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Thursday 21 October 2010

Jeudi 21 octobre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 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 non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPEN FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO
PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 15, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 68, An Act to promote Ontario as open for business by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 68, Loi favorisant un Ontario propice aux affaires en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 68. As you know, this bill affects 10 different ministries. My colleagues have addressed some of the broader problems with this bill, so I want to focus on a particular concern of my caucus and of farmers across Ontario: the changes to the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act.

The McGuinty government claims this legislation is about streamlining and cutting red tape, but they neglect to mention that it also weakens protection for farmers who lose livestock to predators. In fact, the government didn't even mention these changes in the briefing package they distributed on this bill. I raised this concern in the spring during second reading, but when I look through the amended version of the bill, there are no changes to ensure that farmers will be protected and that farmers receive the compensation they need.

Currently, it is legislated by the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act that farmers who lose livestock to predators such as wolves, coyotes or dogs must be compensated—I emphasize the word “must.” Although all compensation is delivered by municipalities, the compensation for livestock killed by wolves and coyotes is funded by the province. If this legislation is passed as written, the only compensation that will be guaranteed through legislation is for livestock killed by dogs, which is the part funded by municipalities.

The McGuinty government wants to move compensation for livestock killed by wolves and coyotes, as well as damage to honey bee hives by bears, into regulation. This means they can change or reduce the compensation at any time behind closed doors without any consultation. The McGuinty government says this was in response to requests from stakeholders, but what stakeholders had been asking for was not to have legislation weakened; it was to have the compensation schedule updated. That isn't in the legislation. That is in the regulation, and the government could have done that at any time. They don't need to change the legislation to do that. As PCs, we are supportive of updating the compensation levels and we are supportive of expanding what is covered, but we cannot support changes that will weaken the protection for our farmers.

When the bill was introduced, it said that compensation would be provided through regulation, but there was no plan for what the new regulations would look like. In fact, during the AMO conference, the minister met with the mayors and boasted that the draft regulations were on the website. The mayors looked and couldn't find them because they weren't posted until a week after the AMO conference.

Now that the discussion paper has been posted, we can see there are a number of problems with the draft regulations. The proposed funding is a federal-provincial split, which likely means that the minister is planning to take the money out of the risk management programs, which provide direct support to farmers, to fund this compensation. My office emailed for clarification from the minister's office on August 25, and we're still waiting for a response. That is almost two months ago, and I have to admit that I'm starting to wonder if they're ever going to answer that question.

In fact, going through the discussion paper, I discovered that they are proposing that “compensation would be allowable income in the program year in the Agri-Stability program but not in the reference period.” This means that the compensation paid to farmers for livestock that is lost to predators would take away from the amount of support that farmers will be eligible to receive in that year. The government is trying to have it both ways, because when they assess what the farmer has earned over the past five years to calculate any future support payments, the compensation won't count as income.

At the end of the discussion paper is a description of the current program that includes a line that says, “Over the past seven years, claims under the program have

increased from \$755,000 in 2002-3 to \$1.469 million in 2009-10.” If the McGuinty government’s goal isn’t to reduce costs, why is that line in the paper at all?

The truth is that the amount of livestock being lost to predators is increasing. A recent article in the Kingston Whig-Standard says, “In Leeds–Grenville, the Ontario government paid \$85,000 to farmers last year to compensate for lost livestock, mainly sheep and calves. That’s more than double what was doled out in 2007-8, when \$40,000 was paid to area farmers, according to the agriculture ministry spokesman.” A councillor in Picton said the coyote infestation in their area is “almost at crisis level.” Farm Forum magazine reports “record numbers of marauding coyotes.”

Instead of dealing with the problem or ensuring that farmers are being properly compensated for their losses, this government is looking at ways it can cut its own costs by taking it out of the farmers’ pockets. I’ve already explained the impact on support payments, but reading the discussion paper, it seems there are other ways they are trying to put the cost back on to our farmers.

0910

When a farmer loses livestock, they must call a valuer out to the farm to verify. That’s the same as our present system. However, when the valuer comes out to the farm under the new proposal, “If the evidence is inconclusive, but the probable cause of loss is from an eligible predator, the producer would receive one-half payment.” That means that unless the valuer actually sees the coyote attacking livestock when they go out to the farm, the farmer’s compensation could be cut by 50%. In addition, they can deny compensation if there are any steps the farmer could have taken to avoid the loss. With a government that’s trying to cut costs, that rule could easily be used against farmers.

Farmers are always better off raising livestock and sending it to market. The government is implying that farmers are intentionally encouraging predators to get compensation. We know that isn’t true. Farmers are taking all reasonable steps to avoid losses. Once again, the government is demonstrating how little they think of farmers.

They’ve also demonstrated that with the inclusion of a remedial course, and I find this most interesting. If farmers have multiple claims, the government proposes to force them to attend “a wildlife best management practices workshop” before they’re eligible for any further compensation. Once again, they seem to be thinking the worst of farmers. Instead of offering helpful information or dealing with predator problems, they are designing the rules to punish our farmers.

Another concern raised by farmers is that proposed regulations value livestock at time of death rather than at potential value. The current method accounts for future value. This means that a farmer who now loses a calf is only compensated for what he could get for that calf today, not the income he loses because he no longer has the ability to raise the calf and sell it full-grown. So we

get the value of a newborn calf, because it was destroyed today, and the loss will be that calf for the whole season.

There was a recent article in the Ottawa Sun on this issue, and the first line of the article read, “City hall’s rural services department is bracing for some controversy over the province’s proposal.” The article went on to quote a staff memo to the city’s agriculture and rural affairs committee that said the proposal is “a cause for concern” because “coyotes target calves over weaned cattle.” This is more proof that the McGuinty government just doesn’t understand or support our farmers.

We saw that when they cut support for deadstock removal with no plan in place. We saw that when they gave money to dead and retired farmers and then simply ignored beginning farmers who didn’t receive the support they needed. We saw that when they tried to ban good Ontario chocolate milk in 500-millilitre containers from our schools. We saw it when they transferred money out of the programs that provide direct support for farmers and used it for other priorities. We see it every day in their response to farmers asking for business risk management based on the cost of production.

Our farmers need a government that is fair, honest and trustworthy, not one that tries to sneak in cuts to compensation in an omnibus bill. I urge the government to remove this section from the bill immediately and update the compensation schedule. If they want to make changes to the program to make it work better for farmers, they should introduce a new bill to amend the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act to ensure that our farmers have the protection they deserve.

In wrapping up, I’d just like to point out, on business risk management, how little they think of farmers. One minute they have the business risk management program that includes the cost of production in the program. They have a three-year pilot program. Everybody—farmers, ministry, the minister herself—supported the program; it worked well. But they decided not to continue the pilot program. When all of a sudden the prices are going up, so it will not cost a lot, for public relations they put it back in for one year for grain and oilseeds.

The program is identical for all the other commodities. The government asked them to prepare the program. All the commodities prepared the program. But would the minister include them in this pilot extension? No. She will do nothing for those. She’s just going to carry that other program on for another year—I believe that would be after the next election—and I guess we can assume that will be the end of the program, because that was the only reason it was extended.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me a few moments to speak to the bill. I want to tell you that the part that deals with agriculture in the Open for Business Act is not going to open agriculture for business in Ontario. In fact, it’s going to help close the door on a lot of livestock producers who are no longer going to get paid for predator damage—predator damage caused by the predators that the government is responsible for. I think the government should be ashamed of themselves for doing that.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: First, I want to apologize. I very much want to apologize in advance for anything I say this morning that might be rude or inappropriate, and I want to withdraw in advance anything I say that's unparliamentary.

I want to acknowledge that I'm wont, from time to time, to meander. I consider it a function of age. Quite frankly, any effort on people's parts to address that is an insult to me as a middle-aged male who is prone to meandering. So I hope we have that clearly on the record now, and that perhaps may moderate some of the silly points of order that members of the government, who are otherwise unable to get on the record, are inclined to make from time to time. It's perhaps the only way they have of making their presence here known.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You can take all the time. Peter, take it all.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And my colleague from Timmins—James Bay will be speaking to this.

This bill has been time-allocated. You understand that, don't you? The government put the boots to parliamentary process. It imposed the guillotine motion. A bill this extensive, and one that impacts on, as I'm going to address especially, workers' rights in this province, and especially low-paid workers and vulnerable workers—this government is disinclined to want to have this kind of bill debated, and for reasons that are pretty clear, I think, to most Ontarians. Indeed, I would say to the some 24% of Ontarians who don't say that they would like to see another party in power—because, you see, 76% of Ontarians do say it. You recall the poll. Some 76% of Ontarians do say that they want to see another party in power, and 86% of Ontarians, in the same poll, published September 28, 2010 in the *Toronto Star*, say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago.

New Democrats will be voting against Bill 68, and let me make it very, very clear that the provisions in Bill 68, especially those provisions contained in schedule 9 of Bill 68—and if I can help my friends across the road who may not have ventured that far into the bill, schedule 9 begins at page 133 of the bill, as printed for third reading.

It's incredible that this government, with its pathetic record when it comes to protecting workers in this province, would now insist that before workers can avail themselves of any rights under the Employment Standards Act, they first have to address their concerns to their employer, to the bad boss, in the first place. What were these people thinking? Surely the Minister of Labour, at some point after the bill was printed for first reading, or maybe after second reading—and now that the bill is printed for third reading, he must be giving his head one of those smacks and asking how oblivious he, the Minister of Labour, could have been, should have been, must have been to have required vulnerable employees who are being either ripped off by bad bosses, mistreated by bad bosses, exposed to dangerous work situations by bad bosses or simply abused and misused

by bad bosses—exploited by any boss, for that matter—to go to their boss first with their complaint. Well, the reason they have a complaint is because that boss is, *prima facie*, a bad boss.

What do you think happens to vulnerable workers who raise employment standards issues with a bad boss? They don't last very long at those jobs. They get intimidated. They get beat up on. They get bullied. They get smacked around, figuratively and perhaps even literally. So New Democrats are not going to have any role whatsoever to play in participation with any effort—and this is an extreme effort—to diminish workers' rights in the workplace.

