Stewardship Ontario is like these other arm's-length groups that are funded by industry and completely run by industry. We've had the leadership in to talk to us about what their plans are. Again, I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Well, since the minister didn't have enough information, I'll give him a little more.

Proof the McGuinty Liberals are planning to introduce a second eco tax on cars can be found on page 30 of the

environment minister's 2009 report, entitled *From Waste To Worth*. The former environment minister lauded a second eco tax on cars as "our proposal for improving the way we manage waste here in Ontario."

Automotive industry stakeholders say the McGuinty Liberals are talking about an eco tax that adds upwards of \$1,000 a car. It's unacceptable. The industry is struggling. Families are struggling. This will kill sales and manufacturing jobs in my riding that families depend on.

Will you do with this eco tax grab what you did with the former environment minister and sweep it aside to gather dust?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Well, there we have it: A report all of a sudden is government policy. I'll tell you that, on this side of the House, we set government policy.

We ask people all the time to give us their best advice, and there is a report that has to do with how we take the concept of waste and turn that into a resource. That is what's required in the 21st century: How do we take things that we're throwing away and turn them into resources?

One of our great examples of that is, now there is this new and ever-growing rubber recycling business in the province of Ontario that's creating jobs as we ensure that used tires, for example, don't go into the back forty, don't go into the dump. They go into new products, turning what was considered waste into a resource, creating new green jobs that are environmentally friendly.

We will continue to receive advice from people, if they want to write a report or if they want to make a recommendation, but we set government policy on this—

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

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. In light of the two deaths of Jamaican agricultural workers recently, it's shocking that there have only been 71 farm inspections in four years in Ontario while there are over 60,000 farms. Why has this government inspected so few corporate farms?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member is wrong. This government is committed to ensuring that all farm workers are protected, that their health and safety is protected.

Let me share some numbers with the member: 375 field visits last year, and 228 were to crop and animal farming operations. Another 131 were to greenhouse operations, where there were many, many migrant workers employed. That is, on average, a farm visited every single day of the year. The member's numbers are incorrect.

It is this government, in 2006, that brought the Occupational Health and Safety Act to farms to protect farm workers. In this province, a farm worker is a farm worker is a farm worker. Regardless of classification, regardless of status, we want to ensure that they are protected—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will come to order and perhaps be best in his seat.

Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Minister, as you well know, inspectors are telling us that they are told not to inspect farms. Given the number of serious workplace injuries and fatalities occurring on Ontario corporate farms, why is the minister not sending health and safety inspectors to corporate farming operations?

I want to say that his figures are the inaccurate ones. Our figures come through UFCW and are checked out in the field. So I challenge him just on the figures alone, but also on the facts. The fact is, the inspectors are telling us that they're told not even to go to farms. Answer that, Mr. Minister.

1110

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'll stick to the facts. I'll reject what that member has said. She is completely wrong. Again, this is the government that has protected farm workers by—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

I smell turkey cooking.

Interjection: Is that Ontario turkey?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Of course it's Ontario turkey.

Minister.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Speaker, thank you very much.

Again, the member is wrong. We've doubled the number of health and safety inspectors in the province of Ontario, and 100 of those inspectors are trained specifically on safe work on farms and to ensure quicker response to concerns. These are the correct numbers, and I'll be more than happy to provide these to the member opposite.

Again, more than one visit to a farm every single day. They are large farms, crop and animal farms, greenhouse operations. There are many migrant workers in those operations. We will continue to ensure that our farms are safe.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Ontario is very fortunate to be protected by our courageous firefighters right across this great province. These brave men and women work every day to ensure our safety and the protection of all Ontarians. In their line of work, firefighters must make split-second decisions before they enter dangerous situations. They risk their very own well-being to help strangers in need of aid and rescue. Not only do our firefighters provide protection, these individuals are integral parts of our society, donating their time and effort to local charities and organizations.

Unfortunately, the reality of the job can create insurmountable risk, taking the lives of some of our finest citizens. I would ask that the Minister of Community

Safety and Correctional Services explain how we honour and recognize these great, valorous fighters of the province of Ontario.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you for a good question from the member who brought forward a bill in the House to recognize firefighters appropriately.

I was honoured to attend the Ontario firefighter memorial service this past weekend in my new capacity as Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I would like to acknowledge as well those from the Legislature who joined the grieving families and fire services from across the province to honour the fallen. The Premier, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and other colleagues from both sides of the House were there.

The Ontario firefighter memorial ceremony pays tribute to the memory of those courageous firefighters who died while protecting others. Each name engraved on the memorial represents a life of dedication, heroism and, sadly, a life lost in the service to others.

These were individuals of outstanding character and courage, whose selfless acts made a difference in the lives of people they touched. The legacy of these firefighters lies in the lives they lead and the examples they set for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I know that each and every one of us will be indebted to these individuals, particularly the families they left behind, that they have provided this service to the province of Ontario. I know that in the riding of Brant, our entire community came together to build a safety village, in which the fire department is one of the highest stakeholders.

I know we look forward to the day when no names can be added to the firefighters memorial. Fire safety is a shared responsibility and we must all do our part. It's important that all levels of government, fire experts, caregivers, the private sector, homeowners and residents work together to make that happen.

This past Sunday marked the start of Ontario's Fire Prevention Week, an opportunity for all Ontarians to learn helpful fire safety tips—for instance, smoke detectors, CO detectors and all the information that is needed in order for us to keep ourselves safe.

Would the Minister of Community and Correctional Services please provide us with more details on Fire Prevention Week to help all Ontarians be safe and secure?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member is absolutely correct: Our government, along with the fire safety partners we have, are celebrating national Fire Prevention Week. This year's theme is "Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With." Smoke alarms, as I think all of us know, save lives, but a faulty smoke alarm saves nobody.

We are challenging Ontarians during Fire Prevention Week to be fire safe and fire smart by following the following steps: Know what to do when the smoke alarm sounds. Develop a home escape plan with everyone in your household. Make sure you have two ways out of all areas. Keep combustible materials at least one metre

away from space heaters. Never leave candles burning unattended.

Installing smoke alarms is the law in Ontario. At a minimum, every home must have a working smoke alarm on every storey and outside of all sleeping areas. Taking a few minutes to follow these simple steps will most assuredly keep Ontario families safe.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. Premier, we all know the WSIB is broke and broken; the Auditor General said as much last year. The WSIB's unfunded liability has doubled under your watch, from \$6 billion to \$12 billion, and is growing at a rate of \$1 billion per year. Last February, at the public accounts committee, WSIB chair Mahoney said, "By the fall we will develop a comprehensive go-forward plan." Last week, your WSIB chair revealed his big plan: He's hired Professor Harry Arthurs at \$500 an hour for the next 16 months.

We all know your cabinet is incapable of solving the problems they created for Ontario families. Premier, is there any problem your government creates that a high-priced consultant can't solve?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd be happy to share with the member the importance of the announcement that was made last Thursday by the WSIB. Yes, they have presented a comprehensive plan to retire the unfunded liability. The WSIB has presented a plan that is prudent and responsible, and it's going to put the WSIB on firm financial footing. I want to commend the new president and CEO, David Marshall—he's a former Deputy Auditor General of Canada—for putting that plan together.

It is a comprehensive plan. It is a plan that involves consultation, which is important, and it is what the stakeholders have asked for. We support that plan to put the WSIB on stable footing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier: At the standing committee, your new WSIB president said, "I've come into this role as president and CEO of the WSIB with a clear mandate from the minister. It is to build a sound financial plan...." Now we learn that the plan is to have someone else fix the problems.

Premier, you told us that we're going to get a new deal: no more eHealth-style consultants, no more money down the drain. Instead, we get more per diems, more waste and more proof that your government can't solve its own problems. Premier, if all your government does is hire outside consultants to fix the problems you've caused, what exactly are Ontario families paying you for?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It's obvious that this member just doesn't get it, but you know what? The Chair of that standing committee, the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, does get it, because he said, "What we need is a plan. What we need is a consultation," and that's exactly what has been delivered.

This is a WSIB plan that is prudent and that is responsible. It does have a consultation—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just say to the member from Lanark that he knows the standing orders. He just asked the question, and as always, if he's not satisfied with the answer he can follow with a late show. Please listen to the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The stakeholders, both business and hard-working men and women of Ontario, understand the importance of the WSIB and of this plan. They have asked for a consultation; it's being led by Professor Harry Arthurs. This member may not want somebody competent, with experience, who is somebody who is respected—

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

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety. The law in Ontario requires that all residences must have an audible fire alarm. This is of no value to deaf and hard-of-hearing Ontarians. As witnessed by the tragic death of a deaf person in St. Catharines last week, the audible fire alarm was useless, as she couldn't hear it anyway.

The member for Pickering–Scarborough East is re-introducing his visual fire alarm bill because this government didn't act on the proposal in the past and because this government did not let it go to third reading. When will this government take fire safety seriously and protect all citizens equally?

1120

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think the member would mischaracterize the government's approach to fire safety if he were to say that, without a doubt. All accidents that happen of this kind, all tragedies of this kind, we feel badly about because there is a loss of lives and so on.

On an ongoing basis we are reviewing with our fire safety partners all of the possible options available to increase fire safety even more. Quite obviously, one of those options is the option to which the member has made reference and on which our member has brought forward a private member's bill. I think there is virtue in it. I know it's been an issue for a number of years: when your government was in power, when that government was in power and now that our government is in power; it has been for a number of years. I am really impressed by the fact that the member has brought this forward. Certainly, in my consultations as a new minister, it is one of the issues I'll be reviewing very, very seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The reality is that this government has done little to advance fire safety for Ontarians. It has been left up to individual members and private members' bills to fill the void. First there was the member from Brampton–Springdale, now a minister, who pushed for

sprinklers in new homes. It never happened. My bill banning wooden fire escapes came next. It never happened. Now this government is being asked to act on visual fire alarms. If these bills were the law, deaths would have been prevented as recently as last week. Yet they've been introduced two, three and four times each.

Will this government take any responsibility for improving fire safety, or will the ideas of MPPs and fire-fighters continue to be ignored?

Hon. James J. Bradley: In fact, I have met with fire-fighters on issues of fire prevention and fire safety, along with those who are the fire chiefs in the province of Ontario. Some of the things that we've already done, in addition—I think the member raises some very legitimate questions: We have strengthened the Ontario fire code to require working smoke alarms on every storey of a home, for instance; we have updated safety equipment requirements for hotels and motels; we've improved safety in existing care facilities through change to fire safety planning, staff and fire drills; effective April 1, 2010, we amended the Ontario building code, requiring sprinklers in all new residential buildings higher than three storeys; and we distributed an unprecedented \$30 million to fire departments to assist with training, equipment and prevention programs. We've made progress; we want to make even more progress.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Between 2001 and 2006, the number of persons with disabilities in Ontario increased by 22%. About one in seven people in Ontario have disabilities. It is anticipated to grow to one in five within 20 years.

I appreciate the advice I receive from the accessibility advisory council in my riding. They inform me of the accessibility needs in my community now and provide feedback on how our government can help. What is our government doing to address the needs of accessibility in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for his advocacy on behalf of his disabled community. He's a great leader in his community.

People with disabilities have long been faced with barriers that limit their ability as individuals and limit our strength as a province. The ODA, introduced in 2001, did not go far enough. In response, our government introduced the AODA in 2005. The AODA will help create inclusion for everyone in Ontario, regardless of their ability, so they can reach their full potential. Ontario is the first jurisdiction in the world to move from complaint-based legislation to a modern regulatory regime in the area of mandated accessibility.

We are proud to take this leadership role and we look forward to other jurisdictions doing the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Madam Minister. I think it's important to share success stories with Ontarians to show how public sector organizations, businesses and schools are providing accessibility services to everyone. By demonstrating what can be achieved when communities break down barriers for people with disabilities, we can encourage others to do the same.

I understand that the minister's website contains many videos that profile such stories. Minister, can you share with us why Ontario is a leader in accessibility and how we can learn more about specific accessibility initiatives?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: My ministry has many videos available on YouTube and our website, profiling many organizations that have become accessible. In fact, I'm happy to say our ministry has a new video available highlighting a school in Northumberland–Quinte West that made their buildings accessible. St. Mary's Elementary School in Campbellford was recently made accessible with the addition of a ramp, an elevator, a Snoezelen room and accessible washrooms. They also received the 2009 Mary Cook Inclusive Education Award from Community Living Campbellford/Brighton for offering integrated education, where students with developmental disabilities are integrated with other students.

I want to thank and commend the principal of the school, Diane Mather, and the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for all they have done to make their community accessible.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, can you explain why your source water protection committees are sending confusing, intimidating and threatening letters to rural Ontario property owners?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm pleased to talk about source water protection. We had a tragedy in this province, and one of the things we learned from Justice O'Connor was about how important it is to keep the sources of our drinking water safe in the first place, that the right thing to do is to do that.

Because of the legislation that we passed following on the work of Justice O'Connor, we've had source water planning protection committees right across the province, making sure that we have the basis in science and making sure that we've done the consultations with people to ensure that we can be stewards of our sources of drinking water. They've been doing a lot of work, and they're coming back to me now with proposals about how they'll give life to that act, to ensure that we are protecting our municipal sources of drinking water. That is our policy objective.

I am proud that we have a program that we instituted in the act that says that we go to local landowners, who are the best stewards of the land, in many cases farmers, and—

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, I have to tell you right up front: Most people in the province of Ontario don't even know these committees exist. There are 19 of them, basically anonymous committees, at work across the province. They have caused significant distress to property owners who are concerned over the level of intrusion on their own property. They're also wondering what new level of water protection—that's above and beyond conservation authorities etc.—they are being subjected to and at what cost it will be.

What authority are those special purpose bodies using to send threatening letters to property owners? And what are you doing to monitor what they are doing and saying to the property owners of the province of Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Perhaps the member wasn't paying attention in the last term, but what we did was we passed an act. I can tell you the terms of reference for our source water planning protection committees were approved by my ministry. They're out doing the work. They now are bringing those plans back to our ministry. I have the legislative authority to approve or to alter those plans. I take that responsibility very seriously. As these plans come back, they have to be approved by our ministry, and then they have to be put into force.

But what I can tell you is that because of funding that we made available to local landowners, they are already doing the things that are required to ensure that the sources of our drinking water are protected. I want to thank every one of those landowners who have used the millions of dollars provided by our government, which they have supplemented with millions of their own dollars because they want to do the right thing. Because though it may be our land, it's our water. It's something that we value, and we want to—

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

1130

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. In today's Toronto Star article on the state of home care, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care said, "I need better information. I want to go deeper into the numbers."

I'd like to assist the minister and the Premier on how this government funds home care. First, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care gives the home care money to the 14 local health integration networks. The 14 local health integration networks give the home care money to the 14 community care access centres, minus their admin fees. Then the community care access centres, through an expensive competitive bidding process, give the home care money to—there are many more admin fees and many more profit margins that come in before you're going to see any care at all—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, and I'll test my own memory here a little bit.