0920

I got stuck. It took me a while to get to page 134 of the bill because I was stuck at the title of the bill: An Act to promote Ontario as open for business. Open for business? Down where I come from, where John Deere just shut down—900 jobs; 100-year-old company in the city of Welland; industrial jobs, manufacturing jobs, wealth-creation jobs, value-added jobs. Wealth doesn't come from casinos. Wealth sure as hell doesn't come from high-priced consultants who are ripping off the taxpayer under the umbrella of this Liberal government as they peddle hospitals' favours to ministers and ministerial staff. Wealth comes from working women and men who make things. Open for business? Not where I come from.

God bless Lakeside Steel manufacturing a little bit of pipe, because Lord knows, John Deere is gone, Union Carbide is gone, Atlas Steel is gone, Welland Tube is gone. The largest single employer in the city of Welland right now is a call centre, the Canadian Tire Acceptance centre. Quite frankly—I never thought I'd say this—thank goodness we have them. It's not a unionized workplace; workers are not even covered by workers' compensation, by WSIB. Did you know that, Speaker? These are workers who, in a call centre, suffer a hugely inappropriate level of things like repetitive stress injuries because they're working at desks and they're doing handsets and they're doing keyboarding.

Let me tell you what happens to a 50-year-old woman, because more likely than not it's a woman working in this workplace, who can no longer work because her wrists are gone—she's got carpal tunnel—when she doesn't have workers' compensation coverage. She's done. She's done like dinner. She has been done in. Oh, she could sue but that's highly unlikely, because when she's lost her job because she can't work at it anymore—she doesn't have access to workers' compensation, you see, because this government denies those workers workers' compensation coverage. She can sue if she can put together a hundred grand or so for the high-priced law firm that would be necessary to sue somebody like Canadian Tire Acceptance, because they've got deep pockets and they'll resist any lawsuit. I'm not aware of any lawsuit ever having been filed against them by an injured worker. That's what happens, and this government is oblivious to those working women and men. This government could care less about them.

This government has a disgusting track record when it comes to workers in the province of Ontario. It has an even more disgusting record when it comes to job losses in the province of Ontario: 300,000 jobs lost in the last—what?—three and a half, four years. And these aren't piddling jobs; these aren't double-down-sandwich, Kentucky-Fried-Chicken service jobs, and nothing wrong with the women and men who work in that industry; they work hard for very, very little wages. Three hundred thousand good jobs, mostly unionized jobs, jobs with good wages, good salaries, good pensions, good health packages—those are the kinds of jobs that people work at to send their kids to college and university, because you don't send your kids to college and university when you work at a Tim Hortons, do you, Speaker? It simply doesn't happen.

Open for business? This government has somehow suggested it hired that high-priced team, that high-priced pair, that high-priced duo, Florida and Martin, from the University of Toronto—Lord knows how many tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars they paid them for this sage advice. Remember the advice of Florida and Martin if you lost your job? Open an art gallery or maybe a hairdressing salon. Give me a break. Don't be silly. What a stupid comment made by a couple of boneheaded academic types who are frauds. Officer Bubbles has more sense than they do, and he has a hard time passing anybody's threshold of intelligence or common sense. You lose your job? Open an art gallery. Give me a break. Tell a guy who has been a welder at John Deere for 35 years who loses his job—you see, there was a time down in Niagara when, if you lost your job, you might be able to go work for Casino Niagara. The problem is, Casino Niagara is laying people off now and they're going to be laying more off as this government embarks and follows through on its incredibly dumb and dumber proposition of Internet gambling. No jobs in Internet gambling; all there is is grief and loss.

There was a time when, if you lost your factory job down in Welland, you could go to Niagara College and train as a blackjack dealer. You could train as a slot machine technician and get a job at the casino or at the slots down in Fort Erie. You can't do it anymore, because they're laying people off. Don't you get it? So what do you tell the guy, the 30-year welder from John Deere who just lost his job? The timing is just perfect, because his kids are just about university or college age or just about getting-ready-to-get-married age and need a little boosting hand from their folks—and their folks are expected to be able to give them a little bit of a boost. What are you going to do—put him in a tutu and send him down the road here to dance the ballet with Karen Kain? I don't think so.

This government isn't open for business. This government has shut down business: business after business after business, and job after job after job.

New Democrats will be voting against this legislation. It's bad policy. It's legislation that attacks working women and men, and when you attack working women

and men that means you attack their kids and their parents and their neighbours too, and their communities.

I've got a real hard time—and again, here I am. I've got but a minute left because the government imposed its guillotine motion. The stormtroopers marched in and padlocked the doors to free speech on this one, as they have on a whole lot of other bills over the course of the last seven years, let me tell you. The government has no interest in seeing this bill debated because the government has no interest in being disclosed as it is: as an anti-worker government and an anti-wealth creation government. Not anti-wealth; anti-wealth creation, because oh yes, if you're a high-priced hospital CEO making \$500,000, \$600,000 or \$700,000 a year, or if you're a high-priced, Liberally-connected—Liberal-connected—consultant making a quarter of a million bucks a year or more, charging—what?—\$3,000 for junkets to Singapore—what that has to do with hospital lobbying beats me. It may have more to do with some custom-fitted suits, I suspect.

That kind of wealth, this government endorses. It supports it. It cultivates it, nurtures it. But this government attacks working women and men, attacks retirees, attacks the poor, attacks the unemployed, attacks young people trying to further their education at colleges and universities.

We say no to this bad legislation.

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

Seeing none, pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2010, I'm now required to put the question. Mr. Fonseca has moved third reading of Bill 68, An Act to promote Ontario as open for business by amending or repealing certain Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We'll defer this vote until deferred votes after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE

Mr. Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to start debate on second reading of Bill 172, the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act.

The House will recall that when we introduced this legislation, we did so to make sure that consumers were treated fairly. That's really what is at the heart of this very streamlined, simple piece of legislation: We want to ensure that consumers are treated, in all respects, fairly. Imagine the situation, if you are a parent, a mom or dad, and there is a great performer who's coming to town, and your kids want tickets. Your kids are absolutely determined to get tickets to the performance. It's what they've always dreamed of, and so you watch to find out when the tickets go on sale. You plan, you rearrange your day and you reschedule. At the very moment the tickets go on sale, you get online or you get on the phone, and there are no tickets. You're referred somewhere else. Instead of a \$100 ticket, you've got a \$300 ticket. Then what do you do? Do you disappoint forever your son or your daughter? Or if it's the son or the daughter, do you disappoint your mother or father? Or do you invest all that extra money for those tickets that are the most important thing in the child's life at the moment?

0930

Then you find out—guess what? The place you were referred to to buy the higher-priced tickets happens to be commercially connected to the original seller. They had some sort of arrangement so that you were instantly referred from the first or primary seller to the secondary seller to buy tickets at an inflated price over the face value. That's at the heart of the upset of many Ontario consumers.

And it started happening with great regularity. You'd hear regularly about issues which were presented to consumers where they tried to get tickets—they did everything they could to get them online or on the phone—and boom, all the tickets were gone. You'd think to yourself, how could it possibly be that every single ticket in that 5,000-person, 10,000-person, 20,000-person stadium was all of a sudden gone at the regular price, and the only place you can get tickets is at the higher, inflated price? There was just something about that that didn't seem right.

People stood up and said, "Gee, that's not right." Then when they found out that the place they were referred to to buy these inflated-price tickets happened to be connected to the original seller, people got a little upset. And they should. Because at the end of the day, however you describe it in legal language, it isn't fair.

If you want to sell a ticket at a hundred bucks, then people should have a reasonable chance of getting a \$100 ticket. If you want to sell it at \$300, sell it at \$300. Tell everybody it's going to be 300 bucks. If you want to sell it at a thousand, sell it at a thousand. Tell everybody the ticket price is going to be a thousand bucks. But don't tell them you're selling a ticket at 100 bucks and give them no chance to get a \$100 ticket and send them to a seller who's going to sell it at 300 bucks—who happens to be related to the \$100 seller. That's just not right.

You say: Why has this suddenly come to light in the last number of years? The Ticket Speculation Act has been around forever—well, not quite forever, but just

about. Of course, now we have phone banks, we have Internet sales, we have the ability to move transactions in a split second—anywhere in the world. So the advent of technology and the opportunity that some have identified to maximize their own profits have given rise to an unfairness.

At the end of the day, that really is what this legislation is all about. It's not the longest bill you'll ever see in the world. It's not the most complicated bill you'll ever see in the world. But it really is designed to address a rather simple proposition: that primary and secondary sellers shouldn't be commercially related when they're selling the same set of tickets. It's simple. That, at the end of the day, is really what this piece of legislation is all about.

You will recall that a little over a year ago, other jurisdictions jumped up and started doing the same thing. We had in Ontario a Leonard Cohen concert which caused great consternation. In the United States, it was the Boss who was upset about tickets to his concert, and other performers started to—well, you see, the problem is that performers started to hear from the customer. Customers would say that they're fans. They're not customers; they're the fans who say, "Gosh, you know, it's really disappointing. I tried to come and see you and that \$100 ticket became \$300 before you could pronounce your name. It's just not right." They started getting upset and let governments throughout North America know. It just wasn't fair.

So we introduced this piece of legislation. We've had the benefit, over the last year, of making sure that the transactions this legislation will catch are the transactions we want to catch, not every transaction—not a movement between a primary and secondary seller where nobody's profiting, where there's no increased profit. We want to make sure that the transactions that are being caught—given technology, the quick movement and the relationships—are exactly the ones that we want. We've had that year since it was introduced to make sure we can work through some of the issues that were brought to our attention. We will be, if this bill is passed in second reading and goes on to committee, introducing some amendments just to fine-tune a few of the provisions and to make sure that, for example, a movement of tickets from a primary to a secondary seller, where it's for the convenience of the customer and not for profit, is not going to be caught by this particular piece of legislation.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: It's reasonable.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: That's a reasonable change, a reasonable amendment.

Now, as I say, ticket scalping has been illegal in Ontario for some period of time, but when you first started seeing the Internet introduced, in about 1996 or so in terms of selling, it really became a big issue because it shrinks the time where tickets can be transferred from a primary to a secondary seller. It makes it much more commercially attractive to have secondary sellers. Then, of course, as in all things where there is a bit of profit at the end of the day, a behaviour springs up that might not

be illegal but that might strike people as, “Gosh, it’s not really fair.” That’s what we’ve got here.

The other challenge, of course, with legislation that has been around for a while is that the penalties that exist for those who break its provisions don’t always keep pace with the value of the tickets or the commercial enterprise. You don’t want a breach of the law to be little more than a licence, so you have to update penalties. You have to make sure that they are consistent with the nature of the profit or the transgression that’s at issue. What we’ve done in this particular piece of legislation is propose the updating of penalties so that there will be a \$5,000 penalty per transaction for an individual and \$50,000 for a corporation. That starts to add up pretty quickly, and takes the profit out of this particular enterprise.

Ultimately, what this legislation would do: It’s going to help ensure fair access to tickets for consumers by preventing related primary and secondary ticket sellers—including brokers, including agents—from profiting from secondary sales to the same event. It will make it illegal for a primary seller to limit the number of tickets made available to the public and then divert tickets to the secondary seller to buy the same ticket at a much-inflated price—you know that situation where you’ve got 5,000 tickets available and you keep 500 at the face price and slide over the other 4,500 to the secondary seller, who can then greatly sell them at an increased price, when the two were related; the primary and the secondary are related.

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It will reassure Ontarians that when they’re buying tickets online—and you don’t always know who you’re dealing with when you’re online; there’s a lot online these days—the tickets they’re buying are not just the profit end point for some corporate enterprise.

As I say, we spent some time in identifying different issues that were brought to our attention about the multiple transactions that could be caught by this legislation. In a lot of them, we said, “Well, yeah, it’s supposed to be caught.” That’s what we’re here to do. We’re here to change what was becoming the practice.

In fact, to many people—I don’t know empirically—it didn’t seem to be an exception anymore, when those tickets sort of disappeared as soon as you called or went online, and turned up somewhere else at an inflated price. It didn’t seem to be the exception. In fact, it seemed to be the norm. In any economic period, people want to be treated fairly. When the economy is experiencing some worldwide challenges, everybody’s watching it a little closer. Fairness: That’s what this is about.

More transparency: We were debating earlier today the Open for Business bill. Part of being open for business is being transparent in transactions, and there is an element of that in this particular piece of legislation. Let’s be a little more transparent, make sure we’re a little more transparent in the way the tickets are being offered for sale to the people of Ontario. That’s all. They just want to be treated fairly.

If somebody wants to pay a hundred bucks for a particular performer at a concert, and that’s the face price, they’ll pay a hundred bucks. Want to pay \$200? They’ll pay \$200. What to pay \$300? They’ll pay \$300. Some will pay more. But they just want a little bit of access, fair access.

Now, we’re going to be listening very carefully to the debate and we’ll be looking for opportunities to make sure that transactions aren’t identified that you don’t want to catch. I have no doubt that some will encourage us not to proceed with this piece of legislation. They’ll say that commercial enterprise should be left on its own; the government shouldn’t be in the business. Some might tell us that government should not be in the business of ticket sales. I say, we don’t want to be in the business of ticket sales, but we are in the business of fairness.

When commercial enterprises have a bit of a history of not doing what many people think is the fair thing to do, governments sometimes have to step in. It’s not that we want to; we’ve got lots of issues. We’re working very hard to create a stronger economy, working very hard to deal with the challenges of an economic worldwide recession, working very hard to make sure that the jobs are located here in the province of Ontario as opposed to somewhere else. We’ve taken big, bold steps in terms of an economic plan, opening up the province, making sure it’s completely open for business, making sure our foundation is right.

But you know, fairness is part of a very strong society, and although this is not of the same magnitude of many of those other issues—of course not—it does strike that chord of fairness. And that’s just, at the end of the day, what people ask us to do.

I’m looking forward, as I say, to the debate. I’m looking forward to the participation of members of the House. I’m looking forward to suggestions. To those who would tell us not to proceed with this piece of legislation, I say no. The case for fairness has been sufficiently and properly and appropriately made that we need to move on this. There may be others who say, “Oh, gosh, you need to do a lot more.” There may be others who say that we need to go much further. In all things, it’s a question of balance. It’s a question of finding the appropriate degree of intervention, measured by the nature of the activity at issue.

We’ll listen very carefully to make sure that we have focused this legislation, directed it to the very issue. It’s not a complete reworking of all commercial enterprise. We don’t want to do that. It’s not an attempt to deal with every issue under the sun. We couldn’t do that in the age of the Internet. It’s making sure that, to the extent that we’re able within the province of Ontario, we support fairness, support that chord that runs through our society of fair dealing, support an appropriate relationship between the seller and the consumers—who are usually the fans or parents of, or sons or daughters of—and that we have made sure that at its heart, the primary seller of a ticket can’t be the secondary seller of the ticket to the same event when that secondary sale profits from the

movement of tickets over, benefits from a heightened and increased price in the movement of tickets over. It's as simple as that. It really is as simple as that in the very complicated Internet age.

With that, I thank the members of the House. I look forward to the debate, the comments and the suggestions for improvement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions or comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The diversion has begun. Of course, the government has been reeling in the last couple of days with the Auditor General's report, and they've reached into their—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Exactly. They've reached into their little bag of tricks and they've come up with a bill that was introduced on April 29, 2009. Now we're having leadoff speeches some 14 months later—I would say to the table, I can speak a long time but I should have a clock on me—and this is taking place for over 14 months.

During those 14 months, of course, the organizations that are involved in this process have been talking to the government. They have been talking to us as well. They have explained that this bill will do absolutely nothing to solve the problems that the Attorney General has outlined and, in fact, will insert itself into the business of companies carrying on legitimate businesses in Ontario and will have no effect on the consumer.

Why they are proceeding with this bill as it was written, with some flaws, in 2009—it hasn't been changed. Surely the government has learned something about this business over the last 14 or 16 months. None of that is reflected in the bill as it's introduced today.

This bill was so important to the government that it carried it over when the House prorogued, and still the bill comes back in its same form. It's too bad that this bill, which could be important to the people of Ontario, hasn't been written in a form that would make it helpful to the people of Ontario.

The only reason it's being introduced today is that it is seen as consumerism, as a popular bill. The government is very hopeful that it will take the minds of the public off the Auditor General's report, one that, of course, held the government up to a good deal of ridicule when they repeated their mistakes of a year ago with eHealth. Exactly the same thing is happening today in eHealth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'll be beginning my one-hour lead on this in due course, perhaps this morning or perhaps the next time it's called. But then again, I'm going to be an old man by the next time it's called, because after all, this bill has been on the order paper for a year and a half—18 months. We served first reading on April 29, 2009. Good God. I still had colour in my hair in 2009. My goodness, this bill has been gathering dust. It's not destined to be called again next week, for instance,

because we're nowhere near finishing the leads on second reading debate this morning.

0950

But I do find some delight in the Attorney General's references to there being a lot online nowadays. That will allow me, of course, to talk about this government's intention to have a state-operated, state-sanctioned, state-approved Internet gambling system here in the province of Ontario so that 13-year-old kids can be blowing mommy and daddy's credit cards while they're in their bedrooms gambling on the Internet, getting addicted.

I do take some great delight in the Attorney General referencing fairness so much, because that will give me an opportunity to talk about so many things that this government has been doing to people that are oh, so unfair.

But I also make note of this: Here we have a bill that is flimsy. You could read a newspaper through this bill. It's not a weighty bill like this one; it's a flimsy bill. When the Ministry of the Attorney General has weighty bills, why, it's the parliamentary assistant who carries them in this chamber, but when we've got a lightweight bill, it's the Attorney General who carries it. With the heavy bills, he needs the heavy lifting of Mr. Zimmer. With this one, clearly he doesn't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to rise in my place today to speak to An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act.

As the Attorney General so clearly pointed out, a lot of groups across the country and in the US have been jobbing the system. They're in a position of a monopoly on the tickets. It's easy with the new means of getting ticket sales out there, with the Internet etc., that they can take people, and take people very quickly and very often, and keep moving names around.

I think this bill—someone says there's not very much in it. Of course there's not very much in it; it's an amendment that's going to do what Ontario should do to protect people who want to have a fair deal, not only have a few tickets for sale and ship them all out on events where they know it's going to be a sell-out and have somebody reap huge profits. That is not the way we should act in business. I'm glad to see that the fines are going up: \$5,000 for an individual, \$50,000 if the person is a corporation—a fine of not more than \$50,000. Those are the types of fines that will make sure we have honest business and that people in a monopoly position do not steal from fans who want to go to a certain show, that we control this business. It's not the first time; other provinces and other states have been bringing in this legislation. So this will clean up the act. This will make sure that it's fair for people, and I certainly applaud the Attorney General for bringing this in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Frank Klees: I listened very carefully to the Attorney General this morning as he so eloquently spoke to

this bill. As my colleagues have said, it has been gathering dust for the last year and a half. I find it disconcerting that the Attorney General would want to be party to wasting our time here this morning discussing this bill when we all have on our desk this morning the special report from the office of the Auditor General in Ontario on consultant use in selected health organizations.