We took a long, hard look at the best way to ensure that we provide the best-quality home care to Ontario families—and obviously, we have an accountability to taxpayers. We ended up with a system which I firmly believe strikes the right balance between assuring us that we can deliver good, quality care—and we give options to people in the services in the community to make application to provide those services.

My honourable colleague takes an ideological position on this, and I just don't think that's a luxury that we enjoy. We've got to be open to various ways to deliver the best quality home care. At the end of the day, there's only one test, and that's the quality of the services being delivered. We keep our eye very closely attuned to those developments.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The home care system is broken. We are not getting quality care through all of this long process that we go through. Everybody will tell you that because of the competitive bidding process, home care agencies are not able to retain and recruit a stable workforce. Quality care comes through continuity of care, which comes through continuity of caregivers. If you cannot keep a stable workforce, you cannot give quality care. The people whose needs are not being met through home care end up in emergency. They end up in one of the ALC beds in our hospitals. They are the ones waiting 118 days to get placed in a long-term-care home.

Home care is broken. Will you get rid of the competitive bidding process?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As far as I'm concerned, we've had this debate in the past. We've come to a landing on this, and we think we've struck the appropriate balance. Again, we're putting the patient at the centre of the system. We want to make sure they're delivering the best possible care. I'm proud to report that since 2003, 182,000 more clients are now receiving home care as a result of the system we have put in place.

I appreciate the advice offered by my honourable colleague, but I just don't think we enjoy the luxury of bringing an ideological perspective to these things. We've got to strike a balance between ensuring that we have the best-quality care available to our patients—when I say “patients,” these are mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, people who are shut-ins in many cases—and ensuring that we are also being accountable to taxpayers.

I'm confident that by putting the patient at the centre of this and ensuring that we follow the quality outputs very, very closely, we're in the right place.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. From bears to coyotes, some Ontario wildlife is so abundant that it's preying upon and damaging agriculture crops, livestock and poultry.

In my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock farmers recognize that wildlife damage is an inherent risk, which they accept. It's when the damage rises to intolerable levels that they turn to their government for help.

Currently, farmers are eligible for limited compensation for their losses under the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act. However, they feel that there are some shortcomings with the act. The act only applies to a limited number of predators and livestock.

Could the minister please inform the House what, if any, steps are being taken to address these concerns, to update the act?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you very much for the question.

Certainly, I understand that wildlife can be a very serious concern to the affected producers. There has been a discussion paper on my ministry website that was available till October 1. We will now review the comments. Specifically, we wanted to hear—and I'm just going to name a couple of points—what our farmers had to say about species that should be included and also what would be adequate, what would be fair levels of compensation for predators.

One of the things that I think is a critical piece is, this legislation has not been addressed for 30 years and we recognize that it's long overdue. The Open for Business bill gave the opportunity to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: During question period, I said that the government's plan to bring in an eco tax on cars was on page 30 of the Waste to Worth report. I would like to correct that for the record. It is on page 30 of the PDF version on the minister's website, but on page 23 of the hard copy of the report.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is a point of order. The member can correct her own record.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me—this is the last day for this group of pages. Let's say thank you to them and wish them all the best.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's great when there is harmony in the House and everyone is working together. The Speaker much appreciates that.

Members, guests and audience, have a great Thanksgiving and make sure that when you're out shopping for your Thanksgiving dinner you buy local and buy Ontario. Support Ontario farmers. Happy Thanksgiving.

We are recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's my pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park Maureen Millar, the mother of page Christopher Millar, and his grandmother Marie Millar. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I want to introduce Russell Ormerod from the Pelham area, down in the Niagara region, where I live. He's here today to show his support for Bill 76, the Visual Fire Alarm System Act.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome to the west gallery Shawna Clouthier and Marianne McGee, plus some other people whose names haven't been provided to me yet. They are here for the introduction of a private member's bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity to welcome a former member who will be joining us today, Gary Malkowski, who represented York East in the 35th Parliament. Gary will be here momentarily.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: People affected by past public divestments are getting restless because of the McGuinty government's foot-dragging when it comes to the introduction of regulations to the Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

The bill was passed in May and now it's October, and honest and hard-working employees still can't merge their pension assets. With each passing day, countless people are at risk of losing the opportunity for pension fairness.

I want to read from an email I received from an employee of the county of Simcoe:

"While I enjoy my job, I'm looking forward to a change and am anxious to start making plans for retirement. Unfortunately, I can't do that as I have no idea when this will all be settled. It was not our fault that our responsibility was handed over to the municipality, and to have our pensions reduced was totally unfair...."

"As you can well imagine, the stress of waiting gets worse as each day goes by. Please keep working to have this resolved. I worry that many will retire before it is [settled] because they aren't even aware of the changes."

I expressed these same concerns to the Premier and Minister of Finance on several occasions, and I know that many others have also done so. None of us has received a response. So I ask again: When will the McGuinty government restore the full pension benefits that these workers have earned?

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members' statements? The member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. You finally achieved the ability to remember that. Thank you.

I'm pleased to rise today in the Legislature to recognize Mental Illness Awareness Week.

One in five people will experience a mental illness in their lifetime, and increasingly we are all aware of the need for all of us to be more aware and accepting of mental health issues.

In response to this need, Hamilton steelmaker ArcelorMittal Dofasco and its employees have announced a donation of \$1.5 million to St. Joseph's Healthcare's West 5th mental health campus. This incredible donation will be used by the hospital to build stronger and more comprehensive mental health services for nearly 2.5 million people in south-central Ontario and help reduce the stigma associated with mental illness through best practices in prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

I invite my colleagues and members from all sides of this House to join me in congratulating ArcelorMittal Dofasco and its employees for their wonderful donation. AMD gives credence to the thought that we are indeed all in this together, for good mental health has never been more important. Good mental health is absolutely essential to everyone's well-being, and it's a sign of a strong, healthy society.

FOOD BANKS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This weekend, Canadians will be celebrating Thanksgiving. It's a time to recognize and thank our farmers. It's also a time to remember those in need.

There are many Ontario families that simply can't afford to put food on the table. They rely on our food banks to help them. In 2009, over 375,000 Ontarians used food banks, an all-time high for the province.

I want to commend all the people and organizations who generously donate to Ontario's food banks. But sadly, over the last few years, there has been a significant drop in donations, due in part to the many processing plants that have been forced out of Ontario.

My colleague Bob Bailey has introduced a private member's bill that provides a simple solution to help those families and Ontario's farmers. Bill 78, a bill to fight hunger with local food, provides a tax credit for farmers who donate food to the food bank. This will help farmers pay for the harvesting and transportation of the food they are donating. I want to commend the member for Sarnia–Lambton for his great work on this bill.

A few weeks ago, this bill received unanimous and enthusiastic support on second reading. We have a responsibility to move forward quickly on this bill and help these families. I call on the McGuinty government to move the bill forward and give it third reading before Christmas. Don't leave this bill sitting in committee. Let's give these families, food banks and farmers something to celebrate.

I want to wish all members and all Ontarians a happy Thanksgiving.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST NORWAY CHURCH

Mr. Michael Prue: This past Sunday, October 3, I had the privilege to attend the church of St. John the Baptist Norway for the induction of their new Anglican priest, the Reverend Jeffrey Sangwine.

The church itself is a historic landmark in Beaches—East York. It was built in the old village of Norway—this was many, many years ago, before the first of many amalgamations—and it was built high on a hill overlooking the lake. But today it's found at the corner of Kingston Road and Woodbine.

The church was absolutely packed. There were parishioners, residents, friends and family. An incredible choir sang songs that were familiar to me and a great many that I had never heard before. The music and the trumpets were inspiring. The church people had processions to all corners over the hour-and-a-half ceremony. Vows were made, and I am positive they will be kept. There was a covenant of the people and of their new minister. It was a truly inspiring day.

At the conclusion of the day, everyone was invited for food and fellowship downstairs, and in the best Canadian tradition, it was Chinese food.

Best wishes to the parish and to Reverend Sangwine in his new ministry as they go forth together in service to our community and service to all mankind.

THE KNIGHTS TABLE

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise to congratulate the Knights Table Food Bank on winning the Tropicana and Breakfast Television Brighter Mornings contest this past summer.

This award is given to an organization that helps brighten the day by improving someone's life and impacting the community in a positive way. The Knights Table certainly deserves our recognition.

The Knights Table is also in the running for a \$100,000 prize in Pepsi's Refresh contest. I encourage all my constituents to support the Knights Table by voting at www.refresheverything.ca/knightstable.

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It's important to show the impact the Knights Table has made in alleviating poverty in Peel. The Knights Table is the only multi-food location within the region of Peel that offers programs and services 365 days of the year without user fees to those individuals and families impacted by hunger, poverty and homelessness.

The Knights Table has played an integral role for the past 20 years in working to alleviate hunger and ensuring that no one goes hungry in Peel.

I would like to thank all of the staff and volunteers for their hard work and dedication. Your commitment to helping the less fortunate is truly inspiring.

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today, as we wrap up Fire Prevention Week.

I had an opportunity last Saturday to talk to Chief Ralph Dominelli from the Orillia fire department. That was following the court case that was held last Friday, October 1, on the Muskoka Heights Retirement Residence—which resulted in the deaths of four seniors.

Both Ralph Dominelli, chief of the City of Orillia Fire Department, and Tim Beckett, president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, have some important advice for the government and this Legislature. I'll read a quote from Ralph Dominelli's press release. It says, "This tragic case highlights the need for changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act that would require automatic sprinklers in care occupancies. Since 1980, 44 deaths and countless injuries have occurred in care occupancies. In Ontario, there have been four serious fires in care occupancies since 2008—Huntsville, Niagara Falls, Orillia and Owen Sound. Three separate coroner's inquests in 1980, 1995 and 1997 have all recommended the full retroactive installation of automatic sprinklers in all existing care occupancies."

Chief Beckett goes on to make similar comments in his release on behalf of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs.

As we talk about Fire Prevention Week, we have to listen to our fire chiefs across this province. I think in a lot of cases we do a fairly good job—but in this case I think it's important that we may save lives by listening to some of these fire prevention officers.

MAURICE FOSTER

Mr. Michael A. Brown: On Saturday, October 2, Dr. Maurice Brydon Foster passed away in Ottawa after a valiant three-year struggle with pulmonary fibrosis.

Maurice was a 1937 graduate of the Ontario Veterinary College. He practised in Desbarats from 1959 until his election to the House of Commons in 1968, to represent the constituency of Algoma, previously represented by the Prime Minister of Canada, the Honourable Lester B. Pearson.

For the next 25 years, Maurice, in his calm, tenacious, determined way, worked on behalf of the people of Algoma. He successfully contested six elections through all political winds. He knew how to sail with the wind, and he knew how to tack when it wasn't at his back.

He was the consummate constituency man. In other words, Maurice was a friend, always interested, always energetic and always effective. Upon leaving elected politics, he worked in Prime Minister Chrétien's office.

Yesterday in Ottawa, I had the privilege, along with several hundred people, including Mr. Chrétien, senators, members of Parliament both past and present, and friends, to share with his wife, Janet, their children, Peter, Andy, Peggy and James, 14 grandchildren, brother Garry, brother-in-law Bud and many nieces and nephews, a wonderful memorial and a celebration of Dr. Foster's life. I understand there will be a further memorial this summer in Desbarats.

The people of Canada and the people of Algoma, and I, have lost a friend. Our thoughts to Jan and the family.

OKTOBERFEST

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I rise in the House today with a good-news item, to talk about a cultural event that has become a huge success in Ontario, across Canada and North America. It takes place each year in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. Yes, it's that time of year again: Oktoberfest. It's here again.

Interjections.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Without the dirndl, I might add. Oktoberfest is here. Dirndl or no dirndl, it's here.

So I invite all of you to attend this wonderful event—

Interjection.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Absolutely—in Waterloo region, to join us for this cultural event. It starts tomorrow, October 8, and it concludes the following Saturday, on the 16th.

Since 1969, Kitchener–Waterloo Oktoberfest has developed Bavarian traditions and festivals. Thousands of visitors create a celebration in our festhallen, and there are 40 family and cultural events that everyone can come and join and be part of. The celebration and the spirit of *gemütlichkeit* to the festival gives the local economy a huge boost, with over \$1.5 million that is being raised for 70 charities and not-for-profit organizations throughout Waterloo region.

Please come and have a great time at Oktoberfest. It's a wonderful experience in Kitchener–Waterloo and Kitchener–Conestoga, in my riding—for good cheer, friendly staff wearing German tracht serving sausages, schnitzels, beer and beer nuts. So, wunderbar, and come and join us in Oktoberfest.

MEHREGAN

Mr. Reza Moridi: I am pleased to rise in this House today on the occasion of Mehregan. The Zoroastrian holy book divides the year into two equal seasons, the first season being summer and the second being winter. The coming of the two seasons would be celebrated through Nowruz and Mehregan. Long ago, Mehregan was celebrated by Iranians with the same magnificence and pageantry as Nowruz. It has been the second most elaborate celebration after Nowruz. Like Nowruz, Mehregan was not celebrated by all Iranians and is mainly regarded as a Zoroastrian festival. In recent decades, there has been a revival of this joyful and merry occasion.

Mehregan is celebrated on the 16th of the seventh month, Mehr, of the Iranian calendar, or on October 8th on the international calendar. As some members might have noted, Mehregan is very similar to Thanksgiving, the festival of harvest. During Mehregan, a feast would be celebrated for six days, starting on the 16th, called Mehr Ruz, and ending on the 21st, known as Raam Ruz. During these days, after the farmers had taken their

harvest, they would relax and pray and thank God for the harvest.

I'd like to wish a happy Mehregan to my fellow Iranian Canadians and to members of the Zoroastrian community of Ontario, and a very happy Thanksgiving for all Ontarians.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Kormos assumes ballot item 48 and Madame Gélinas assumes ballot item 74.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE DES ENFANTS

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act to transfer the administration of certain children's mental health services to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / *Projet de loi 117, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée afin de transférer l'administration de certains services de santé mentale pour les enfants au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.*

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. David Caplan: Before I begin my short statement, I'm delighted to inform the House that this bill is being co-sponsored by myself, by the member from Whitby–Oshawa, Mrs. Elliott, and by the member from Nickel Belt, Madame Gélinas, and I hope all members will support it.

The bill amends the Child and Family Services Act and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act to transfer the administration of programs under part IV of the Child and Family Services Act from the Minister of Children and Youth Services to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The programs affected relate to the treatment of children with mental health disorders in which continuous restrictions are imposed on the liberty of children.

This is in line with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions' recommendation number 1.

1320

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS
AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LA JOURNÉE
DE SENSIBILISATION À LA PERTE
D'UNE GROSSESSE OU D'UN BÉBÉ

Mr. Paul Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act to proclaim Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day / Projet de loi 118, Loi proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation à la perte d'une grossesse ou d'un bébé.

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. Paul Miller: This bill proclaims October 15 in each year as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day.