As we read this report, we see that literally multi-millions and billions of dollars are being wasted by hospitals, by LHINs, by the Ministry of Health. As the Attorney General, I would have thought that he would want to use every available moment in this Legislature to condemn what is going on in the health care corridors of this province, not to talk about whether or not someone is selling a ticket to a ball game for another \$20 or \$30 or \$100 more than the face value. Let's talk about where the real scandals are in the halls of this government. That should be the mission of the Attorney General, not to come here and so eloquently address people who are perhaps, yes, scamming someone for \$100. Let's talk about the people who are scamming the people of Ontario for multi-millions under the endorsement of his government. Let's get the priorities of this government straight. I call on the Attorney General to assume his responsibility to oversee how government conducts its business in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Attorney General has two minutes for the response.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to thank the members for Newmarket–Aurora, Ottawa–Orléans, Welland and Halton for their comments and contributions. I too am looking forward to the debate on the legislation that was introduced yesterday by my colleague the Minister of Health to end the practice, I might say, that was in existence through the government of which my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora was part, and the government before that, and before that, and before that. It's amazing how often issues have been around for decades, where other parties had the ability to change a practice they knew was going on and they sat and did nothing. I guess the question is this: Did they know what was going on; did they not know what was going on—in which case you've got to question what the heck they were doing—or did they know what was going on and decide that it was okay? They'll have the opportunity to participate in the debate on that legislation.

But I want to tell you that I think people should be treated fairly in all their commercial dealings. I'm looking forward to the contributions of the parties opposite, both the official opposition and the third party. Really, I'm looking forward to whether they're going to support the principle of fairness or not. That's what consumers want. If they've got some suggestions to make it stronger, I'd love to hear them. If they've got some suggestions to protect the consumer, I'd love to hear them. If they've got some ways to protect the consumer who doesn't want to get fleeced, I'd love to hear them. But the stall, the delay, the prevarication that we hear coming forward so far, "Oh, it's not going to protect anybody," is the old deflect. No, we proceed.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: According to the Attorney General, apparently John A. Macdonald should have changed this regulation to protect consumers against the—but I suppose John A. Macdonald was too busy developing his chain of restaurants to take on that particular task.

This bill, as was pointed out, was introduced on April 29, 2009, some 18 months ago, and has sat gathering dust, and is brought up today primarily because this government is in trouble. It is in trouble with its eHealth 201; we had eHealth 101 last year. We called for public inquiries into how this happened, how a billion dollars in taxpayers' money could disappear into a black hole of consultants, many of them with Liberal-friendly ties. We asked: How can this happen? We wanted a public inquiry into that. "No, no, no," the government said. The Premier apologized and said, "We have to do better."

And what has happened in the year and a half since this bill was introduced? Apparently, the consultants changed their business cards, they changed the letterhead and they continued on in their consulting business, continued on with consulting with LHINs, consulting with the Ministry of Health. They continued on consulting with the hospitals so that hospitals, public agencies, were hiring consultants to represent them when dealing with the government, not providing any front-line health services. It just continued on. If we had had a public inquiry back originally when we were calling for one, June 2009, perhaps a system would have been developed that would have prevented this from happening again—more taxpayer dollars wasted in a sensitive industry like health when government can't find the money to help individual Ontarians. They can't find the money to take action on health issues in Ontario, but they can find the money—hundreds of millions of dollars—to send consultants to Hong Kong, pay them while they're on vacation and pay them for Christmas parties and booze. Something is tragically wrong in the province of Ontario.

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Of course, the government wants to divert the public's attention from these disasters that are happening all around us, so they bring in this act, the act that they want to debate today, Bill 172. As was pointed out by the member from Welland–Thorold, this bill that's being debated this morning is not on the order paper for next week. That in itself should tell the third estate and the fourth estate that the bill is a diversion.

There's no seriousness on the government's behalf to actually debate this bill. They know that this bill will not do one thing, not one thing, to fix the system of ticketing in Ontario. They know how that system works. They know why popular venues sell out almost immediately—within 30 seconds sometimes. They also know that if someone goes online to buy a ticket to the Toronto Maple Leafs when they are playing the Los Angeles Kings, perhaps, quite often they can buy those tickets at much less than face value. They know that in many venues that don't sell out, in Toronto or anywhere else in Ontario,

many of the tickets are sold below face value. They know that's happening.

Last year the Premier said, regarding eHealth, that we had to do better. I don't think bringing this bill back after 18 months of consultations—forced consultations, in many cases—is doing better. But this is the bill that we're going to debate today, and believe it or not, I do intend to talk about the bill.

One of the things that—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This other stuff is more important.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The other stuff is more important, but we should say a few words about the bill in the debate before the Speaker calls me to order in that area.

One of the best articles that I've read on this issue was printed in the National Post. It was printed a year and a half ago, on Tuesday, May 5, 2009. I remember that this bill was introduced on April 29, 2009, so it was written from that perspective, a few days after it was introduced. It was written by Terence Corcoran, who is with the National Post. In my opinion, he's a really great writer, able to capsulize and identify issues very succinctly. He starts out by saying, "Too little attention was paid last week as Ontario's Attorney General did what governments do best: Pander to public perception"—a very powerful way to start an article. He also correctly used a colon in that sentence. It's something that we don't see an awful lot in our newspapers anymore: proper punctuation. My hat's off to Mr. Corcoran, who uses it correctly—"Seems like no issue is too small and no public misconception so stupid or wrong that it cannot be answered with legislation or regulation." He capsulizes the exact problem: that Premier Dad is coming to the rescue, but to no avail. Nothing is too small that it can't be fixed with regulation or legislation.

"And so Attorney General Chris Bentley, answering the call of the blogosphere, last Wednesday introduced Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act. The bill, aimed at Ticketmaster, is designed to fix a perceived problem that doesn't exist based on an analysis that is flawed with a law that doesn't do anything to fix the perception or respond to the flawed analysis. In government and politics, that's called productive work."

I told you this guy was a good writer. So far, in two paragraphs, he has basically said it all.

"The perception is that Ticketmaster, an agency hired by rock groups, sports teams and others to handle ticket sales, is taking preferential advantage of its position and transferring tickets to its secondary market subsidiary, TicketsNow, where they are marked up to sky-high prices." That's the perception.

"The fact that there is no evidence that Ticketmaster favours its TicketsNow subsidiary is more or less acknowledged right in the government's Bill 172 press release. 'The new provisions respond to public concern that companies may make tickets available for sale to the same events on the primary market and then on the secondary market, at a much higher price.'"

In Ticketmaster's press release on the subject, they specifically say that they do not transfer tickets from

Ticketmaster to TicketsNow. In introducing this bill, I suppose the government is calling the company untruthful, if I can use that word. The fact that there's no evidence that Ticketmaster favours its TicketsNow subsidiary is more or less acknowledged right in the government's press release.

"Public concern about something is not a basis for legislation, especially when the legislation does nothing to alleviate the concern and may, in the end, make the local concert/sports events ticket-pricing situation worse." This legislation could make the situation worse. "The new law also undermines competition in the ticket-selling business. Why would the government want to do that?" Why would the government want to undermine the competitive situation that exists in the market today?

He continues: "The bill, in two pages, amends existing Ontario law that supposedly bans scalping in event tickets. Specifically, it would prohibit a primary seller (i.e. Ticketmaster) from dealing in the same tickets as a secondary seller (i.e. TicketsNow), its subsidiary. "The minister doesn't explain what the effect is of this change in the law, except to claim that it will return 'fairness' to the ticket market and 'protect consumers.'

"The government by now knows that the public perception is wrong. Or if it has doubts, it also knows that the federal Competition Bureau is investigating this public perception. The least Mr. Bentley could do is wait for the Competition Bureau to report."

The Competition Bureau has reported, and it finds nothing wrong with the existing system. The Competition Bureau, of course, is another branch of government, and it finds nothing wrong.

"The most famous example of alleged ticket manipulation is a Bruce Springsteen concert in New Jersey, where TicketsNow appeared to have tickets even before they were available at Ticketmaster. Not only is it the most famous example, it is the only example, and one which Ticketmaster says was due to a local computer malfunction. If Ticketmaster had prematurely sold Springsteen tickets via TicketsNow, it would have been in breach of its contract with the Springsteen promoters." That's something that no one in the ticket distribution business would want to do. That could destroy their business overnight, and they are market leaders in that area.

"It is now conventional wisdom in the blog world, on radio call-in shows and in the newsrooms of the Toronto Star and the CBC that Ticketmaster scalps its own products to TicketsNow. Ticketmaster's legal counsel, Joe Freeman, calls it an 'urban myth.' Still, on CBC Radio's As It Happens last week"—this would be in May 2009—"host Carol Off belligerently went after Mr. Freeman for having the temerity to deny Ticketmaster's complicity in the ticket-scalping market." Urban myths: They're hard to do away with.

1010

"The concert and sport-event ticket business is becoming increasingly complicated and sophisticated, thanks to the Internet. Tickets for everything can be found with a simple Google search and a willingness to pay prices well above the official price.

“In Toronto, primary sellers include Ticketmaster, the Toronto Blue Jays, the Mirvish theatre group and others. Secondary players include StubHub, TicketNorth, TicketLiquidator, Ticket Express, GoTickets and others. Ticketmaster is the only primary seller that owns a secondary seller. The Ontario legislation effectively singles out Ticketmaster and would prevent it from operating in the secondary market, where it essentially acts as an Internet-based broker between buyers and sellers. The real money is made by the scalpers and traders. TicketsNow collects a fee on transactions, but does not own or control any tickets.”

Understand what he’s saying: I have a ticket that I find that I can no longer use. I put it on TicketsNow. TicketsNow provides the sales organization to find another buyer. The other buyer buys the ticket off the Internet. TicketsNow guarantees that that is, indeed, a legitimate ticket to the event that the buyer expects to attend. You can imagine the fraud that takes place on the Internet: people buying tickets that don’t exist; people buying tickets that have no legitimacy. They show up at the gate—“Sorry, that ticket’s no good.” There’s all kinds of money that disappears by the illegitimate sale of tickets. TicketsNow guarantees that you’re buying a legitimate ticket. That’s their business, and they take a percentage of that. They don’t own tickets themselves. So this whole bill is badly, badly flawed in that area.

The Attorney General—he refers to “Mr. Bentley,” if I can use that name. I’m reading; I’m not referring to the member: “Mr. Bentley apparently doesn’t believe Ticketmaster. Otherwise, why would he bring in a law that effectively bars Ticketmaster from competing in the secondary market? No doubt the owners of StubHub and scores of other Internet-based scalping agencies are going to be happy.”

Most of these agencies that sell tickets are indeed selling them above face value, and under this law that’s illegal. But this government doesn’t seem to have a lot of problems dealing with companies that do illegal things, or agencies or, indeed, people who do illegal things in Ontario. I give you the illegal tobacco business in Ontario, where close to 50%, if not in excess of 50%, of the tobacco that’s sold in Ontario is of an illegal nature. We do not collect taxes on it. There’s probably \$1.5 billion from all levels of government going down the drain when we are not collecting that money. Those cigarettes are being sold illegally across Ontario. Grade 8 students can find a van to buy cigarettes out of, but apparently the government can’t find the van to charge those people with the illegal sale of cigarettes. The illegal cigarettes come out of known locations, the Six Nations reserve, for one. They come out in tractor-trailers. The government knows which road they’re coming out on, but they don’t seem to be able to catch those people coming out with a tractor-trailer full of illegal cigarettes. I guess it’s because they just don’t care. And here we are scalping tickets across the Internet, knowing buyer and knowing seller. It’s illegal, but the government just doesn’t care.

“All of this is taking place under an existing law that makes scalping illegal. The amendment, in other words,

will prevent Ticketmaster from engaging in an activity that the law already officially prohibits but does not stop. It’s tough to explain, but it’s what people want, the minister says. ‘Ontarians have spoken out clearly, resoundingly and unequivocally against companies benefiting from the primary and secondary markets.’”

Mr. Corcoran concludes his article by saying, “I give up.”

Well, we on this side of the House are not going to give up. We are going to continue the good fight. We are going to continue to bring to light the misconceptions, the way in which this government operates, why they’re bringing in this diversionary bill this week: to try and cover up the massive waste of money that we’ve seen in eHealth 201, the next stage of the eHealth saga; the sequel. Even the government has sequels to its scandals. I think when a government has sequels to its scandals, it’s no wonder 76% of Ontarians think that it’s time for a change.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about 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 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would like to welcome in the east gallery two of my staff today: Elaine Palmateer, my executive assistant, and my brand new staff of about two months, Megan Forest. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I’m pleased to introduce on behalf of page Emmett Bisbee his mother, Debbie Bisbee, sister Avery Bisbee and grandparents Grahame Bennett, Joan Bisbee and Bob Bisbee in the members’ gallery.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have the pleasure of introducing three guests of mine from Simcoe county: Lacey Robson, who’s shadowing me today, from Orillia; and Jane Binns and Louise Pope, all here in the members’ gallery.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would like to introduce Darryl Demille from my riding. I wanted to introduce him to the Premier, but the Premier is not here again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We welcome the guests, but I do remind the honourable member about making references to absences.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Wow, that didn’t take long. We haven’t even started question period.

I remind the honourable members of the practice within this chamber. None of us know why a member may not be here, and we do not make references to members’ attendance.

Further introductions?

We have with us in the Speaker’s gallery the German-Canadian Parliamentary Friendship Group from the German Bundestag, led by Mr. Klaus-Peter Flosbach. They

are accompanied by the consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany in Toronto, Mrs. Sabine Sparwasser. Please join me in welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Ontario families want to know: Where is Premier McGuinty and why is he hiding from what the auditor says in his report on eHealth 2.0? They saw McGuinty Liberals hand out sweetheart deals to Liberal-friendly consultants during the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle. You changed the rules—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The reference that the honourable member just made certainly did cause disorder in the House, either directly or indirectly, by making reference to a member's attendance in this chamber. If it has the ability to cause disorder, I would just ask the honourable member to refrain from making references. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: They saw the McGuinty Liberals hand out sweetheart deals to Liberal-friendly consultants in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle.

You changed the rules; that didn't work. You changed ministers; that didn't work. Why is the only way to bring about real change to bring in a new government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's going to be one of those mornings, so let's get started.

I think what's very important is that people perhaps watching at home understand what has transpired over the last some time. Under our government, the Auditor General was given expanded powers. One of those expanded powers was to shine a light into what was going on in hospitals, in stark contrast to what was happening when the previous government had their chance. We shone a light; they covered up. We specifically asked the Auditor General to go in and take a look. "Give us your best advice, Auditor General," we said. "What can we do? What's going on with respect to consultants and lobbyists in our hospitals and in our LHINs?"

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: People are seeing what's happening out there and they don't like it. We looked at the auditor's eHealth report and we looked at his eHealth 2.0 report. They say the same thing.

On page 13 of the eHealth report, the auditor said, "Sound and reasonable policies were in place ... but all too often the rules were not followed." On page 8 of this year's report, he says, "We noted far too many instances at the hospitals we visited where sound public sector business practices were not followed..."

Minister, why did you say you fixed things when you didn't?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I think the member opposite knows but isn't prepared to acknowledge is that when her party was in power—they had eight years in power when they refused to shine a light into the hospitals. They would not give the Auditor General the power to look at hospitals.

We changed that, and when we changed that, we knew that the Auditor General would find things that needed improving. He did not disappoint us. It's why we asked him to go in. He gave us recommendations, and the very same day we introduced legislation that addresses each and every one of those recommendations.

When you have the responsibility of government, you can make a choice. You can choose to cover up, to keep things in the dark, or you can choose to shine the light and make the changes that people expect us to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable member of the use of unparliamentary language within this chamber. Again, it's similar to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Oxford, I would appreciate it that when I'm taking an opportunity to address all members of this House, that everyone would listen to what I have to say.

It's very similar to the comment that I made earlier about making references to attendance. Any time there is language used within this chamber that has the opportunity to cause disorder in this House, I'd just ask the honourable members to use the words cautiously.

Final supplementary.

1040

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On page 11 of last year's report, the auditor said, "Allegations that the agency showed favouritism in awarding ... contracts are ... true." A year later, he says: "The Ministry of Health ... found a way around the rules when it wanted to hire a favoured consultant ... we essentially felt the fix was in..."

The only difference between eHealth and eHealth 2.0 is that the problem is closer to the minister this time around. The auditor says the cheating was by her ministry, not an agency. Why would Ontario families believe new rules make a difference when the auditor keeps saying the McGuinty Liberals don't follow them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would recommend that the member opposite actually not try to put words in the mouth of the Auditor General. He can speak for himself. I think that it's only respectful of that position that we quote him responsibly and accurately.

We on this side of the House have made decisions since the very first—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member from Lanark to withdraw the comment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have taken step after step after step to strengthen accountability, to increase

transparency. The legislation we introduced yesterday is the next step.

My question is, are we going to get the support from the party opposite for these improvements?

CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again for the Minister of Health: Last year's eHealth report and this year's eHealth 2.0 report are not the only things the same about this year's and last year's scandals. We looked at what you said when your hand was caught in the cookie jar last year and what you say now. It's the same too.

At his press conference last year, Premier McGuinty said: "We have ended practices carried on for decades." In your press conference yesterday, speaking to the Minister through you, Mr. Speaker, you said: "This is a practice that has been going on far too long, and we are ending it."

Why would Ontario families believe what you say about ending sweetheart deals when the auditor says you didn't?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I really do think that this is a bit rich, coming from the party opposite. When it comes to the use of consultants, for example—I'm sure the party opposite knows this, but let me just remind them if they don't. We have cut in half the spending on consultants. You left us with spending on consultants that was twice what we spend today.

I think it's important to note that the auditor has confirmed the non-partisan nature of the contracts that were let, so if we're going to quote the auditor, I think it's important that we actually quote the auditor. He says party politics did not enter into the awarding of these contracts: "We did not see any evidence that it was awarded on the basis of party politics."

We are continuing to improve transparency. When you improve transparency—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It seems that the Premier is not only recycling his scandals but his PR schemes to manage them too. Last year, he thanked the auditor for his report and said: "It's unacceptable." A year after the consulting contract feeding frenzy at eHealth, your line on the exact same thing going on in hospitals, LHINs and your own ministry is to thank the auditor for his report and say, "I don't think this is acceptable."

You had a year. Ontario families keep hearing you say that you can do better. Why don't you actually do better?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to health care, I think Ontario families may be interested in the contrast between their record and our record. Let me just remind the people opposite: Under their government, 6,200 nurses fired; under our government, 10,000 nurses hired. Under their leadership, 28 hospitals closed; under our leadership, 18 new hospitals opened. Under their government, they actually took—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. Member from Halton. Member from Kitchener–Waterloo, and Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Northumberland–Quinte West should be in his seat—and the member from Renfrew.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Under their watch, they—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

I'd just remind all members that I realize this is an issue that is important to members on both sides of the House, but we have an important role to play within this chamber, and I would ask all members to participate in that.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Under the opposition's watch, they changed the FOI laws to exclude Hydro One and OPG. What did we do? We reversed their decision and opened up Hydro One to FOI. Now we are opening up freedom of information to hospitals if our legislation is passed. Their last year in office, this—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The reason why Ontario families want change is because the McGuinty Liberals are like a broken record. You changed the rules, but that didn't work. You changed the ministers, but that didn't work. Ontario families understand that if their car still isn't fixed after the mechanic said he fixed it for the 10th time, they should change the mechanic. The same applies to you.

If Premier McGuinty is listening to all of this, I'll ask this question: If you can't change, then why shouldn't Ontario families change and elect a PC government that will bring back front-line health care instead of electing all their Liberal friends and giving consulting contracts to them?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Peter Fonseca: They didn't get their Mc-Breakfast.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): At this rate, nobody's getting lunch.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have spent the last seven years that we have been in government cleaning up the mess that that party left behind when it came to health care. When we took office, people could not get a family doctor in my community or in communities across this

province. When they left office, people were waiting two years for cataract surgery, for hip replacement surgery—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford will come to order. Simcoe North, come to order. Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, come to order.