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION
AMENDMENT ACT
(PUBLIC ENTITIES), 2010
LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ENREGISTREMENT
DES LOBBYISTES (ENTITÉS PUBLIQUES)

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998 to prohibit consultant lobbyists from lobbying on behalf of public entities / Projet de loi 119, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'enregistrement des lobbyistes pour interdire aux lobbyistes-conseils d'exercer des pressions pour le compte d'entités publiques.

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. Peter Tabuns: The bill amends the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, to prohibit consultant-lobbyists from lobbying on behalf of public entities. The bill also changes the title of the act to the Lobbyists Registration and Restrictions Act, 1998.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I seek unanimous consent that during consideration of private members' public business this afternoon, in the event that Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month, receives second reading, the order for third reading shall

immediately be called and the question put immediately without debate or amendment.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition to save the medical laboratory services in Stayner.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

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

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Paul Miller: I present this petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I agree with this and will affix my name.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed here by a great number of people in the township of East Zorra-Tavistock in the great riding of Oxford county, and it is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

TAXATION

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

“Whereas the ... province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

“Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

“Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

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

“That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario.”

I want to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseth for sending this petition to me, and I will sign it.

RECYCLING

Mr. Kuldip Kular: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“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 (as illustrated in their letter, attached). 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 this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval into law;

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

“We, the undersigned, would like to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass into law such a program, as described in the attached letter outlining the red box recycling initiative, as presented.”

I agree with the petitioners, so I put my signature on it.

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ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: Given the number of petitions that have been submitted on this, I do trust that the minister is listening. A petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park ... on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a similar petition from the good folks in my riding in the village of Utopia, a petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition, and this one is certified by the Clerk, pursuant to the standing orders. It’s addressed to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I agree with the petition and will affix my signature to it and hand it off to page Thomas.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**VISUAL FIRE ALARM SYSTEM ACT,
2010**

**LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SYSTÈMES
D'ALARME-INCENDIE
À AFFICHAGE VISUEL**

Mr. Arthurs moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act respecting visual fire alarm systems in public buildings / Projet de loi 76, Loi sur les systèmes d'alarme-incendie à affichage visuel dans les édifices publics.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you so much for this opportunity in these 12 minutes and for the debate that we have the opportunity to have here today.

Three times—third time lucky, I hope—in the past number of weeks, during private members' debate, we have had the opportunity to hear, from all sides of the House, private members' bills that had been introduced more than once, that have been up for debate. I think we've heard of strong interest in seeing some of those bills move forward into the committee stage in debate and ultimately back in this place, hopefully for adoption. I am hoping that following today's debate, subject to the pleasure of the Legislature, if this bill meets with the approval of those here on second reading and is referred to committee at this point, after a third time around it might well receive the support of committee and be reintroduced in this place for third reading, and with any additional luck, ultimate adoption.

As I say, this is the third time I've had the opportunity to introduce, if not the bill in exactly the same words—the first time out, it was a little bit different. It was scoped for the second time and is effectively being reintroduced on a third time to reflect exactly what we had before us on second reading. It's an act to provide for visual fire alarm systems in public buildings, those public buildings being new provincial and municipal buildings.

We have the opportunity today, as well, to have a number of guests in the Legislature, and I hope that we will take the opportunity, in the appropriate fashion—I know that behind me, there is a sign language interpreter working with some of our constituents so that they can participate in hearing what is happening here today in this debate. Please join me in welcoming them to the Legislature.

Applause.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Earlier, during introductions, Gary Malkowski was recognized, and I'd like to just

reinforce that. As a former member of this place and a member of the NDP government of the day, from 1990 to 1995, he made a valuable contribution and obviously continues to make a valuable contribution in the community on his advocacy for those who have hearing disabilities.

I was looking through my notes and Hansard from the last time I introduced this bill, and, quite frankly, there's not much different that I would like to say. You were actually in the chair that day, Speaker, when I introduced it at that point in time. The bill is only one page. It's pretty straightforward. It speaks to a fairly simplistic need in the community, one that could be adopted as it sits, or, if the government so chose, it could pick up the bill, modify it, regulate it and bring it forward in a fashion that would even better meet the needs. But first we have to get through second reading before we need to concern ourselves with that.

The bill, in the one page, states, "All new municipal and public buildings shall be equipped with a visual fire alarm system." Under subsection (1), it applies to "a provincial or municipal public building for which a building permit application is made on or after the first anniversary of the day this section comes into force." There's no requirement to retrofit buildings, there will be no requirement to deal with a building that might happen to be proposed or seeks a permit today. It provides a window of opportunity a full year out after this bill would come into force, before a municipality or a public, provincial building would need to install a visual fire alarm.

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It provides some provisions as to the nature of those visual fire alarm systems, including a feature that electronically displays messages in respect to the fire alarm, including one or all of the following messages:

"1. The fact that the fire alarm has been activated.

"2. Information on the appropriate response, including whether to evacuate....

"3. Information on the nearest exit."

The act, obviously, would bind the crown.

There are a number of considerations for me in bringing forward this bill, and in the need in our community. I want to speak to just a couple of those. I want to speak to the objective of this place and the objective of the government of the day to make Ontario a more accessible province. Thus, legislation is in place to provide for full accessibility. Full accessibility should also provide for the security and independence of all individuals in the province. Those with hearing loss should not be left out of that opportunity.

In addition to the pure safety factors that come with visual fire alarms in a public building, there is the opportunity for those with a hearing loss to have the dignity of being able to act of their own accord. It wouldn't be fine for someone to say, "Well, you really don't need those in a public building in a public space. There's lots of people around. Someone will tell them there's a fire alarm and show them where the nearest exit is." That doesn't

support the individual freedoms and dignity that come with acting of your own accord. I think it's important not only for the safety features, not only to build upon what we want to have in an accessible Ontario—and this bill does provide an opportunity for us to put these into public spaces, where people gather; to highlight and profile that we are acting in the context of making Ontario as accessible a province as possible. This is one small opportunity for us to do that, quite frankly at very, very modest cost, either to the provincial government or to municipalities, on new structures that they're putting into place.

I think we all in this place have either acquaintances, colleagues or family members who have disabilities. In the last time I spoke to this bill, I made a reference to my own family. One of my children has a rather significant hearing loss. In the absence of his hearing aid, he is, for all practical purposes, dysfunctional when it comes to the capacity to hear and act accordingly.

I told a story last time I introduced this bill; I'm going to tell the story again because I think it's worth repeating. A few years ago, my wife and I and my son were at our cottage. In the middle of the night, we had an awful storm. It was one of those microbursts. Trees were falling in front of the property, windows were being broken by branches coming through. I must say, both my wife and I were rather concerned about whether the cottage would still be standing as the wind howled through the broken windows. My son was in a back bedroom away from the lakefront, away from the wind. My wife said, "Should we wake him up?" And I said, "No, there's no need to wake him because he can't hear what's going on anyway." There was no sense in three of us being in a panic; two of us was enough. The point being that first, he was unable to function in that emergency situation in an effective way. Not that visual fire alarms would have helped him in that particular instance, but he was unable to function in an emergency situation because he was unable to know what was happening. Secondly, he didn't have the opportunity to make those decisions.

Obviously, over the years, I have become acutely aware of some of the disadvantages that come with hearing loss. I think of it as a hidden disability because it's one you don't see; it's not one that you can see. A mobility issue is more identifiable. For me, it's important to raise the awareness for those with hearing loss (1) for their protection and (2) because of the dignity and responsibility that they want to achieve on their own.

I had a chance, coming in here, to say we have a number of guests who are here because they are interested in this matter. They have followed this matter each time I have brought the bill forward. They have taken the opportunity to do press releases. They have taken the opportunity to engage other organizations.

Just this week, the Canadian Hearing Society put out a press release in regard to this matter and in regard to Fire Prevention Week, which is currently under way. In their press release they have taken the time to speak to this:

"Wayne Arthurs will reintroduce, for the third time, the private member's bill on visual fire alarm systems,

Bill 76.... His earlier bills—148 and 59—received second reading and have been endorsed by all political parties."

It's nice to have the communities who have an interest take an interest in the bills that we present in this place and be champions for them. We can similarly, I think, be champions for them. We have that opportunity.

As I was coming in this afternoon, I was introduced to a gentleman, and he provided me with a letter addressed, "To whom it may concern"—a broader letter, so it's more publicly open. The gentleman's name is Russell Ormerod, and I want to read it to you. I think the member from Welland is familiar with him.

Russell says, "I am deaf myself. I am a technician and I specialize in life safety and property protection, which consists of fire alarm systems, security systems and environmental systems, to name a few.

"I am here today to show my support for the reintroduction of the Visual Fire Alarm System Act, 2010, under Bill 76 that MPP Wayne Arthurs is proposing in the Legislature today.

"My being present in the Legislature today signifies my strong support that deaf and hard-of-hearing people need to have access to visual means for notifying them of a fire alarm or a break-in, which they would not otherwise have easy access to due to the extraordinary cost and the work involved in hard-wiring the systems."

His letter goes on. I won't read it all, but I think it's indicative of the fact that those in the community with hearing loss are taking the personal time to be here, to write, to engage us in what their needs are, and I think we have the opportunity to pick up that challenge, not only here as legislators today but ideally, following today, if this receives endorsement on second reading, the opportunity to see if we can get this bill through committee, through second reading and back here for endorsement.

The need is self-evident. The bill is not speaking to a broad range of opportunity from the context of the assistive devices program, which our friends here would like to see enhanced. It's not speaking to sprinkler systems, which is a different issue. The focus here is quite simply the provision of visual fire alarms in new provincial and municipal buildings, and my objective is to keep the focus as clear as possible on that provision, not to enter into the broader range of debate that's valuable and probably quite necessary, but ideally to keep the focus and achieve one aspect, one goal: to have visual fire alarms in municipal and provincial new buildings as a starting point for other activities to support those who are hard of hearing or deaf in our community.

I would ask for the support of this Legislature at the end of this hour debate on second reading of Bill 76.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to join the debate today on Bill 76. We will definitely be supporting this legislation, the Visual Fire Alarm System Act. The bill, if passed, would require that all new provincial and municipal public buildings be equipped with visual fire

alarm systems so that the deaf and hearing-impaired are alerted when fire alarms are activated.

To begin with, I certainly don't think this bill is unreasonable in any way, particularly when it applies to new public municipal and provincial buildings. I think that's why we as legislators are in this particular building: we're supposed to be trying to make improvements for people all the time. I think of legislation like my colleague from Oxford's on the equipment he would like to see installed in homes for carbon monoxide, because it's something that may save lives.

It's interesting that the member would bring this bill forward at the very end of Fire Prevention Week. We see over and over again examples of why we continue to make improvements.

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I had a statement a little bit earlier in the House on Fire Prevention Week, and I wanted to follow up a little bit more on it.

In my riding, a retirement home burned two years ago this coming January. It was an older retirement home and there was no sprinkler system.

Over and over again, after numerous deaths in retirement homes, the fire chiefs of not only the city of Orillia—Ralph Dominelli—but the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, have called on the province of Ontario to take a more active approach and to require sprinklers.

It's all in the same category, because we're here to try to save lives and do what's right for our constituents.

In a lot of cases, I think the government tends to take these private members' bills for granted. I understand that this is the third time this thing has been through, much the same as the cellphone bill that Mr. O'Toole introduced four or five times. Finally, after a while, the government listened and introduced a cellphone bill, and now we have hands-free legislation with our phones in the province of Ontario. That's probably what's going to happen here. Eventually, someone will listen to this bill and the government will take a proactive approach. They won't give credit to Mr. Arthurs, but the minister will bring in his own bill and will take credit for it, pretending that he actually cares about visual fire alarm systems.

It's kind of sad that we continue to do this in private members' hour. Over and over again, good legislation is brought in, very positive legislation for the citizens of our province, and the government tends to neglect it. I think this would be very positive legislation for our citizens, and I'm hoping that we can convince the ministry and all members of this House to take it to committee, take it to the next step. It doesn't have to be in some kind of a platform document; this could be passed before the next election. Everybody would leave here in a positive manner, particularly all the people who are in the Legislature today supporting you, Mr. Arthurs, in your attempt to see Bill 76 pass for the third time.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the bill. The visual fire alarm must include more features than a normal fire alarm. The features would include a strobe beacon or electronic display messages that indicate that the alarm

has been activated, where the nearest exit is and whether evacuation is necessary. Visual fire alarms can determine the difference between life and death for Ontarians who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

In my riding each year, I hold pre-budget consultations with my constituents, and each and every year, at both my Orillia pre-budget consultation and my Midland pre-budget consultation, I get the hearing groups coming to see me. Each and every year, they ask for this. They think that it's important legislation. They come well prepared, probably with the same documentation they have provided to you, saying, "This is something we need in Ontario, something that will save lives, and we'd ask you, as our local MPP, to support this if it comes up in the House." For that reason alone—besides the fact that I've supported it in the past—as a critic for community safety and correctional services, I have an obligation to recommend to my caucus members that this be supported and that we move forward in a very proactive manner with this.

As I said, when you're looking at the huge expense of new provincial and municipal buildings to begin with, I don't think this is going to add a great deal of cost when you're already doing the pre-wiring and the pre-battery systems that we have for our current fire alarms. I think it's important that we take the little bit of extra money it will cost for some of the equipment and put it in place. We've done it in this building. There's no better example than this building here. When the bells are called here, we see the flashing lights and we also hear the bells in the hallways. We did it because of a former colleague in the Legislature who felt that this was right for his presence in this facility.

As we move through this debate this afternoon, I'm thinking that all members of the House will be supporting this, but we really have to zero in on the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Let those ministries work together, make sure that they can bring support for Mr. Arthurs's Bill 76 and get it into committee. Like I said earlier, there are a number of those types of bills we've seen here in this Legislature, but, above all, even if it's not acceptable to them, let's make it a government bill. Let's make it part of an omnibus bill or just a bill on its own, but let's get this bill passed and then we can make sure that the citizens who are in the Legislature here today are pleased with it and they can feel that their legislators here at Queen's Park are really acting in a proactive way.

In closing, I wanted to welcome everyone here today—all the folks in the Legislature—who is supporting this legislation. I want to say, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus, that we will be supporting this legislation and encouraging government members and the government itself to move forward and get this bill through the committee and passed once and for all.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It indeed is a pleasure for me to get a few remarks on the record today in support of my good friend the member from Pickering–Scarborough East and Bill 76.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize Saverio Montemarano, who is in the members' west gallery today. He's been very involved with Melody Homes in the great riding of Peterborough. We really appreciate his investment in our community. Mr. Montemarano, it's good to have you here.

Bill 76 is an important piece of legislation. I have chatted with the regional manager of the Peterborough Hearing Society, Ms. Maggie Doherty-Gilbert, and she is certainly very supportive of this. The opportunity to enshrine this kind of technology in new provincial and municipal buildings a year after a building permit has been issued for those particular projects is exceedingly important. I know that the Peterborough Council for Persons with Disabilities has been in Peterborough for some 30 years and is also very supportive of this.

By enshrining this legislation, it really raises the bar in the province of Ontario to make sure that we have this type of technology in new municipal and provincial buildings. Indeed, it sends quite a signal to buildings beyond both the municipal and the provincial sectors to put this kind of technology in place.

We are, over the last several decades, starting with the work of one of Ontario's most successful Premiers, Mr. Davis, when he became Premier in 1971, continuing to build an inclusive society in the province of Ontario by bringing in various pieces of legislation to make sure that we include all our residents in this great province.

A former member, Mr. Malkowski, who served so ably here in the early 1990s, of course, has been a strong advocate to push us to make sure that we employ the kind of technology that provides a warning signal for those who might find themselves in a very stressful situation.

I think also, to make changes—the Canadian Hearing Society—to Ontario's building code—and there are, of course, other players that work with us in the private sector that are certainly making moves in this area. That's why private member's Bill 76, by raising the standard, is so important to all of us here.

Having never experienced myself, but certainly chatting with people who have found themselves in a very difficult situation in a house fire—and these were people who did not have any disabilities of any nature—of course it truly is a very frightening experience. If you look at this from the perspective of somebody who has a disability, you just kind of ratchet up the challenges that are faced by those individuals.

1400

I think it's important in many, many of the groups. I know that the Canadian Hearing Society has been pressing for this particular piece of legislation for many years. We know that the current law in Ontario does not address who is responsible for the cost or installation of visual fire alarms and/or notification systems within individual apartment units, new condominium units or

new homes. Further, landlords are not required to provide visual fire alarms for their culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing residents, nor are home builders required to install such devices into new homes or condominium units for purchase by culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing buyers.

As I said, I think this is important because it does raise the bar. It sends a very powerful signal that we need to make sure—this technology may be available and installed beyond what this bill requires, but, certainly, our municipal buildings and our provincial buildings are constructed—they're made accessible, and they are often community hubs and the kinds of buildings that people need to reach, to use, on an everyday basis.

With those words, I'm certainly prepared to support this legislation. I compliment my colleague from Pickering–Scarborough East for bringing this forward at this particular time.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to join the debate on Bill 76, the Visual Fire Alarm System Act, 2010, which has been introduced by Mr. Wayne Arthurs from Pickering–Scarborough East.

I can tell you that I will be supporting this bill. I think my colleague has already indicated that he will be as well. We do think it is a good bill. It has been introduced before; I believe this is the third time. We believe there is merit in moving this bill forward. We would hope, if it is supported today by the members in this Legislature, that it would have the opportunity to go to committee, where we could take a look at how we could make what is a good bill even better and also address, obviously, some of the issues and challenges that need to be given serious consideration.

One of the concerns, probably, for those who have to put in the system, will be the cost. However, if you take a look at this bill, it is only dealing with new provincial and municipal public buildings, and it's asking that they be equipped with a visual fire alarm system so that deaf and hearing-impaired people are alerted to fire alarms.

I've certainly heard from people in my community, and they believe that this bill is necessary. It will certainly support them and help them to be much more independent.

This visual fire alarm system would include a strobe beacon or a similar feature. It could include additional features such as an electronic display message that would indicate that the fire alarm has been activated; where you would go, to the nearest exit; and whether or not there was a need to evacuate.

I think we can appreciate that this bill is important. This bill should be supported today, and it should go to committee, where we'd have an opportunity to take a look at all of the issues that need to be given some further consideration.

Certainly, we have smoke detectors in our homes today. If we take a look at this particular bill—we are also hearing that the Canadian Hearing Society has

indicated that they feel that the installation of visual fire alarms and visual notification systems should also be eligible for some degree of financial support. The Canadian Hearing Society also feels that all builders and landlords should be required to install visual fire alarms for individual buyers or in tenant units at no cost. They also believe that builders and landlords should be able to recoup the additional expense from the government.

In a province where we do try to do everything we can in order to improve access and to improve services for those who do have disabilities, it's important that we seriously consider this bill that is before us. So I am going to be very pleased to support the bill.

I think we need to also keep in mind that safety is important. In our province, there are certainly many people who, unfortunately, die each year from fire. There are between 100 and 200. We do have a responsibility, particularly now in our seniors' homes where we have many people living over the age of 65, and we know that the numbers are going to double. We need to do everything we can for those people with impaired hearing to keep them safe.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It is my privilege to stand and say a few words about this bill. It's also my privilege today to address people who are here with Gary Malkowski, my friend, my colleague and a man who has done much for the deaf community and did much when he was an MPP in this House.

This morning I stood and I asked a question in question period. I asked the question of the Minister of Community Safety. I did it knowing full well that this debate would take place this afternoon. I did it to ask the Minister of Community Safety exactly what the government's plan and commitment were for fire safety, for fire safety regulations and for bills like this that have come forward and what the government was going to do with them.

I have to say that I was not very happy with the answer. The answer was that the government is doing a lot of things, but I'm not sure that the government is doing a lot of things. I cited three, I think, perfect examples.

I'm proud to see that the three people who are trying to do something about fire safety are all here today. The first person who attempted to do something in what I think was a remarkable bill, which has never seen the light of day, is the member from Brampton-Springdale, now a minister. She came to this House on three or four occasions to put forward a bill that would mandate sprinklers in all new residential properties. It was a very good idea. Fire chiefs from across the province came here to talk about how fast fires can spread. They showed us simulations of flashpoints, when something goes up in fire—a couch goes up in flames—how fast it can spread and how quickly it is put out with a sprinkler system. That bill came forward three or four times and died on the order paper. It was an excellent bill; nothing ever happened with it.

I put in a motion, and it has been debated now four times in this Legislature, which would outlaw or make illegal wooden fire escapes. People, when I tell them that I'm trying to put forward a bill so that Ontario no longer has wooden fire escapes, stare at me in disbelief that this province would allow this practice to continue. They don't understand that there are wooden fire escapes throughout this entire province. The bill has been put forward four times. Four times it has passed this Legislature at second reading. Twice it has made it all the way through the committee process. It seems to me very logical. It has been supported by all members of the House.

Now we have the bill standing in the name of the member from Scarborough-Pickering East, which says that we should have visual fire alarms for the deaf, the deafened and the hard of hearing. This is the third time that he is bringing this bill forward.

1410

None of these bills has been enacted by the government opposite me. These bills have been proposed for the last seven years—time after time after time. I believe, in total, the three bills have been before us 11 times. They have been passed unanimously, each of those bills, on every single occasion. They have been sent to committee on each and every occasion. I am absolutely confident that when this vote is taken it will be sent to committee for the third time. We all want it to go there. We'll all vote for it to go there—government members and opposition members.

Here is the problem: It is the government and the government House leader alone who can determine which bills go any further than today. They are the only one, the only person, the only cabinet member; they have to make the determination of which bills will survive and which ones will not.

I and my caucus have no hope of influencing this. We do not sit in the government caucus. We are not there to argue that the bills be allowed to proceed, so I have to ask my friends opposite to assist the member from Pickering-Scarborough East. Assist him in getting this through.

It is not enough to send it to committee if the committee is never allowed to hear it. It is not enough to send it to committee even if the committee is allowed to hear it and not have it called for third reading. That's what happens.

We know other things can happen. I witnessed it this very day, this very afternoon, when the minister without portfolio and the chair of cabinet stood in his place and asked that the bill that we're going to argue right after this one go to third reading today and that it be done without debate. He had unanimous consent to do it. It's going to happen. That bill this afternoon, the one following this, in all likelihood is going to be debated, it's going to be passed, it's going to be ordered for third reading and it's going to be law by the time we walk out of this room. That can happen.

But why can't it happen for this fire bill? Why can't it happen for the bill from the member from Brampton—

Springdale or the bill that I put forward? It's because the government doesn't want to do it. The government is dragging its feet, kicking and screaming for seven years saying, "This is not our priority."

In those seven years, what has happened? People have died, people who could have been saved. Homes that could have been saved have burned. People have died inside those homes.

I believe that the bill that's being put forward today is essential. People in Ontario who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing absolutely deserve the same equality as people who are not. They deserve the right to have the same equality in law and the same opportunity in law. All that is required is that, instead of having a sound system, they have a visual system. That is all the change that is being asked for here.

Can we accommodate it as a province? Absolutely. Will it cost a few dollars? More than likely. Is it necessary to do it? Yes, it is. It's necessary to do it to save lives. But more importantly to me, it's more important to do it so that all Ontarians have equality of opportunity and equality of safety.

This past year, there was a tragic fire in East York. The house burned down. My friend Maureen Lindsay was the sole occupant of the house, and she died. She died because the fire alarm that was in her house had the battery put in backwards. It didn't go off. She didn't hear it.

We know that this was a technical problem. I guess she or whoever installed it put it in backwards and it didn't work. But that told me a thousand things about the debate today. She couldn't hear it, so she died. The people who are here watching this will never hear it, even if it's put in the right way. Of what value is this audio alarm to them if it cannot be heard? The battery might as well be put in backwards. It might as well be, because it is absolutely of no value. If it cannot be heard, it doesn't work.

I am asking that people vote for this. I'm asking that all members vote for it, but I'm especially asking that the members opposite push this in their caucus and make sure that this goes to committee and that it is lifted from committee and comes back for third reading.

I am asking that the members of the Liberal caucus argue that the money is secondary to the issue. Will it cost money? Yes, it will. It costs more to put in a visual alarm than it costs to put in an audio alarm. You can go to Canadian Tire, Home Depot, Home Hardware or a thousand stores across this province and buy those alarms for about \$15. To put in a visual alarm costs many hundreds of dollars, because they have to be wired; they're strobe lights and there are a whole bunch of things that have to happen. Yes, it does cost more money, but in order to be fair and honest to deaf Canadians, we need to give them the same opportunity. The tool is slightly different; it's slightly more expensive, but it can work.

I'm asking as well that all members look at the purpose and the intent of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It was passed unanimously in this House

a number of years ago. It has a 25-year time frame, which in my view is too long, but that's what was passed. But the spirit and intent was that, at the end of the period, everyone with a disability in this province will have equality of opportunity, everyone in this province will have equality of service and everyone in this province will have equality to do the things that are necessary to be a full and complete citizen. One of those things is to feel free and safe in your own home, in your own municipal structures, in your own buildings and public buildings, so that if something happens you have the same knowledge and the same ability to protect yourself and your family as anyone else. The deaths continue. I cited one earlier today, a tragic case in St. Catharines. Had the bill passed before, that woman might still be alive.

Please do the right thing today, as I'm sure you will. Pass this bill, but please, Liberal members opposite, do something to help this bill in committee and in your caucus so that it goes to committee and it is the law before another person dies.

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on private members' business Bill 76, An Act respecting visual fire alarm systems in public buildings. This bill will require all new provincial and municipal public buildings be equipped with a visual fire alarm system.

I would like to thank my colleague the member from Pickering-Scarborough East for being so passionate and persistent about this important issue and bringing this bill to us for the third time. Let's hope that the third time is a charm and that this bill finally makes it into law.

As I was preparing my notes, it hit me that I know at least 10 people who have some type of impairment of hearing. Really, if you think about it, for all the other things that we do for people with disabilities, this bill is really important and an important first step that we should pursue vigorously. I will be supporting this bill, especially as it deals with trying to implement measures to keep people in Ontario safer.

1420

The installation of smoke alarms in buildings is a legal requirement today. However, they do not provide everyone with the same level of awareness as they should. By definition, a smoke alarm must sound an audible alarm to alert individuals of possible dangers. But for those with a hearing impairment, it will make no difference to them. Unfortunately, an audible alarm will not alert these people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing; therefore, their safety is at risk in our province.

I believe that this bill would begin the process to put culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing individuals on the same playing field during an emergency situation. I'm hoping also that as time passes and buildings are replaced in our province, we will achieve what I would consider full equity.

When this bill was debated in 2009, there were questions asked: why the bill didn't include existing public

buildings. The member from Pickering–Scarborough East responded that we have to be practical about how much we can accomplish. Although he would have liked to have accomplished a lot more with the bill, he was being realistic about what we can practicably achieve in today's environment.

I too would like this bill to accomplish more, such as protecting homes and including existing buildings, but I have to agree with my colleague across the way that that would be the goal for all of us in the long term. At least this is a step in the right direction. It is a first step, a baby step, but I wish him luck. I hope, with the passionate debate that is going on in the chamber today, that we will have this passed into law eventually.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly my pleasure to add my voice to all those who have spoken in support of Bill 76. I certainly congratulate the member for Pickering–Scarborough East on this initiative, and we hope it's certainly third time lucky.

I think it's worth acknowledging the size of the problem we're dealing with. Almost 25% of adult Canadians report having some hearing loss, even though 10% say that it interferes with their daily activities, but 10% is really a very large number. As has been alluded to, we are an aging population. By 2030, Canadians 65 years and older will represent 25% of the total population, nearly double the current 13%, and certainly we know that hearing loss prevalence rises with age; in fact, reports indicate that more than 80% of patients over 85 have a hearing loss. So this is a problem that affects many in our society, and it needs to be addressed.

It has also been brought to my attention by the Canadian hearing foundation that there's increasing evidence now that noise-induced hearing loss through the use of iPods cranked up at full volume is affecting the hearing of our youth. In fact, I've considered introducing a private member's bill in relation to limiting somehow the noise that people are exposed to, which will exacerbate this particular problem. So I think it's very important that we do have the visual signals as well.

I've been coming to the building—in my former position as medical officer of health, I used to visit very often. Over the last 20 years, I was here many, many times, and of course I heard the bells ringing, and then I saw lights flashing. I assumed it was because MPPs were such busy people, they were so distracted, that they might not notice the bells and they needed the lights flashing. It was only when I became an elected member that I heard of the influence that Gary Malkowski, former MPP and now with the Canadian Hearing Society, had on this place when he, with all reasonableness, pointed out the issue of those with disabilities and that those people who could not hear the bells needed a visual signal as well to remind them to come to debate. The work that he has done in terms of disabilities is something that we need to move forward.

This bill is a good step forward. It is extremely reasonable in the scope that our colleague from Pickering–

Scarborough East has put to it, that it be in new provincial and municipal buildings. It's a very reasonable approach and one that hopefully will save lives and do what what we need to do for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Pickering–Scarborough East, Mr. Arthurs, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I want to first, if I can, thank the members from Simcoe North, Peterborough, Kitchener–Waterloo, Beaches–East York, Scarborough–Rouge River and Oak Ridges–Markham for taking the time to participate in the debate and for their expressions of support for the bill.

I want to take just half a second—there's only a minute and 40 seconds—to introduce someone who didn't get introduced a little bit earlier—I didn't happen to see him—a member of the Oshawa city council, Tito-Dante Marimpietri. Tito, welcome. In addition to being here to see what we're doing, he may be here for another private member's bill this afternoon, if I'm not mistaken.