New question.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday's report by the Auditor General reveals insiders bilking hospitals for bar tabs and vacations while women with breast cancer lost nurses; and hospitals closed emergency rooms. But does the Acting Premier think that we've actually been given the full story?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, that's kind of an astonishing question, I have to say. We were the ones who gave the Auditor General the responsibility to go in and look. We asked him specifically to look at this issue.

If the member opposite is suggesting that the Auditor General did not do his job thoroughly, I can tell you that I cannot support the premise of that question. I have tremendous respect for the auditor. He gave us some very good recommendations. We introduced legislation yesterday to address all of them. My question is, will you support the recommendations of the Auditor General?

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The scathing report found a misuse of precious public health dollars at every one of the 16 hospitals examined; 16 out of 16 hospitals were okay with consultants expensing trips to Singapore and \$200 bar tabs. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. Can the minister tell Ontarians what was happening at all the other hospitals across this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Auditor General, first of all, now has the power, which he did not have before we came to office, to look at hospitals. He has done exactly what he was requested to do by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and he has raised some very serious issues—practices that are going on in hospitals—that are simply unacceptable. I am convinced by the Auditor General's report that these are not isolated incidents, that there are problems in our hospital sector, that people in hospitals are not taking responsibility the way we need them to. They are spending taxpayer dollars.

People are feeling very stretched. They're having a very difficult time making ends meet. They pay their taxes with the expectation that they get service for those dollars, that they get value for the money. That's why we are fixing the problem; that's why we have introduced legislation.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General's report has rolled back the lid but we need to blow it off. Precious health dollars were supposed to support women struggling with breast cancer, to run emergency rooms that are now closing, to pay nurses and personal support workers, to help people who are unwell in this province. Instead, that money flowed into the pockets of well-connected consultants and lobbyists at 16 out of 16 hospitals.

Will the minister now use her power under the Auditor General Act and immediately order a comprehensive review of all hospitals in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the Auditor General did a very fine and thorough job. He shone the light on practices that are unacceptable. I have spoken to hospital CEOs and board chairs. I made it very clear to them that they have a responsibility to go through their budgets to understand the practices that are happening in their hospitals.

I can tell you that the response from hospitals and from the Ontario Hospital Association has been encouraging; they acknowledge that they have a lot of work ahead of them. We will ensure that they comply with the legislation, if indeed we pass that legislation. I do hope that members opposite will support this legislation.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Ontario families who are losing ERs while well-connected consultants spend their health dollars on exotic vacations and drinks deserve some answers. Will the Acting Premier give us full disclosure on exactly which consultants were highlighted in the Auditor General's report yesterday?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Enhancing transparency and accountability is a hallmark of this government. I have to say that I am extremely proud of the steps we have taken. For example, the Auditor General will provide a report on the state of our finances so that, unlike under previous administrations, the taxpayers will know what kind of shape the province is in before they go into an election. Transparency, publicly reporting expenses and reporting on the use of consultants are all components of the legislation that we introduced yesterday. We are taking a big step forward when it comes to transparency. We are giving oversight under freedom of information to hospitals. Opening up hospitals to freedom of information is a very big and important step forward. The—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Trips to Singapore, vacations to Japan, \$200 bar tabs, and \$210,000 salaries for a four-day work week are some of the glaring examples of our precious health care dollars that should have been spent running ERs and hiring nurses. But the problem can't be fixed without all the facts, so when will the minister pull

off the cover and let Ontario families know the names of all of the consultants who cashed in on our health care dime?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have taken a very significant step. We have introduced legislation yesterday that will improve transparency and expand accountability. It will strengthen our health care system.

I do want to remind the member opposite that when her party was in power—I know it was a long time ago, but nonetheless, successive governments have not taken the step that we have taken today. We are taking a step that will shine more light on the practices that are unacceptable. The Auditor General has done an exceptional job for us. We thank him for that work. We responded immediately, and I do think that all of us need to understand that this is a significant step forward.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While families lost their ERs, while women with breast cancer lost their nurses, while patients waited in closets for the emergency room doctor to have a chance to see them, money that should have gone to making people well instead went to cover the bar tabs of well-connected insider consultants. This is really the last straw for Ontario families who have had enough of this tired and out-of-touch government. Families don't want more empty promises; what families simply want is the facts.

When will the minister reveal the names of the consultants making these outrageous claims and order a comprehensive audit of all health care consultant spending?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm just going to read something that the member opposite might find of interest: "That the Provincial Auditor should have a duplicate role of going in after they've already been audited to do it all over again to make sure that proper policy has been followed ... I say is wrong. It is not the job of the auditor to determine what public policy should be and how it's being followed."

Interjection: Who wrote that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Who wrote that?

Interjection: Who said that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Mr. Gilles Bisson.

I have another quote. I think that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member of the use of names.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That was the member for Timmins when, in fact, that party was in government. That party refused to open up hospitals to freedom of information when they had the chance. Our government is doing exactly that.

CONSULTANTS

Mr. Steve Clark: The McGuinty Liberals can say what they like about accountability, but the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To whom?

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Acting Premier—but the Premier hasn't yet uttered a peep about the Auditor General's eHealth 2.0 report. He certainly hasn't been a model of accountability in facing this House. I was at the same press conference the Premier was at this morning and I made it back to the House, because—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands recessed for five minutes.

The House recessed from 1059 to 1106.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I've had to remind members on a number of occasions today about making references to members' attendance. I think we need to be cognizant of the fact, and I'm going to remind you again, that we often don't know why a member is or is not here. During the recess, I was reminded of an occasion in this House where a member in opposition was making repeated references to a cabinet minister of the day not being in attendance. Subsequent to those numerous references being made, the member was made aware that that cabinet minister was at a hospital attending to her son. We don't know the reasons, but I think we need to be cognizant that there may be circumstances in people's day-to-day lives so that they cannot be here.

I'll say to members that I've reminded them a number of times today about making those references to attendance. If it happens again, I'm just going to pass to the next question, no questions asked—and that's a warning to everyone. That warning holds true as well from the standpoint of just walking back into the chamber right now and making references. If you want to make those comments, go outside the chamber and make them, but don't make them in here, because we all recognize that it does disrupt the flow of the House.

With that, I'm going to ask the member from Leeds-Grenville to get to his question, please.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm here in the House and I will address my question to the Acting Premier. When will the Premier of the province of Ontario take accountability in this House for the eHealth 2.0 report?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to accountability and transparency, we will not be taking any lessons whatsoever from the party opposite. Their record is very, very clear, and so is ours. We are the party that has strengthened accountability, that has strengthened transparency; that is the party that refused to take the steps to shine the light on practices that were going on.

They have had some advice for us. We have had advice that we perhaps send a memo. We're going much farther than that: We are taking action. We have introduced legislation. We are hoping that we will have support for that legislation.

The member from Nepean-Carleton introduced legislation. She thinks it's pretty fabulous. I tell you, it does not ban the practice of hiring lobbyists with taxpayer dollars to lobby for—

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Minister, but you're talking to me. I'm asking you a question. The question was about when the Premier—who hasn't uttered a peep in this House about the Auditor General's eHealth 2.0 report. I want to know, why should Ontario families believe that there won't be an eHealth 3.0? Answer that question.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As we've said many times in this House—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Lanark, I don't need the advice of others in the House. I'd just remind the honourable member that you should be in your seat.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a government that has expanded transparency precisely so that we can find out what is going on and take the right action to address those issues. That's exactly what happened here. Under their watch, there was nobody looking, there was nobody watching, but that didn't stop the Auditor General from actually finding some things that were going on under their watch.

On page 25, he says, "In early 1999"—remember that? That's under your watch—"the hospital single-sourced a contract, which has been in continued operation since that time.... Total costs paid to the firm have amounted to about \$60 million"—

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

CONSULTANTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre par intérim. After the Auditor General acted upon my motion and exposed that precious health care dollars were padding the pockets of high-priced lobbyists and consultants under McGuinty's watch, how can the government expect Ontarians to trust our health care system?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know that the member opposite has a job to do as my critic and I expect her to do that job, but what I do not expect her to do, particularly someone with such a strong background in health care, is to play politics with this issue.

The Auditor General's report exposed practices that are unacceptable, exposed practices that do not respect taxpayer dollars. I'm not going to defend anything that the Auditor General revealed, but to suggest that somehow Ontarians ought not to have trust or confidence in their health care system is completely irresponsible. Ontarians can have absolute confidence in their health care system. They can have absolute confidence in the quality of care that they are getting. We have an excellent—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: We're talking about money that was taken away from people who are sick. We're talking about money that was taken away from people who needed care. That's because their government failed them.

The Auditor General himself said that he's surprised that eHealth had not been the wakeup call for hospitals to tighten up their procedures. It is clear that despite scandal after scandal and three health ministers since I've been here, this government has not been able to ensure that precious health care dollars go to health care. Yesterday's report is just the latest example of a government failing on the job.

Why does this government continue shaking up Ontarians' trust in our health care system by letting lobbyists profit on the backs of sick people?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said, we introduced legislation yesterday to address the issues raised by the Auditor General. I was astonished to hear the member opposite yesterday—perhaps she was misquoted. I think the member yesterday called this legislation, which addresses the recommendations of the Auditor General—they were characterized yesterday by this member as worthless.

You can't have it both ways. You can't on one hand criticize and then call the legislation that addresses those worthless. So what is it? Are they playing politics with this or are they genuinely interested in improving health care in this province?

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Our province, like many other jurisdictions around the world, has felt the negative effects of the recent global economic downturn. Ontario's automotive sector was particularly affected by the recession, and employment in this sector fell dramatically. But our province is now emerging from the recession. We have seen progress in a number of industries as workers are being called back to the job and production is ramping up to meet a growing demand for Ontario-made goods.

What role, if any, has the Ontario government played in ensuring the long-term viability of the—

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to speak on behalf of the automotive industry of Ontario, and in particular the member for Ajax-Pickering, a long-time defender of the automotive industry, and, in Oshawa, GM, Ford, Chrysler, Toyota, Honda—and we are delighted that so many on our side of the House are in fact defenders of the automotive industry. When other parties in this House turned their backs on the automotive industry when they needed help, the Ontario government, under the Liberal leader, Dalton McGuinty, was there for the automotive industry.

Today, as a result of that support, we know that GM, for example, in Oshawa—in this member's backyard—is

rehiring 600 people to take care of more demand for the Equinox, more demand for GM product, and we're delighted to see that. And let me say that this simply would not have happened had we listened to opposition members of this House who at that time chose to call our support—

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to thank the minister for her response. It has had a positive impact in my area of Durham region and all of Ontario. It is encouraging to hear just how dedicated this government has been to the long-term viability of the province's auto industry and its workers.

The examples that the minister provided in the first part of my question were compelling. However, little to no mention of support for automotive innovation was made. In order for our province to continue as a global auto leader, our industry must be able to keep up with the ever-changing demands of the consumer.

I was involved with the announcement with the minister in Oshawa which demonstrates our government's support for automotive innovation. The Ontario government, along with a number of partners, announced the unveiling of the Automotive Centre of Excellence. My question is, will we provide this House with further examples of how this government—

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I was in fact delighted to be with this particular member at UOIT just on Monday, where we could bring industry together to look at the significant Ontario government investment in this facility. In fact, the Automotive Centre of Excellence, as this member well knows—\$80 million from the Ontario government, supporting innovation for the entire automotive industry, for green industries, for aerospace and all of those industries looking for places to do that research. UOIT now has a tremendous facility.

This is in great contrast to the opposition members who, quite frankly, did not support the automotive industry when they needed help the most, when they called it "corporate welfare." In the meantime, even your colleague in the Ajax-Whitby area, whose own campaign manager chose to take money as a lobbyist—that in fact wasn't corporate welfare, but their support of automotive, they refused to give, so we—

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The government has repeatedly failed to meet its own deadlines on the release of the affordable housing strategy report. It was supposed to be delivered last June. There are now 142,000 families waiting an average of 10 to 12 years for affordable housing. This is the worst record in Ontario's history.

Will the minister give us the actual date this report will be released?

1120

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member from Parkdale-High Park should know that since 2003, we have committed more than \$2.5 billion toward the sector. This is helping us build and repair well over 200,000 units across the province and deliver more than 35,000 rent supplements. She should know that we are the first government in Ontario to come forward with a long-term affordable housing strategy, which will be out later this year. She should understand that we inherited a mess from two previous governments; that we are now repairing the mess that was left by two previous governments.

We are dedicated to making a difference in affordable housing. We will continue to work toward this strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The minister's words are cold comfort to the 142,000 families who are facing homelessness this winter.

Just two days ago, there was a mass demonstration at the Ministry of Housing by Ontarians demanding the release of the affordable housing strategy report. They pointed out that there was not even a line item for housing when the government announced its budget for the year. No money for housing? No wonder there's no housing strategy.

I ask again: Give us the exact date of when the housing strategy report will be released.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Actually, the demonstration that was out in front of 777 Bay Street was all about getting the federal government involved in a long-term affordable housing strategy. I stood up in this House and said I support that. I believe the federal government should get involved in the long-term affordable housing strategy.

I'd love to be able to compare records. When the NDP were in power, there was no affordable housing strategy in place. In fact, if anything, there was a diminishing of importance with regard to affordable housing. That's not the case here. We've made \$2.5 billion worth of investment in affordable housing. We will continue to ensure that we work on a long-term affordable housing strategy that is in place in the timeline that the Premier said makes sense, unlike what previous governments have done.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Fire safety is something everybody thinks about. We worry about our homes, our families and the best way to stay safe from fire. It's especially true for seniors and those vulnerable persons who have difficulty caring for themselves. I hear about these concerns from constituents all the time. They and I have seen several fires in residences for vulnerable Ontarians over the years. Some have resulted in fatalities.

I know our government has enhanced fire safety regulations on a number of fronts, but I also know a lot more can be done. Minister, what are we doing to protect those most at risk from fire here in Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's a very important question and one that has been before this House on many occasions. This government has heard from organizations across Ontario, experts in the fire sector, those who live in and manage vulnerable care homes, municipalities and others, that more needs to be done. That's why today we announced that we are launching extensive consultations on how to improve fire safety in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and other vulnerable Ontarians. We recognize there are a number of ways to move forward and a number of different aspects to consider, so we're seeking advice from residents, their families and organizations, including fire services, municipalities, facility owners and operators, and associations, that play important roles in ensuring the safety of these individuals. This advice will help the government to determine our next steps to enhance fire safety in vulnerable care homes, such as with fire sprinklers—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: My constituents in Willowdale, and indeed everybody in Ontario, will be happy that we're moving forward on this file. But there is no single thing that will fix the issue of fire safety. There needs to be a comprehensive approach put in place in order to protect Ontarians.

There are a number of organizations in my riding, Willowdale, that work with vulnerable Ontarians, and I feel that they really want to contribute to these consultations. I've also heard generally from those living in retirement and long-term-care homes that they want their voices heard in this consultation process. Minister, quite specifically, how can these people have a say in this consultation process?

Hon. James J. Bradley: We're going to be posting a consultation document for comment. We're going to seek the views and concerns of all our fire safety industry partners, including all the organizations to which I made reference. We're pleased that the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the Ontario Retirement Communities Association, among others, have expressed their enthusiasm about this important step forward.

Following the receipt of all submissions made during the consultation, we plan to release a document outlining what we have heard, and we're wide open to all suggestions that will help us drive the best plan to address and improve fire safety in residences housing vulnerable Ontarians. We look forward to that input.

I want to pay tribute to MPP Jeffrey, MPP Sergio, MPP Miller and MPP Craitor, who have all brought forward private members' bills on this particular issue. I think that, together as members of the Legislature, we'll be able to bring about something that is going to make a measurable difference—

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

CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. The auditor's report is not just about hospital lobbying contracts. On page 8 of the report, the auditor says he found two cases where the Ministry of Health gave "preferred treatment" to higher-priced consultants, yet you are trying to make hospitals scapegoats when, especially after eHealth, you had to have known what was happening within your own ministry.

How can you expect hospitals to follow rules that you are not following yourself?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have made significant change. We have improved transparency and accountability. Because of action that this government has taken, the auditor has the power to go in and expose these practices, which are unacceptable.

This did not start under our watch. Every party represented in this House bears some responsibility for not having made the changes that we are now making. Let me refer to the Auditor General's report again. He raises several contracts that actually started back in the 1990s, when they were in power. On page 28, he says, "At one hospital, a consultant has been engaged since 1999 as the chief executive officer." The contract was—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's time for this government to assume responsibility. They've been there for seven years. This is why Ontario families want change.

Yesterday, the auditor said, "One thing the minister does set is the culture, what I call the tone from the top." The culture you've created is blaming the rules constantly and passing the buck. A year after the former health minister was thrown under the bus to shield George Smitherman from accountability, the auditor says on page 12 of his report that the rot is also in your own ministry. He found that the ministry awarded a half-million-dollar contract to a consultant even though it had submitted the highest of 12 bids.

Why is accountability greater when an agency is caught short-changing Ontario families than when it is your own ministry who is cheating Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think if the member opposite actually thought about it, she would know that these are practices that have gone on far too long under all governments.

It is our government that is taking action. Her party thought we should send a memo; our party thinks we need to pass legislation. Her party thought that you could improve accountability and not ban lobbyists; we think we need to ban lobbyists from using taxpayer dollars.

These are practices that have gone on for far too long under governments of all stripes. We have asked the Auditor General to give us advice. We are acting on that advice. We have introduced legislation. I genuinely hope,

and ask the member opposite: Will you support this legislation?

1130

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Families across Ontario are being squeezed by higher and higher hydro bills. Margaret Risdon from Elliot Lake writes: "I live in a two-bedroom apartment in northern Ontario. I just dread to think what my bills are going to be this winter."

With winter coming, how soon can Ms. Risdon expect her government to give her a break by taking the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I guess I'm still waiting to see if the leader of the third party puts in her newsletter all the good news about the energy and property tax credit that's going to help that very constituent. But maybe she doesn't want that constituent to know.

I guess the question I have is why, day after day, the leader of the third party gets up in her place to oppose the important investments that we're making in our energy system, important investments that are shared in creating jobs right across this province.

I'd like to quote from the United Steelworkers. They said, about an announcement that the Premier was at with them just a couple of days ago: "Today's announcement is doubly good news.... More new jobs in Ontario are just what working families need. And helping build a cleaner tomorrow is just what workers want for their kids, too."

The quote goes on, and I have a feeling I may want to expand on that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ms. Risdon isn't alone in worrying about paying her hydro bill. Mary D. from Sarnia writes this: "We have noticed on our last payment for hydro our bill has increased by approximately \$100."

Mary LeBlanc, the mother of a child with special needs, also from Sarnia, writes: "Just got my hydro bill last week and nearly had a heart attack ... another \$40 in HST!"

How much longer will Mary and her family have to wait before this government finally gives them a break and takes the HST off of their hydro bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There was a time in this province when the NDP used to stand for something. It's becoming very obvious now that those principles that they once possessed, those principles that required investments in energy to ensure that we could move from a dirty system of energy to a clean system of energy, investments that are creating jobs across this province—they have lost their way. They no longer support those investments.

I ask the member, because I know she's vaguely familiar with the steelworkers of Ontario, who I think once used to be very close to her—no longer, because this is what they're saying: "From steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels,

workers can support their families by working in clean energy.... Workers in other countries know this is the economy of tomorrow. More Ontario workers know clean energy will power our economy, too."

It's a—

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

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In recent months, we've heard much about municipal election campaigns all across Ontario and the way they inspire us and get us to work to elect more and more people, and mostly to get people involved in the democratic process.

In the western Mississauga neighbourhoods of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, I am aware of an initiative by our province and a variety of other groups to immerse more people into how government and the democratic process work. Called Local Government Week, the program engages students in processes similar to that of municipal elections.