I want to speak, in the minute or so that's left, about three things, quickly. We need to build a foundation in some fashion. This can be part of that foundation on which we can put other building blocks at a later date. Providing for visual fire alarms in public, provincial and municipal new buildings can be a strong part of that foundation. It will show the leadership that we are obligated to provide as provincial elected officials, and similarly provide the opportunity for our municipal elected officials, like Tito, to be able to show that type of leadership in the context of making sure Ontario is accessible.

In my final comments, this really, for me, is about three things. First, it's certainly about the safety that comes with visual fire alarms for those with hearing disabilities; second, it recognizes a need for those in our community with disabilities to be independent and to make independent decisions; and thirdly, it shows that we have a respect for them and the dignity that they should have in making those decisions.

I'm anxious for when we get to the vote later today. I'm hopeful that all members of this place will support this bill. Maybe the third time will be a charm.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for Mr. Arthurs's ballot item has now expired. For people in the galleries and those watching at home, we'll vote on this item in about 100 minutes.

ITALIAN HERITAGE
MONTH ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LE MOIS
DU PATRIMOINE ITALIEN

Mr. Sergio moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month / Projet de loi 103, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois du patrimoine italien.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's always an honour and a privilege to rise and address the House, especially leading the debate on Bill 103. I want to first of all welcome the members of the National Congress of Italian Canadians, Toronto District, to the House today. We have worked with the congress to propose to the Ontario government the implementation of an Italian Heritage Month.

I'm delighted to join with my colleagues in the House to sponsor this bill, and I am truly pleased that the government will support third reading passage of the bill today, allowing our province to declare June Italian Heritage Month in Ontario.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Stop the clock so that Mr. Sergio will have his full time.

I just want to remind the people in the galleries that we do welcome you to Queen's Park today and we're very happy that you're here, but we do have a very strict rule that you can observe the debate but not participate in it. That includes clapping. My apologies.

Mr. Sergio.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I would like to acknowledge and thank the co-sponsors of the bill, the member from Thornhill, Mr. Peter Shurman, and one of the longest-serving members in the House, the honourable Mr. Rosario Marchese from Trinity-Spadina. Thank you very much for co-sponsoring the bill.

"I'm very pleased to express my support for Bill 103," says my colleague Laura Albanese. It's nice to see you with us today and we wish you well. It's good to be here.

1430

I think it is fitting that June be proclaimed Italian Heritage Month as Italy celebrates its national day on June 2. Italian Canadians have contributed greatly over the last century to the fabric of this country and this province. Their capacity to grow and integrate well in Canadian society reflects their commitment to family values, to looking after themselves and caring for others. Their accomplishments are a testament to the importance of a strong work ethic. Their creative, can-do approach to life has served them well. This bill represents a great milestone in the immigrant journey of the Italian Canadian experience. Thank you for being here.

Also, I would like to acknowledge members from the Italian community, among them the president of the National Congress of Italian Canadians, Toronto District, Mr. Mike Tibollo; our consul general, Mr. Bardini; I know our ambassador is on the way and should be here any time; and I have my wife here today, as well.

It began many, many years ago. People would come to our country. They would come and they would stay. They would build their families and they would build a better future. After all, they all shared one particular thing in common: the hope, the vision to build a better future for themselves and their families, often for the families they had left behind.

I came as a young lad in 1958, but Italians started to migrate to Canada from the early 1800s. They came and they brought with them their ambition, their skills, their trades, their work ethic, their knowledge, their ingenuity, their will and their heart. And yes, Mr. Rossi, they brought bocce balls and marinara sauce. They brought as well amarone wine, olive oil—extra virgin—and, yes, prosciutto, parmigiano, pecorino; the Armani, the Canali and the Gucci.

But they came over here for one particular reason: to work and build a better future. Those were the times when opportunities were few and they knew very little, so they took whatever they could, often working in, I would say, inhumane conditions, substandard working conditions. They never asked how much the job would pay or when they would get paid. They never asked what kinds of benefits the job offered, if there was a pension plan or any other benefits, any security for their job or any job security in itself.

Some 50 years ago, the disaster at Hogs Hollow on March 17, 1960, took the lives of five young Italian immigrant workers. The action of Premier Leslie Frost brought the labour laws of the province of Ontario out of the darkness and initiated the most comprehensive labour review in Ontario's history.

But that's in the past, and this is part of our history. Today, Italians have grabbed every opportunity. They saw the opportunity, the entrepreneurial spirit, and they never looked behind. We can be very proud, as with all other immigrants, of their contribution and their accomplishments. I know that Italians are very proud of their contribution and their accomplishments in building Ontario strong.

The multitude of immigrants we have received over the years—and they're still coming—is because of them. We draw from them, from this multitude, which we often call multicultural. I see this wonderful rainbow of cultural people, who came from practically every part of the world, that our country, Canada, and Ontario draw strength from. They give so much of themselves to this new country.

As Italians, I have to say that today they are very passionate Canadians, but within their hearts they still carry the inextinguishable love for their country of origin. It is to them that we owe so much.

I could very briefly say that if it hadn't been for the Sicilians or the calabrese, we wouldn't have a mile of our roads paved. If it hadn't been for the ciociari and abruzzesi—they started the concrete and drain business. The friulani: With their knowledge, their ingenuity and their spirit, they started to build our first high-rises, with the first balconies. So they have a lot to be proud of.

Our province has offered them many opportunities, and, yes, they were there to grab them, as all the other immigrants did.

Comme le sont tous les immigrants, les Italiens sont très fiers de leurs accomplissements et de la contribution remarquable qu'ils ont faite à la croissance de notre province. Je dis que les Italiens à travers toute notre

province seraient très honorés de voir le gouvernement de l'Ontario proclamer le mois de juin le Mois du patrimoine italien, en considération de leurs contributions.

Indeed, I would call on all the members of the House to recognize these wonderful, remarkable contributions and pass second reading of the bill today and move on. Show them, indeed, our appreciation for what they have contributed to the province of Ontario.

It is the immigrants who, when they came many, many years ago—today we enjoy the fruits of their labour. But in those days—those were the times, yes, when they didn't know any better but there was much more. Because of the conditions then, they were exploited. They were abused. They were mistreated, if you will. They were discriminated against. But it's because of the spirit of all our immigrants, no less than the Italians, that they moved on. Today we enjoy this wonderful country, this wonderful province, where their contributions, every one of them, have made it so wonderful for to us live.

The rest is history. Today we have an opportunity, small as it may be—even a speck of our actions will too be part of our history. But it's not totally for us. It is to acknowledge the past, but also to convey something to future generations as well, not only for the Italian history, but for our history, our Ontarian, our Canadian history.

I think it would speak well of this House today if we were to indeed approve second and third reading and be part of that history. So I'm calling on every member of the House today to approve second and third reading of Bill 103 and declare, yes, indeed, June Italian Heritage Month.

I would like to thank everyone who is present here, because they wanted to be present for this historical debate, as they too are part of this wonderful mix: communities; part of those, Italian, that many, many years ago—they still do, but they have contributed so much.

I hope that history will look very favourably on today's actions as we move to just put a little bit of a spot on our young history.

1440

I thank all the members, I thank the co-sponsors and I thank the Premier for allowing me to present this bill, and you, Speaker, for giving me the time to address the House today. In the name of all Italians, I humbly seek your support and approval of Bill 103, to declare the month of June Italian Heritage Month.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am so pleased to co-sponsor Bill 103 with my friend, its author, the member from York West.

I welcome my guests: Frank Notte; former Vaughan MP and Vaughan mayoralty candidate Maurizio Bevilacqua; Sandi Salerno and Rose DiMarco from Thornhill; as well as my wife, Carole, who's sitting in the west gallery with us today.

Contributions of the Italian community to Canada date back 500 years to when John Cabot, or Giovanni Caboto,

first landed on Newfoundland's shores. Early in the 20th century, 60,000 Italian immigrants arrived in Canada to work in forestry, mining and construction. The post-World War II era saw the largest influx of immigration, with over 500,000 Italians coming to Canada, 40% of them settling here in Toronto. In fact, Italian Canadians comprise 15% of my own riding of Thornhill.

The story of Ontario's Italian immigrants is far from unique. The strong bonds of family life and working together, shoulder to shoulder, to build Ontario's infrastructure in the 20th century made the Italian Canadian community strong and vibrant. Their shared experience of working together provided the impetus for the contributions they have made to this great province.

As the economic development critic for our party, I must mention the extraordinary economic contribution made by Italian Canadians. They are, and continue to be, captains of industry. They have excelled in all areas: construction, media, transportation, food production, finance and the law, to name just a few. Together with that incredibly strong sense of community and family bond, the Italian Canadian community took that economic success and gave it back to Ontario. For example, starting as an idea in the late 1960s to build a seniors' home, Villa Charities now provides social assistance, cultural development and educational programs in Toronto and York region.

Like so many others who made Canada their home, Italian immigrants relied on family and friends to find housing and work, learn a trade and a new language. The agency now known as COSTI was set up in the early 1950s to help Italian immigrants navigate their way in a new country, and now provides a wide range of social services to all Ontarians.

As a businessman and an MPP, I have come to know many Italian Canadians, and they are, each and every one of them, a Canadian success story. We should take every opportunity to celebrate these success stories, which is why I am so proud to co-sponsor this bill that will do just that during the month of June each and every year.

While June 24 was declared, in the 1980s, as Giovanni Caboto Day in Ontario, it is just one day. A month of appreciation and celebration is needed to honour the contributions of almost a million Italian Canadians. Viva l'Italia.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Again, just to remind members of the gallery.

The honourable member for Welland.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Now there's a guy who wishes he was Italian.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes.

I'm pleased to join my Calabrian-born colleague Rosario Marchese, the member from Trinity-Spadina, who co-sponsored this bill—along with Mr. Shurman and Mr. Sergio—to speak to and support this bill.

I'm intimately familiar with the history of Italians in Canada because many of those Italian families who came here at the end of the 19th century and the early part of

the 20th century ended up in Niagara region. Their families have endured and prospered over the course of the 1900s and into this millennium.

As a youngster, as but a four-year-old, I have vivid recollections. We lived in the east end. We lived where immigrant families lived: Poles, Hungarians, Ukrainians and my family. We were Rusyn-Slovaks.

Then, when I was around four years old, a new community entered the streets of our east end, and they were these new Italian Canadians, and their children, four and five years old like I was, and I became rapid friends. Their homes became safe havens and their foods became very familiar very quickly. Their families became friends, and I went to elementary and high school with them.

Half of the town of Castropignano moved to Ontario and most of them moved to the Niagara region. I'm so proud and pleased that those Castropignano Italian Canadians have been good friends of mine for so many years.

I say, as we celebrate the industry of Italian Canadians, their courage, their tenacity, their entrepreneurial skill, their doggedness, their willingness to sacrifice—and they did. They sacrificed generation after generation so that their children and grandchildren could live better lives than they did and they ensured that their kids got post-secondary educations and university and college education. They ensured that their children and grandchildren prospered and contributed all that much more to this community.

But they didn't just bring great food. They brought us the legacy of Raphael, the legacy of Dante, the legacy of Puccini, and they introduced us to Fellini. Italian Canadians brought with them a great culture, a rich culture, a valuable culture, an enduring culture and a culture that has enriched ours and made this country far stronger than it would have been without them.

I salute the authors, the sponsors of this bill, and I appreciate the opportunity to applaud the Italian heritage in Ontario and am pleased that we've managed to agree to make sure that this bill gets not only second reading but third reading here and now this afternoon.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Grazie, Mr. Speaker, grazie. I just want to say that my colleague from York West mentioned the friulani, calabresi. He didn't mention the pugliesi who also helped build this country.

Remarks in Italian.

Mr. Mike Colle: Anyway, I want to also say on behalf of—

Mr. Greg Sorbara: I Milanesei.

Mr. Mike Colle: Milanesei, yes. The member from York South–Weston, Laura Albanese, has made her whole life speaking, and because of her throat situation she's unable to speak on this glorious day. Imagine the frustration of our member from York South–Weston. As a fellow pugliesi, I'll try and say a few things on her behalf.

This August, I celebrated 60 years in Canada. We came in August 1950 on a small Greek ship with my

mother and my sister. We joined our father here, so this is certainly a resolution very close to my heart. As you've all been speaking, I just thought of so many incredible memories.

I think the reason why I can see the passion in Mario's voice is because we think of the people who went before us. I think of Johnny Lombardi, one of the incredible pioneers in broadcasting who left such an indelible mark on Canada; Danny Iannuzzi, the great journalist; Nino Ricci, the author; Charles Caccia, the great environmentalist.

I've got an incredible volunteer in my riding, Toni Ciccarelli, who had her fingerprints taken and was arrested in 1940 as an alien at that time. She's still fighting to get her fingerprints back, Toni Ciccarelli. At 92, she's still fighting.

We've got people like Ralph Chiodo who's here, a great business person. Lenny Lombardi is here, another greater broadcaster following in his father's footsteps.

I think of the builders: the DeGasperis family, the Sorbara family, the Montemarano family, the Cortellucci family. All these families came with nothing and they built incredible places to live and house people. They're still doing it.

I think of Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians in London in the music world, the contributions he made with his brother, Carmine. I think of Vittorio Coco, the morning voice of Canada every morning. I think of Gino Cucchi, the great man of St. Clair; Ali Bidabadi, who's an honorary Italian, who's always there with his camera everywhere that things are going. There are just so many people who gave so much, never asking anything back but just wanting to work so they could raise their family and their kids could go to school. That's really what they wanted.

1450

I just think of the unnamed workers—we know of the five who died at Hoggs Hollow. I think of my next-door neighbour, Antonio Garisto. He was the first Italian-Canadian foreman for Metro Works, and he used to tell stories about how they used to do all these incredibly complex tunnel-digging exercises—the Beare Road tunnel—and they would do very dangerous work. He, in fact, even had a tunnel collapse on him. He said that what was really hard for him to take was that many of the engineers with the white hats would really have problems figuring out a complex issue. They'd always come to Tony quietly and say, "Tony, we've got a problem here. What do we do?" So Tony, in his broken English, would explain, "If you want to really do this properly and tunnel properly, here's what you do." Then they would follow Tony's instructions and the problem would be fixed. He would sort of stand there with a tear in his eye because, at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the guys with the white hats would get all the pats on the back and poor Tony and the workmen are sitting in the back in their boots, ignored. Those are the unknown workers. There are so many of them.

I tell another story, the Ferma brothers, who told me that when they first started on construction, in the

summertime they were working up at Markham Road. They said that it was so hot, and there was no water on the job site, so the cement truck would come by. That's where they would get their water to get a little bit of nourishment on a hot summer day—the dirty cement truck water.

These are the kinds of sacrifices that these men and women—the women. My mother was a seamstress on Spadina, working piecework, coming home, like many Italian mothers—we had boarders in our house. We had three or four boarders. She would come home, cook, clean, even for the boarders, and then go back to Spadina the next morning at 6 o'clock, sometimes walking home because she didn't want to spend the 12 cents for the streetcar ticket. This is the kind of people they were.

There are people from Portugal now doing the same thing, from Jamaica doing the same thing. This is what truly makes us an incredible country, an incredible province, because these people have put part of themselves into our streets, into our homes, into our buildings, our schools and into this place.

So I feel honoured being here today, being part of this incredible group of people who have called Toronto home. We're so proud of being Canadians, because Canada opened the door for us when nobody else would.

Thank you all so much for listening to us and supporting this very important resolution that really makes us all Italian Canadians today.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly very pleased to have the opportunity to support the bill to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month. As I listened to the member from York West, I realized that many of us in this Legislature have more in common than we do apart. Although I am not Italian, I am, like you, an immigrant from Europe. My mother was Dutch and my father was Austrian. Listening to the member, I do have a keen appreciation and understanding of the many challenges and the many sacrifices that our parents and those who went before us made in order that we could establish new roots, a new life and hope and opportunity.

So today I'm very pleased to support this bill. I have many friends in the Italian community. I live in Kitchener-Waterloo, and I can tell you that I have seen the people there. They have seized every opportunity that has been given to them. They have come with very modest means and they have quickly emerged as valuable contributors to our community in every way possible. They have always demonstrated their desire to contribute and make this province stronger and more vibrant than it is today, and certainly you can say that they do work hard. We see that every day. We have a lot of people who have opened businesses at home, and we see their perseverance in what they have done.

The other thing that I always marvel at and enjoy is that we have a festival. I would say to you that in our community of Kitchener-Waterloo—and it includes Wellington—they have certainly enriched, with their art

and their culture, the social fabric of the province of Ontario. This is an important day.

I want to acknowledge one person from the Kitchener-Waterloo community who I think exemplifies many of the wonderful attributes of Italian Canadians, and that is Dr. Gabriel Niccoli. He was recently appointed to be the honorary vice-consul of Italy to Canada, to serve the counties of Wellington and Waterloo. I am proud to consider and count him as a close friend, and he was recognized for his contribution to preserving the Italian heritage in our community, which he has done. I've had the opportunity to meet many of the visiting dignitaries from Italy.

So today is a great day. Italian Canadians have made an outstanding contribution to our province, and I am very, very pleased to join my colleagues in supporting June as Italian Heritage Month.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was very happy to co-sponsor this bill with the member from York West and the member from Thornhill.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Viva la Calabria!

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Viva la Calabria indeed, and so many other regions in Italy.

I wanted to not congratulate but acknowledge the fact that the consul general is here and the National Congress of Italian Canadians, Toronto District, and so many others. Thank you for coming to participate in this little debate that we're having.

Again, when we introduce bills like this, it forces you to reflect on your past and the present, and also to reflect on where we're going. Because as you reflect on the past—and I've got to tell you, I grew up in the area of Christie Pits. I am one of the few people who has stayed in the area. Me and Lenny Lombardi, and everybody else literally has left the whole downtown area. I remember Italians used to say, "You still live on College Street in those shacks?" Those \$1-million shacks that have more value today than the Woodbridge homes which are three times bigger than our little shacks in downtown Toronto? Yes, I still live downtown. I love it down here. I can't imagine living anywhere else, always wanting to be close to College, where the majority of Italians used to live.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: What about living over on this side?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's another dark side to get into. This is where the lighthouse is.

Mr. David Zimmer: This is the right side, Rosario.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, the right side is here, and the left is here.

I mean, I've got to tell you, the majority of Italians who landed in this city stayed in the city—and in my riding—but we have but a few Italians left. I think we might have close to 1,000 Italian Canadian seniors, and that's about it. It has changed very much.

But I was thinking about this as we reflect on this bill, thinking of my stories. My father came in 1956 with my older brother. I remember a story being told by my father

of going to the north because they were looking for work. There wasn't much work in those Diefenbaker years. And when they went to the north, my father was a heavy smoker. They caught him smoking one evening—he fell asleep with a cigarette in his mouth—and they told him, “If we catch you again, we’re going to send you back to Toronto.” That’s all he needed to hear. Today people need patches, they need drugs to kick the tobacco habit; all my father needed to hear: “If we catch you smoking again”—he was a heavy smoker—“we’re going to send you back to Toronto,” and the economic imperative took over. He needed to work. He needed to call the rest of his family. That’s what made him stop smoking. Lovely story; I never forgot it.

We came in 1962, with the four brothers. My older brother had come, as I said, in 1956. My sister came in 1960. And I went to Ossington/Old Orchard. I was in grade 4 in Italy; they put me back in grade 3. I was there listening to this teacher and I couldn't understand a single word she was saying. It was a math lesson. She asked me a question; I couldn't understand it. They moved me to grade 2.

Laughter.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And it seems funny today, but what a tragic thing, for a young man who didn't understand a single word, to be moved to another grade. And I understood math more than the other students did; I just didn't understand what she was asking me.

1500

I remember running crying to my older brother, because we had Ossington/Old Orchard on one side—there were two schools, one on Dovercourt, the other one on Ossington—running to the other school, telling my brothers what had happened, in tears. I'm sure I wasn't the only one. It happened to many Italians and other immigrants. These are sad stories that one doesn't like telling.

Another sad story: My brother John, in 1962 or 1963, said he was walking down Grace Street with a friend of his, and two policeman in a cruiser stopped him. I asked my brother why, and he said he didn't know. They were walking down Grace Street, not doing anything, and the cops stopped them and took them for a ride around the city. They even threatened to throw them into the lake. Why would they do that? They didn't have a clue. Because they could, I guess, in 1962 or 1963. It's a terrible story to remember.

Being Catholic in those days wasn't easy either, particularly in the 1920s. Being Catholic was something you hid. When you applied for jobs, you made sure that you didn't put your religion behind it. Of course, if you happened to have an Italian name, it's a given what you are. But it was tough to be a Catholic.

And let's not forget the loitering laws. You weren't permitted to loiter in the streets. It was a way to make sure that Italians and others didn't congregate on College Street at the bars or just to chat. It wasn't until the Charter of Rights that we got rid of those crazy laws, dumb laws.

But look at the sacrifices Italians made, and it wasn't just Italians; it's every immigrant. Every immigrant has the same story. My father worked hard in construction. He got up every morning at 6 o'clock until he retired, and when he retired he couldn't retire, because he didn't know how to retire. They're tough stories. It's not an Italian story; you could put there “Portuguese”; you could put whatever linguistic community or racial community you want. It's the same story.

So there's much to celebrate in terms of where we came from and what we accomplished. In all professions of our economy, whether it's politicians, whether it's doctors or the more than 600 lawyers we have in Ontario—it doesn't matter what profession you're talking about, Italians are well integrated in this society. We now have Conservative politicians who are of Italian origin.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Misguided, absolutely misguided.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's to tell you how much things have changed. And we still have some New Democrats left to tell you that some things never change.

It's a wonderful history to talk about. I've got to tell you, I'm a big promoter of multilingualism. I'm a big promoter of bilingualism. I believe every Canadian should be bilingual. There ought to be no reason not to speak French in this country, and yet we pounce upon Quebecers as if somehow they're a pariah. I don't understand; never did. I was a teacher of English and French and proud of it. I speak Italian, not perfectly, but I am proud of that; and I speak Spanish, not perfectly, but I'm proud of that. We should all be multilingual. It's good for us all.

But I worry about our ability to retain the language. I worry about the commitment we have to be able to maintain our second and third languages. Would that we could, and if we make an effort, we can. It's good psychologically, it's good socially, and it's good economically.

We mustn't forget the past, should not forget where we are. I remind all of our immigrant brothers and sisters that the new immigrants coming into the country today face the same difficulties and more than we did. Rather than attacking the new immigrants, we should be defending them, as we were attacked. Let's not do to other immigrants what others did to us. Let's not forget that as we celebrate this wonderful occasion, and as we celebrate the passing of this bill and as we celebrate that the House leaders have decided that we should move to third reading today and not wait.

Congratulations. Thank you for coming. It's a great day. Thank you, member from York West, for the initiative and for our ability to co-sponsor with you.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's indeed a pleasure to take part in this debate to make June Italian Heritage Month. It is so important. I, like my good friend Mike Colle, this year celebrated 50 years—

Mr. Mike Colle: Sixty.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I've been 50—I'm much younger than you, Michael—years in this country.

As we grow, as new generations come forward, we tend to forget sometimes. By doing what we are doing here today, it's helping us to remember that heritage.

I was just doing some quick math. Back in 1959, my father came—yes, we are *ciociari*—from Patrica in the province of Frosinone. It was just him. The year after, 1960, my mother, my sister and I came here. Four of us of Italian origin landed in Woodbridge initially, and then I think my father felt sorry for us and moved us to Toronto—Dufferin and Eglinton—because Woodbridge at that time was farms. There was nothing there, except about three feet of snow when I got here in February. I'd never seen snow before. There were four of us. I did the quick math, and there's 31 of us now. I have nine grandkids, four kids all married, and my sister has two kids. Her kids are married with grandkids. My mother is still alive. From four to 31, that is phenomenal.

But it worries me that my kids and my grandkids might not remember where their roots were born. We need to do things like this to remember. For example, I am happy to say that I don't miss too many—on November 13, this year, is the Festa delle castagne in our home town of Patrica. We get together every year, and I meet some of my friends and uncles and cousins who probably only see each other once a year. We need to do more of that.

My father and some of the folks who came before him and even after him, when we look and see, came here with virtually nothing. They left their home, they left their family behind, to come to a country they had no knowledge of whatsoever.

I, too, like my friend Rosario, went to Regal Road public school in grade 5, and they put me in grade 4. The only thing that I could do was math because it was easy to add, it was easy to subtract. There was no language barrier there.

But it was great because Canada embraced us with open arms. We really need to cherish what we have here. I am a proud Canadian by all means, but proud of our heritage. But more so, proud of Canada for truly opening its arms. It allowed us, as immigrants, to be in this House to do what we do. That's something that we as Canadians can really be proud of, because in many places around this world—we read every day in the media about dysfunction, whether it's governments, whether it's communities, whether it's countries, where two religions cannot live together. Yet here allows immigrants to do what we do.

Anything we can do to retain the heritage, not just Italian heritage but from all different parts of the world, is something we should nourish and promote even more and more.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I, too, would like to welcome the many representatives from the Italian community today, and a very special welcome to my constituent Mr. Anthony Pullano, who is a renowned artist and a good friend.

I want to commend my colleagues for bringing this bill forward. As the member from York West indicated, his motivation is rooted in very personal feelings. That is understandable to those of us who are immigrants to this country, too.

My story in school: The first day, I didn't understand anything either, but they didn't send me back. I was lucky because it was only grade 1, so there was no place to send me, or they would have sent me back, too.

But somehow we made it. Somehow we have so much to be appreciative of: our culture, our heritage and those who came before us—our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents who made the decision to come to this country because of the opportunity that it represented, not for something that they would receive but for something that they would be able to do. All they were looking for was an opportunity, and so it's appropriate that through this bill today, we honour the memory, we honour that incredible tradition of a work ethic and vision and a pioneering spirit that the Italian community represented.

1510

When Giovanni Caboto saw the shores of Newfoundland for the first time, he said, "Buona vista"—a beautiful sight. Little did he know at that time that generations of Italian immigrants would come to this shore and would take that beautiful sight and make it into something even better. Whether it's the subdivisions of houses or whether it's the retail stores or the towers of buildings that we have, we have so much to be grateful for to the many Italian professionals and entrepreneurs and financiers who actually took up the challenge to build this great province. And so we have it here.

Just one example: Alfredo DeGasperis, who, once every year, through the United Way's builders' luncheon, raises hundreds of thousands of dollars—this past year, \$600,000, and over the last number of years, more than \$5.5 million—for the good causes of our United Way initiatives and our social services network.

So it's not just about building buildings; it's about building our society and our culture and ensuring that we have a quality of life. To all in the Italian community and this great province of ours, I say thank you. It's appropriate that we honour the Italian community with this special legislation today.

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

Mr. Greg Sorbara: This is just an incredibly touching day for me. I want to begin by congratulating my colleague from York West and his co-sponsors for bringing this bill to this Parliament. From now on, June will be the month to remember the great contribution of Canadians of Italian origin to the city, to the province and to the entire nation.

I have, for many years now, represented the largest Italian city outside of Italy: Woodbridge in Vaughan. It is just such a joy, when I walk through my community, to see the vibrant way in which we live our lives there. But in a few moments that I have, I want to make just a couple of points.

First of all, I want to tell you how proud I am as an Ontario parliamentarian how many parliamentarians of Italian origin have set aside their private lives to come and sit in this chamber and serve so magnificently on all sides of the House and how many Italian Canadians have made such a powerful contribution to this great nation. My friend Mike Colle mentioned a few. I think of Frank Iacobucci, who served for so many years and so magnificently as a member of the Supreme Court of Canada.

I want to just tell the story of my own dad coming to this country. He came in 1926 with his mom, his younger brother and his two younger sisters. His dad was already here. His dad had a problem with alcohol. It never left him. Shortly after he arrived, his mom died. He had to look after his dad and his younger family. And then, just to top it all off, the entire continent went into a depression. Life was so hard. I remember the stories of how they had to go to the rail yards after midnight and steal the coal that fell off the coal trucks in order to stay warm. But they never lost their determination to be great Canadians.

By the time I was born, my dad was already a success in business. What I remember from him most powerfully was his passion for this country and his passion for the idea of giving public service.

I remember the day that John F. Kennedy died. I rarely saw my dad cry. I came into the house. He was in front of the television and tears were streaming down his eyes. I think that moment gave me an insight about how important politics is.

As we celebrate the passing of this bill and thank the House for considering doing three readings, I just want to say that for those of us who are Canadians of Italian origin, this is a magnificent moment and a great tribute to my friend from York West, his co-sponsors and all of the members of this Parliament.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month. I'm certainly delighted that it has been sponsored by all three parties of this Legislature, starting with the member from York West, also by the member from Trinity-Spadina and by my own colleague the member from Thornhill.

I can't claim any Italian heritage myself, unfortunately, but I am certainly appreciative of the major contribution that Italian Canadians have made to Canada in terms of literally building our cities, including Toronto, and in three other particular areas. Because I only have a few minutes to speak, I'd like to talk about a couple of things that are important to me where Italian Canadians have made a major impact.

One is on fashion. I don't know that we've talked that much about that this afternoon, but we're all familiar with Armani and Versace and Missoni. We also have very major Italian Canadian fashion designers who are making waves across the world: Franco Mirabelli, Marisa Minicucci and many others. So we're very grateful for

the fashion statements that Italian Canadians have made on the Canadian fashion scene.

The second one is food, and I don't want to talk too much about it, because we all love Italian food, but I just want to relate a personal anecdote about my own cooking experience. I've tried for 25 years to make proper tomato sauce, and I can only say that it was last year that I learned from my good friend Angela Montemarano how to finally do it. So my family is grateful, my sons are grateful and all their roommates at university are extremely grateful that I finally learned how to do it. It's delicious, so thank you very much.

Finally, art. I would like to just comment on a significant donation that was made by Italian Canadians to the Art Gallery of Ontario in April 2007. A \$10-million gift was received from 20 Italian Canadian families, and in recognition of this gift to the Art Gallery of Ontario they named its sculpture promenade the Galleria Italia. I think it's one of the major attractions now at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Six other families have joined since this initiative was started. So we're very grateful to the major contribution that has been made by Italian Canadians, not only to the art world but to music, to opera and to all of the other visual arts. Thank you so much for doing that.

I would, just in the few minutes that are left to me, also like to welcome Saverio Montemarano and Tito-Dante Marimpietri from my home riding of Durham region and Whitby-Oshawa—thank you so much for joining us here today—and all of the other proud Italian Canadians who are here to witness this debate. Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for York West has up to two minutes for his response. Mr. Sergio?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Starting with the member from Whitby-Oshawa, our members from Vaughan, Newmarket-Aurora, Northumberland-Quinte West, Kitchener-Waterloo, Eglinton-Lawrence, Welland and of course my two co-sponsors, thank you for your contributions.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of the people who wanted to be present here for the deliberations today. I have my own MP, Judy Sgro, with us today. Thank you for coming. We have the member from I believe it's Etobicoke Centre, Borys Wrzesnewskyj—I hope I did a good job.

I think everybody should be mentioned for coming down today, but I know my colleague—oh, he's here; he's come back, yes. I want our Minister of Labour, Mr. Peter Fonseca, to know that we have a lot of his constituents from Mississauga here. See? They wanted to be present as well. We have the president of COMITES, Mr. Gino Cucchi, and of course the omnipresent Lenny Lombardi. He does so much for our Italian community so well. We have the representative of RAI International; that is the Italian TV station which we get in direct programming now in Canada. I know Cristiano De Florentiis is around somewhere.

With all due respect, he has been mentioned, I think, three or four times. These are the types of people who,

after the 1940s and the 1950s and the 1960s—that's when their imagination really caught, and we have people like Montemarano who built our homes and bridges and the high-rises and everything else.

These are the pioneers, and I have to thank all of you for being here today. Thank you, all the members of the House, for giving the Italian community this wonderful honour today.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): This concludes the time allotted for Mr. Sergio's ballot item. For those in the gallery and those watching at home, we will vote on Mr. Sergio's item in about 50 minutes.

DEFENDING EMPLOYEES'
RIGHTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA DÉFENSE
DES DROITS DES EMPLOYÉS

Mr. Hillier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to increase the rights of members of trade unions and the duty of trade unions to disclose financial information / Projet de loi 71, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail pour accroître les droits des membres des syndicats et l'obligation des syndicats de divulguer des renseignements financiers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order number 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Bill 71 is in response to what I think is clear to everyone: the failure of our labour legislation to protect the individual rights and freedoms of members of trade unions and workers throughout the province.

I'd make it known to everyone in this House, if they're not aware now, that the construction and building trades unions are the only sector of our workforce that can be prevented from having a free, fair and open vote to determine if they wish to be represented by a union—the only sector in this province that is obstructed from that concept of having a secret ballot to express their views.

This bill also seeks to address that problem of accountability with the disclosure of financing for unions, to give members a clear view and insight into the financial activities of their union, as well as giving workers a choice to determine what those mandatory dues are used for.

When we look at these items, these are not difficult items; they're not complex items. These are just items that can be easily solved with those time-honoured traditions and conventions that we do with all other sectors of employment and all other businesses in this province, and that is to ensure accountability through transparency and openness, to assure the protection of individual freedoms and rights by allowing choice and providing a mech-

anism where that choice can be expressed freely, as well as using informed consent to solve some of these problems.

In 2008, Nanos polled over 1,000 unionized workers in this country, and the results were quite amazing: 80% of unionized Canadians oppose union leaders giving dues to political parties or putting that money to uses other than collective bargaining rights; almost 70% of unionized Canadians oppose union leaders giving dues to advocacy groups unrelated to their negotiation or bargaining positions; and 90% of unionized Canadians believe a secret ballot must be required when forming or removing a union. I think those are pretty obvious. Those are fundamental Canadian values: that we must have a vote; that money collected is to be used for its intended purposes; and that unions, first and foremost, must be advocates for negotiations and collective bargaining rights. That's from the Nanos poll in 2008.

I will say, because we haven't implemented those time-honoured traditions in our labour laws here in Ontario, we have created very skewed and ineffective employment for those in the building trades unions especially.

I hear from many, many constituents, as a labour critic. I also hear from many employers and employees from around the province. It really is sad when I hear people from all over this province complaining that they are not treated in the same fashion as other sectors.

I've received calls from Arc Electrical, from Good Mechanical in Smiths Falls, from Blenheim Electric, from Eagleson Construction in Peterborough and a host of different contractors and employers. All of them are saying the same thing: that not allowing openness, not allowing secret ballots to determine unionization puts them into a position where their members, their employees, are not treated fairly.

I know that the present legislation was surely not intended to achieve the outcomes that we now face, but all these firms are clear that the present system allows for abuse of process, abuse of authority and prevents the free, informed consent of their employees from being implemented.

It really is amazing to me that we would have such archaic legislation on the books, archaic legislation that prevents people from expressing their democratic freedoms and rights through a secret ballot.

I'm sure everybody in this House would have expected our labour laws to have come into the 21st century long ago. But, no, we still have on the books that building trades and construction workers can be prevented from exercising a vote to determine their collective bargaining rights.

We also see that unions, unlike any other public entity—unlike a charity or unlike a public corporation, which must disclose their financial activities to their shareholders and the public at large—do not have to disclose any of their financial activities.

Indeed, if any of us—when I was a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the only

way I could get financial activity on that union local was by going to the United States treasury department, because it's an international union. The United States imposes financial disclosure on all unions in their country, but we do not do that here. I have to go and look at American websites to find out what the financial activities are of my union local here. If you belong to a union that is not an international union, then you have no avenue to find out what those activities are.

Of course, secrecy—or without that openness—does allow for abuse. That's the only place where abuse can happen, if things are not available to be scrutinized by the public, and that goes to the third element of this bill. Some unions, sometimes, use their funds in manners which are not related to collective bargaining rights or to the negotiations, and we don't absolutely know for sure just how much that is because there is no financial disclosure imposed.

1530

But with what this bill seeks to do, unions will still be allowed to spend their mandatory dues that they've collected on any activity when a member expressly consents. If the union member does not consent to his mandatory dues being used for advocacy or for political activities, then that union cannot deduct that amount. So it puts some checks and balances into the system, and those checks and balances are not unique or revolutionary. These are the same checks and balances that we use for everybody in society: informed consent, free and open secret ballots, and transparency and accountability.

It's a very important bill and it's a very important time that the Ontario Legislature brings our labour laws back in line and out of the Dark Ages, the archaic ages of preventing people from expressing their views democratically. If we are to achieve progress and labour harmony and prosperity, building trades, construction trades must be treated with the same fairness and the same level of protection that all other trades or industrial workers are protected with through legislation. It is quite amazing that this has not been changed yet. I know the Liberal government talks much of protecting labour, recognizing the importance of labour. It's time that we turn that talk into action, that we protect our tradesmen with the same fundamental freedoms that everybody else in this province enjoys: the right to a secret ballot to express their wishes and full financial disclosure for public unions so that their members understand and can scrutinize what those financial activities are.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, let me make it clear. New Democrats couldn't disagree more. We not only don't support this bill; we'll vote against it.

Let's be clear: The labour union movement, the trade union movement, is the single most important institution in our society in the promotion and creation of social and economic justice, more so than any other institution, including, quite frankly, Parliaments.

Most recently, in the course of the last 40 and 50 years, it has been the trade unions and labour unions that

have advanced the cause of feminism, and that is equal rights for women; that have attacked sexism; that have attacked homophobia; and that have attacked racism. It's a trade union movement's role in these movements against racism, sexism and homophobia that is in the largest part responsible for breaking through some pretty formidable barriers to some pretty big chunks of our communities.

The union is more relevant now than ever, as we are being confronted with the ugly, dangerous realities of globalization. I remember back in 1988, along with so many other people, when Ed Broadbent and New Democrats opposed the Brian Mulroney free trade deal. We predicted grave harm to the Canadian economy and to what there was of Canadian culture. And while we weren't entirely sure as we warned people about the consequences of free trade, now, after a relatively short period of free trade—and then, of course, Jean Chrétien couldn't help himself but join and ally with Brian Mulroney and expand free trade. He didn't care about the free trade deal. Jean Chrétien, the Liberal, of course expanded free trade to the North American free trade agreement. And then globalization, all of that which was predicted, has turned out to be truer and more frightening and more awesome than any of us even imagined in 1988.

I note that Statistics Canada, with what appears to be its most recent analysis, in 2006, identifies the unionization rate in Ontario at approximately 28%. Interesting; nationally it's at 32%. I suspect that that rate is much lower now because of the loss of jobs, mostly industrial jobs, over the course of the last four and five years—thank you very much, Premier McGuinty—some 300,000-plus, and a large chunk, if not the biggest chunk, of those jobs were unionized jobs. What does that mean? It means that they were better-paying jobs than they would have been if they were non-union jobs. What it means is that those workers were far more likely to have pension plans. It means that those workers were far more likely to have health benefits plans. It means that those workers were far more likely to have a greater degree of control over safety in their workplace. I not only oppose this legislation; I bemoan the fact that more workers aren't unionized.

Of course, Premier McGuinty's stubborn and discriminatory stance against agricultural workers—because the Premier of this province, Premier McGuinty, persists in insisting that agricultural workers, workers in some of the most dangerous occupations in North America, notwithstanding the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, don't have a right to be a part of a trade union and collectively bargain. Because we know—we know, we know, we know—that a unionized workplace is a safer workplace. And we know, we know, we know that agricultural workers—we're talking about the corporate farms. We're not talking about the family farm, we're talking about the corporate farms.

We heard this morning from Ms. DiNovo, when she questioned the Minister of Labour about the failure to

inspect those farms, especially in light of recent deaths and a legacy of far too many deaths over the course of the years. We know that unionized workplaces are safer workplaces, because workers have, through the collective bargaining process, a greater degree of control over safety in the workplace and are better-educated about their rights to refuse unsafe work, for instance.

I find some of the arguments disingenuous. The Ontario Labour Relations Act contains section 92, and subsection 92(1) is the duty of unions to furnish financial statements to members: "Every trade union shall upon the request of any member furnish the member, without charge, with a copy of the" latest "audited financial statement of its affairs."

The sponsor of this bill seems to have a problem with social unionism and may embrace the Gompers-style unionism that permeated a whole lot of the American union movement. He and I disagree very fundamentally on that perspective. As a matter of fact, in an interesting book, *There is Power in a Union: The Epic Story of Labor in America*, by Philip Dray, it is the view of that author that it is to our detriment that unions, and he's speaking in the context of the United States, "have lost their reformist zeal. To regain it, he says, they must in the 21st century reinvigorate their historic role as campaigners for social justice and work with global partners 'in environmental, development and human rights issues.' With high unemployment concentrating labour's minds on the here and now," it is proposed that "he will find"—he, the author, Mr. Dray—"it hard to get a hearing" for his proposal.

1540

We have a duty, it seems to me, as unionized workers, when we're fortunate enough to be in a unionized workplace, to advance the interests of workers not just in our own community and not just in our own workplace but in other parts of North America and in other parts of the world. Indeed, the argument has been made far too often, yet not heeded, that Canadian workers will compete with any worker anywhere on the world but on a level playing field. The way to achieve that level playing field, of course, was to ensure that those workers are unionized too, be they in Mexico, be they in Thailand, be they in any of those places in the world, like the Philippines, where a whole lot of the low-wage labour produces a whole lot of products that have become the mainstay in the world of the Canadian consumer.

We have section 92. The sponsor of this bill seems to be perturbed that Mr. McGuinty gave card-based certification rights to construction workers. New Democrats are perturbed that he didn't give it to every worker in the province. Unionization is at 28%—and I suspect it's lower than that because that was in 2006. The recovery that Mr. McGuinty brags about is very much a jobless recovery. Where there are jobs, they tend to be lower-wage jobs and non-union jobs. It's our view as New Democrats that the Walmart worker should have the same rights, when it comes to forming a union and collective bargaining, as the construction worker. That

means that when a clear majority of those workers have signed union cards, indicating their interest in belonging to a union and engage in collective bargaining, there should be a recognition of that and a certification of them as a union.

We have secret ballot votes with but 40% of workers in a non-construction industry. We have secret ballot votes, but we also know that companies like the Walmarts of the world will go to great lengths to abuse and intimidate those workers, whether it's Walmart, whether it's the workers at Casino Niagara, whether it's the workers at any other number of workplaces.

I'm in one of those difficult positions where 12 minutes clearly wasn't sufficient. I'm simply going to create a record here for Hansard that I don't think has existed yet. I rely upon the words of that great songsmith Woody Guthrie:

There once was a union maid
Who never was afraid
Of goons and ginks and company finks
And deputy sheriffs who made the raids.
She went to the union hall
When a meeting it was called,
And when the Legion boys come 'round
She always stood her ground.
This union maid was wise
To the tricks of company spies;
She couldn't be fooled by a company stool
She'd always organize the guys.
She always got her way
When she struck for better pay.
She'd show her card to the National Guard
And this is what she'd say:
"Oh, you can't scare me; I'm sticking to the union."

The unions are the healthiest thing we have in our society as we are forced into globalization. If anything, this government should be condemned for its anti-union stance, for its refusal to revive anti-scab legislation. New Democrats are 100% in support and will fight for anti-scab legislation.

This government demonstrates its anti-worker stance for its refusal to allow agricultural workers to belong to unions and collectively bargain. New Democrats stand firmly in support of agricultural workers and the right to form a union and collectively bargain.

This government displays its anti-labour stance when it refuses to extend historic—card-based certification is an historic reality for workers, taken away in the darkest days of the Mike Harris government. Of course, Mike Harris found an ally in the newly anointed Premier McGuinty in his first term, when Premier McGuinty aligned himself with the worst of the Harris policies when it came to working women and men.

My father was a unionized worker. He was an immigrant. I owe a great deal to the union and the union movement. It kept five kids well-fed. It got five kids through high school and into college and university. And it wasn't just my family; it was thousands of other

families. The union and the union movement is responsible for the existence of a working middle class in this country. This government and its predecessor are responsible for the erosion and the attack on that working middle class.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: It's a pleasure to join in this debate. I am opposed to this bill that's been brought forward by the member for Lanark-Frontenac. The thrust, the heart of this bill will rip the guts out of responsible union administration, and I say that with a feeling that that is what's really going to happen.

My father was a card-carrying member of the old UAW, United Auto Workers, which was the predecessor to the current CAW. A lesson that I learned at my father's feet was that a responsible union movement could do a lot, has done a lot and will continue to do a lot to improve the lives of the workers.

Now, what does my friend the member from Lanark-Frontenac's bill do? It sets back the labour relations regime here in Ontario that has existed for years and years and years. This government, working with the union movement, working with the employers, has established a regime of labour relations which is second to none in Canada and in North America. That regime is based on a certain balance between the ambitions and the needs of the union, the ambitions and needs of the employer, and, indeed, the ambitions and needs of the public at large. We in Ontario have a reputation throughout the country, throughout North America, for having got that balance right.

If you read the member for Lanark-Frontenac's bill carefully, it tips the relationship, that balance, so much, so far to the employers' side that it will set back the peace in the labour relations movement, I dare say, years and years and years. That setback is not in the interests of the employer, and if you talk to responsible employers, they don't want to see that balance disturbed; if you talk to the responsible union movement, they do not want to see that balance disturbed; and the members of the voting public don't want to see that balance disturbed.

Why don't we want to see that balance and that relationship disturbed or tilted in favour of one party or the other? That is because Ontario's manufacturing economy and, indeed, our economy broadly speaking, is founded on a healthy employer-employee relationship. This bill will just rip the guts out of that relationship.

Let me just point out one example. When you read the bill through, one of the things that it contemplates is that there will be all sorts of restrictions on what unions can do with the dues that they collect from their employers, and the sort of implicit intent of the bill is to say to the union, "You can't use union dues for a whole raft of things, a whole raft of initiatives, a whole raft of public initiatives and so on." That provision is designed to really neuter the public voice of the union.

Now, that provision isn't going anywhere because the Supreme Court of Canada has already ruled on that particular issue in a case called Lavigne and the Ontario

public service, where there was a movement to prevent the union from collecting fees and spending those fees for public education and that sort of thing. The Supreme Court of Canada clearly said, "No, a union can collect fees for that purpose, and it can use the fees for those sorts of purposes." This bill that we're debating this afternoon, in effect, says to the Supreme Court of Canada, "You got it wrong. We're going to go ahead and put these restrictions on how unions can use their dues."

1550

I say to the member from Lanark-Frontenac, he's got it dead wrong. The responsible labour and employer parties in this balance that I refer to understand that the unions have that latitude, and the Supreme Court of Canada has agreed. So I say to the member for Lanark-Frontenac, you have got a real uphill battle in this ill-planned thinking that you've got to rip the guts out of the union movement.

My friend opposite from Welland referred to a Woody Guthrie song. I, too, know that song, and my father has got part 2 of that song. I'm going to put part 2 on the record just so we've got the full thing here. It refers to the wives and girlfriends of union workers:

You gals who want to be free, just take a tip from me;

Get you a man who's a union man and join the ladies' union auxiliary.

Married life ain't hard when you got a union card,

A union man has a happy life when he's got a union wife.

I remember my father singing that song to my mother from time to time when she would get a bit exasperated with him.

Anyway, back to my serious point: If you take the 30,000-foot view of this private member's bill, what it's designed to do is to disturb this—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Destroy.

Mr. David Zimmer:—"destroy," my friend beside me said—yes, to destroy this very delicate and proper and working balance that we in Ontario have achieved over years. It's been a struggle from all parties' sides, from the union side, from the employer side, from the public side. But we've got a balance there. We disturb that delicate balance at its peril.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just want to take a moment to welcome to the Legislature this afternoon a former Speaker, the Honourable Alvin Curling, member for Scarborough-Rouge River and member for Scarborough North, in the 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th and 38th Parliament. Congratulations, sir. Welcome.

Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank my colleague for bringing this forward. The member from Lanark-Frontenac, I believe, has brought this legislation forward with the best of intentions, and I found it quite interesting when I listened to my colleague from the Liberal side of the House and his representation of this legislation.

I'm not at all surprised by my colleague from Niagara—is it Niagara?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Welland. In Niagara.

Mr. Frank Klees: It's close.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's in Niagara.

Mr. Frank Klees: It's in Niagara, from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm not surprised by the member from Welland because the man has principles—principles I don't agree with, but he has principles. I'm sure that even my colleague the member from Lanark-Frontenac didn't expect that the member from Welland would support this, because we know where this honourable colleague stands.

However, when we listened to the members of the Liberal caucus—and I'm sure, one by one, they will say the same thing: how terrible this is and how this will absolutely destroy the union movement and somehow disturb this perfect balance that this government has achieved between labour and management.

Let's investigate this a little more carefully. This perfect balance that's been achieved by the Liberal government under the leadership of Premier McGuinty is, on the one hand, saying to a certain segment within the union movement—a certain trade, the construction trade—that they should have a right that no other trade should have.

Well, there's balance, the McGuinty definition of balance: "I'll do it for one group." Why? Perhaps, if you investigate why, you might find out that there are some pretty powerful people behind that lobby, that there was something owed by the McGuinty government to that particular lobby and that particular sector, and that's why they were given this right that no other trade union and no other trade was given. This same argument—I'm anxious to hear from the Liberal caucus as to why.

As the member from Welland said, based on his consistent principles, all workers should be able to unionize, to organize. Not according to Dalton McGuinty—not that I agree with that. I'm simply saying that you can't argue on the one hand that you've achieved this perfect balance, and argue on the one hand how important the ability to unionize is to workers in this province, but you don't give it to some. I find the argument absolutely inconsistent, but that inconsistency is consistent with the way the McGuinty government delivers policy in this province.

What really is at stake here? What is the member asking in his legislation? This, the same thing that every reasonable person in the province of Ontario asks when they make a decision that is of significant importance and they want to do so in confidence. They're asking for a simple thing, and that's called a secret ballot.

Sixty per cent of members of every other union have the right to express their opinions by way of secret ballot. I wonder what it is about the construction trade that somehow those workers are not entitled to that same right. Where is the balance? I ask the McGuinty Liberal caucus. I don't know how you square that. I simply don't know how you square that.

The second thing that is being asked for is full disclosure of the financial dealings of the union organ-

ization. The minute that someone talks about not being willing to make full disclosure, you have to automatically ask the question: "Why?" If there's nothing to hide, then why make a fuss about this simple request? That's all it is: disclosure, full disclosure.

I am surprised, frankly. We have heard nothing but the need for full disclosure from this government. They talk the game. They are going to ensure full accountability, full disclosure by their cabinet ministers and by their government. Why would you not ask the same of a union organization that collects multi-millions and billions of dollars from hard-working Ontarians every single week? Why do those employees not have the right to know where those union dues go and what they're used for?

If we want to be fair, I would also think that it would be appropriate that if those members of that particular union, as an example, do not want their union dues to be used to support a particular political party or a particular cause that they have objections to—why would they not be given that right? It seems to me that that would simply be fair. What is it? I know how the member from Welland justifies that. I don't understand how the Liberal caucus can justify that and claim to be consistent, claim to be for transparency and claim to be for fairness.

1600

Finally, the final point in this bill simply talks about getting confirmation, direction and authorization from the union members as to how those funds are going to be used which are deducted from their cheques every week. I don't know how else you can explain this other than that we want workers to have control over where their dues are going. That is a simple request and I think is something that should be done.

I rest my case. I'm anxious to hear from other Liberal caucus members who are going to debate this as to how they square doing one thing on the one hand and something else on the other. It's absolute inconsistency and absolute contradiction in their position.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak about Bill 71 this afternoon.

It's interesting. Normally I have morning House duty on Thursday, but I had to come back this afternoon. I was at the CAW retirees meeting this morning in Peterborough and had the opportunity to chat with some of my good friends there: Bill Woodbeck, who has been a long-time labour leader in Peterborough, who is the president of the CAW retirees; and my good friend Norm Wedlock, who is the secretary for the CAW retirees.

I come to this perspective from a very personal review. It's interesting: Most of the CAW retirees in Peterborough—the member from Welland may want to hear this—of course were formally members of the UEW. My late father, who worked for GE in Peterborough for some 40 years, was a chief steward for the UEW, and I remember as a very young guy reading some of the interesting writings of C.S. Jackson, who was the long-time president of the United Electrical Workers in

Ontario and Canada and indeed was viewed as one of the labour leaders post World War II in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Dave Levac: Do you know any Woody Guthrie songs?

Mr. Jeff Leal: No, I don't have any of those.

It's interesting, when you look at the labour movement in Peterborough in the mid 1960s, General Electric of course provided the land for the establishment of Trent University in Peterborough, and the UEW, which was then representing the workers in Peterborough, designed a check-off plan to support the building of Trent University on the premise that maybe the sons and daughters of GE employees would indeed attend that university, which was the case for me personally.

We heard earlier today a very eloquent speech by the member from York West dealing with Bill 103, the act to proclaim Italian heritage day in June. He talked about the issue of Hoggs Hollow in 1960, when five young Italian Canadians died in a labour accident. Out of that, he talked about the history, the then-Premier of Ontario, Mr. Frost, bringing in new labour relations laws in the province to protect workers.

Of course, we believe in fair and balanced labour laws, which have been the foundation of this province's prosperity for many decades. We also recognize that the Labour Relations Act, 1995, contains the long-standing financial accountability provision for unions and their members. We know that unions in Ontario are required to provide a copy of an audited annual financial statement if it is requested by a union member. If a union member complains that the statement is not complete, the Ontario Labour Relations Board may order the trade union to prepare another audited financial statement. An employee of any bargaining unit across the province of Ontario who believes that his or her union has acted in a manner that is arbitrary, discriminatory or in bad faith in its representation may file a complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Unions that administer vacation pay, health or pension funds are required to provide a copy of their annual financial statement that discloses salaries, fees and commissions charged to the fund, to the union members, if indeed it is requested.

Over the last number of years, we have provided, of course, through Bill 144—the McGuinty government, our government, gave construction workers the right of electing to apply for certification under the vote-based regime or under the new card-based regime, and of course, under the card-based regime, if more than 55% of employees in the proposed bargaining unit are members of the union, the Ontario Labour Relations Board has the discretion to certify the union without a vote.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today and speak in support of the Defending Employees' Rights Act that we've got before the House this afternoon. It's interesting to see the shift in politics here. People understand where a Progressive Conservative caucus would

come from and they certainly understand where the New Democratic caucus would come from, but once again, the government members are floundering around trying to take an easy balance.

I think this is really about transparency. I don't see where this is—I think it was the member for Willowdale who said it was earth-shattering and that it would rip the guts out of unions. That's not what this is about at all. It is absolutely pathetic to think that way.

But it would end card-based certification, mandating that a business can only be unionized on a free and open vote of its employees. I don't think that's such a terrible thing to ask anybody. My God, I think this is better than doing some sneaky thing behind the scenes. If you have a free vote and people have an opportunity to voice their concerns, and when the whole group agrees to unionize, so be it.

I can tell you one thing that doing this will help. It will support some of the small businesses that are already struggling like you wouldn't believe in this economy. I have had a number of them in central Ontario that have come forward, and they've just basically shut their doors. Somebody said, "You're going to be unionized tomorrow under the current laws," and they can't support that. They don't have the financial resources to move ahead, and so the business shuts down, the trucks are put on the market and sold off somewhere, and everyone is out of a job then.

The second thing it does is mandate full yearly financial disclosure of union spending with itemized reports of all payments over \$5,000. Is that earth-shattering? Is that going to tear the guts out of the union, because you ask for disclosure of spending of over \$5,000?

Third, a union would be forced to get a waiver from any member before using their dues for anything other than collective bargaining.

I think that people who are members of any kind of a union, when they spend a large portion of their salary on their union dues, should know exactly where that money is going. I think that's only fair. That's like the Legislative Assembly saying, "We're not going to check into anything that you spend it on." They check every penny we spend here.

I would expect that if you're a member of a union, and those are hard-earned dollars—whether you're a union member or a non-union member, they're hard-earned dollars that you earn, and if somebody else is in control of that money, I think you would like to have an opportunity to have a say in how that money is actually spent.

I think this is a great discussion, and it will be interesting to see how the vote goes here this afternoon. I hope the people at home who have companies that are teetering on the verge of not being around at all and people who may not have job opportunities for other business in the future will watch the outcome of this particular vote here this afternoon.

I thank my colleague for bringing it forward. It's been an interesting debate to hear the three—well, the two

sides. We've heard the third party side. We never really heard what the government members support here. They floundered around everything. They would say only that it's going to tear the guts out of the union movement.

I'm glad to see the minister in the House. I thought he would want to comment on this today. It's a labour bill, and—

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No; no minister is making any kind of a comment today.

It's been a pleasure to make a few comments, and I will be supporting this legislation.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Mr. Hillier, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I found it interesting during the debate that we learned that both the NDP and the Liberal Party learned their political philosophy and concepts of law from a Woody Guthrie songbook. That was the most interesting part of that.

Now, I think it's also important that we understand that both the NDP and the Liberal Party would deny trade unionists the ability, freedom and right to choose. That's what they're saying here. The speakers today will deny trade unionists the ability, the freedom and the right to choose.

It should be obvious to everyone in this House that you cannot have responsibility without scrutiny, you cannot have accountability without disclosure and you cannot have democracy without a vote. Those are understandable, fundamental concepts, but both parties are willing to prevent and obstruct trade unionists from having a vote. Presently, they do not allow the opportunity to have a secret ballot by all employees of a firm. I find it incredible that the elder statesmen for the New Democratic Party would deny trade unionists that fundamental freedom. But if Woody Guthrie is your most important political philosopher and teacher of law, I guess we can understand where this is coming from.

Freedom: We need scrutiny, we need disclosure and we need secret ballots in the building trades unions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

VISUAL FIRE ALARM SYSTEM ACT,
2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SYSTÈMES
D'ALARME-INCENDIE
À AFFICHAGE VISUEL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item 37, standing in the name of Mr. Arthurs.

Mr. Arthurs has moved second reading of Bill 76, An Act respecting visual fire alarm systems in public buildings.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Arthurs?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'd like to send it to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): So ordered.

ITALIAN HERITAGE
MONTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE MOIS
DU PATRIMOINE ITALIEN

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item 38, standing in the name of Mr. Sergio.

Mr. Sergio has moved second reading of Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month.

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

Second reading agreed to.

ITALIAN HERITAGE
MONTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE MOIS
DU PATRIMOINE ITALIEN

Mr. Sergio moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month / Projet de loi 103, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois du patrimoine italien.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

DEFENDING EMPLOYEES'
RIGHTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA DÉFENSE
DES DROITS DES EMPLOYÉS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 39.

Mr. Hillier has moved second reading of Bill 71, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to increase the rights of members of trade unions and the duty of trade unions to disclose financial information

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1614 to 1619.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Hillier, Randy

Klees, Frank
Miller, Norm
Shurman, Peter

Sterling, Norman W.
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Best, Margaret
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Chiarelli, Bob
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Fonseca, Peter
Jaczek, Helena

Johnson, Rick
Kormos, Peter
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
McNeely, Phil
Miller, Paul
Moridi, Reza

Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Greg
Takhar, Harinder S.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 8; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business have now been completed.

Just before I call orders of the day, let's congratulate and thank—and wish them well—all of our pages.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, October 18 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1622.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of 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	

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Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
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Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
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Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
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David Zimmer
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
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Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
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Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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