Would the minister outline what Local Government Week is and why this event is so important to the democratic process in Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think every member in this House will agree that the democratic process is very good and worth teaching. That's why Local Government Week is all about informing our students about the importance of government. This year, we're combining Local Government Week with Student Vote, an initiative whereby students will hold parallel elections.

For example, in Sudbury tomorrow I'll be at St. Benedict secondary school with principal Karl Dreger and vice-principal Judi Way. I'll be with the 600 students who will be having a parallel election. In Sudbury, 18 schools are participating and 4,300 kids are going to be voting in this parallel election.

I encourage everybody in the House to get their communities involved. Get those students involved. As our Premier has said, the students are the foundation of Ontario's society tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Newcomers and multi-generation Ontarians alike need their government to take an active approach and reach out to Ontarians to encourage greater participation in local politics.

The first step in making a difference in one's community is getting involved in democratically selecting the men and women who represent you. We all represent the many municipalities that make up Ontario because we took an interest in improving life in our communities.

Minister, I understand that many schools are participating in Local Government Week. Would you tell the House how many schools are participating in the program and describe the topics being discussed in Ontario classrooms during this year's Local Government Week?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I am delighted to report to this House that there are 1,500 elementary and secondary schools participating this week in this initiative. I'm also happy that the Ministry of Education has been able to provide \$100,000 for this initiative.

Of course, it's important to remember that this is only possible when the elected representatives within communities make themselves available to go into the schools and talk to students. I think it's important that we recognize and thank them for their contribution but also for understanding why it is so important that we touch our young students, the future electors of the province of Ontario, and have them understand the kinds of services that are provided locally, how their lives are impacted at the local level and that they actually have an opportunity, when there is a municipal election, to make a difference and to ensure they have—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Last year, the Premier hastily assembled a press conference to pre-empt the auditor's criticism of consultant expenses by announcing that 22 agencies would have to post expenses online.

On September 15, we asked how the commissioner will be able to do the job when you haven't added resources to her office. The Premier said: "We will make sure that the appropriate resources are ... there." But yesterday, the finance minister said that "expenses are with the Integrity Commissioner.... I imagine ... that office is quite backlogged."

You're responsible for the Integrity Commissioner's office. Who should Ontario families believe: the Premier, who promised the Integrity Commissioner's office the resources would be there, or the finance minister, who admitted they are not there?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, I'm very proud of the fact that we have brought in measures to improve accountability and transparency for the public sector and also for ministerial staff and ministers. I have also asked the leaders of the opposition, both parties, to post their expenses.

The process is that as of April 1, all the expenses for all these people will be approved and then will go to the Integrity Commissioner. Then the Integrity Commissioner will look at and review those expenses. If there is any problem with those expenses, she has the opportunity and the authority, actually, to recall some of those expenses.

All the expenses that have been approved have gone to the Integrity Commissioner. Now the Integrity Commissioner will approve those expenses. They will come back and be posted on—

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Wasn't that quite an answer? Wasn't that pathetic?

When you appeared before the estimates committee on May 18, the Ontario PC caucus asked you about the McGuinty Liberals breaking the rules for filing expenses, as well as our plan to extend freedom-of-information legislation to all public bodies.

You said that "the cost was in the range of \$30 million.... it doesn't really make a lot of sense." You said that. But yesterday, when the Minister of Health was asked about extending freedom-of-information legislation to hospitals, she said: "Is there a cost attached to that? Yes, there is, but I think it is worth it in terms of transparency." Why does she now say transparency is worth it, but you don't agree?

But maybe I could ask you another question: Where is the Premier today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's the final warning to the member from Simcoe North. I don't want to repeat what I said earlier, but I made it very clear that references to attendance are not acceptable. If this practice is going to persist on both sides of the House, then there will be naming without any warning to a member, because it's not healthy for this place to do that. You just saw the disorder. I trust that the honourable member has respect for the chair, and I'm quite confident that he is not flouting the authority of the chair.

Minister?

1140

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say that I have every faith in the Integrity Commissioner. If they need more resources, they will come and ask us, and we will be more than pleased to look at that. I had a meeting with the Integrity Commissioner on that issue as well.

But let's just put this in some perspective. On February 18, I sent a letter to the Leader of the Opposition asking them to post their expenses. It took them eight months—eight long months—to develop even a simple website to post their expenses. Then they didn't release any report or even Twitter, for that matter, to tell people where to find those expenses. Eight months to do a simple website that you could post expenses on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. There was some question there about going to the next question, and I thought it would be in the interest of the government that they would want their honourable member—the member had finished the question, and I thought that you would have wanted the member to answer the question. That's what I chose to do.

New question.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre des Richesses naturelles. La semaine dernière, j'ai eu le grand plaisir de me rendre à Foleyet. C'était comme un gros parti néo-démocrate parce que tout le monde portait de l'orange. Tous les chasseurs et les chasseresses cher-

chaient également le résumé des règlements de chasse de 2010 du ministère des Richesses naturelles.

Pourquoi, madame la Ministre, est-ce que dans une communauté aussi francophone que Foleyet il y avait des versions anglaises partout—dans les pourvoiries, dans les LCBO, à la station d'essence à 1,28 \$ le litre, dans les magasins généraux—mais il n'y avait aucune version francophone disponible?

L'hon. Dwight Duncan: La ministre des Richesses naturelles.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm happy to answer the question. It's the first I've heard of this issue. Certainly, we value our francophone hunters, whether they come from Ontario or Quebec. We have people from all over North America who come to Ontario to hunt and fish and camp. Certainly, it's something that I will take under advisement with some more information. I would be happy to work with the member.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Vous voyez, ce n'est pas seulement à Foleyet qu'on ne pouvait pas trouver un document français. Je l'ai cherché à Gogama, à Westree, à Cartier, à Dowling, à Onaping, à Wanup, à Estaire, même à la Rivière des Français—Rivière des Français, vous pensiez?—sans résultat.

Il y a des piles de documents anglais partout, mais pas une seule copie de document en français. Pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement de M. McGuinty continue à s'évertuer à ignorer la Loi sur les services en français?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm happy to work with the member, as I said. I have worked with other communities. We've offered briefings for our francophone hunters and anglers. It's very important that we provide those services, and I appreciate her bringing this to our attention.

It is our intention to make sure that everyone has access to hunting and fishing and using the resources we have in Ontario. We're very proud of the services we provide at MNR, and I know that our staff will work very closely with you. We're happy to accommodate your request.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, each year Ontario welcomes thousands of immigrants to our province. These newcomers choose Ontario as their new home because of the opportunities they have to create a better life.

Newcomers bring with them a wealth of skills, talent and expertise which they hope can help them find a good job. Despite having the skills and education, many newcomers find it difficult to enter the workplace in Ontario. Newcomers in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans have told me that their lack of Canadian work experience is often an obstacle to obtaining a job in their field of expertise.

Can the minister tell newcomers in my riding and throughout Ontario what the government is doing to help newcomers find work in their profession?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member from Ottawa–Orléans. The McGuinty government is investing in bridge training programs to help Ontario newcomers succeed. In fact, since 2003, we have invested more than \$175 million to support our newcomers through bridge training programs.

These programs create a bridge to employment opportunities by helping our newcomers get training and local workplace experience so that they can get licensed or certified in their profession or trade. These programs work. They help our newcomers get good jobs to support themselves and to support their families.

Because of the success of bridge training, we recently renewed several programs that are delivering results in Ottawa. For example, we invested an additional \$1.7 million to help more than 700 newcomers get jobs in engineering, the construction trades and other professions. Investments such as these will help Ontario put the skills of our newcomers to work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Newcomers in my riding will be pleased to hear that they can access bridge training programs as they make the transition into the Ontario workplace.

The city of Ottawa is home to many new immigrants whose first language is French. There are a lot of new Canadians from the Haitian community in Vanier, for instance. I'm sure you know that the majority of immigrants to our province adopt English as their second language. However, with many newcomers who pursue opportunities in Ontario using French as their primary language, those French-speaking newcomers also need the province's support. They need the government to invest in settlement and job services to help them succeed.

Can the minister tell francophone newcomers in Ottawa–Orléans, in my riding, how they can access integration services in their language in Ottawa?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, thank you for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about what the government of Ontario is doing to support our francophone newcomers.

The McGuinty government recognizes the importance of delivering bridge training programs for French-speaking newcomers, and that's why we're investing in bridge training programs to help our skilled francophone newcomers find good jobs.

In Ottawa, for example, our government has partnered with La Cité collégiale, which helps foreign-trained workers in the construction trades. This partnership helps francophone newcomers access recruitment services, training workshops as well as internships and apprenticeships.

Our francophone newcomers in Ottawa can also access the Ottawa job match program. This is a program in collaborative partnership that connects internationally trained immigrants in Ottawa with Ottawa-area employers looking for workers with a specific set of skills.

These investments will help our francophone newcomers living in Ontario and living in Ottawa get the job training and employment services they need to succeed.

DEFERRED VOTES

OPEN FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO
PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 68, An Act to promote Ontario as open for business by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 68, Loi favorisant un Ontario propice aux affaires en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

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

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1153.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Meilleur, Madeleine
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoskins, Eric	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Michael A.	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kular, Kuldeep	Sousa, Charles
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Leal, Jeff	Zimmer, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	Matthews, Deborah	
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	Klees, Frank	Wilson, Jim
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 43; the nays are 25.

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

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

Third reading agreed to.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to correct the record regarding my answer to the member for Nickel Belt. I wanted to make sure people knew that our hunting regulations are posted in French on the MNR website. I will obviously work on getting the hard copy available in the member's riding, but I wanted to correct that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's a point of order. The member is allowed to correct the record.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to welcome special guests today in the Legislature: Ms. Anne Brayley and her partner, Nanette Sanson; and Leslie Freeman and her husband, Tim Mallory. Welcome.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce Chief Tim Beckett of the Kitchener fire department. Tim is the president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. Welcome, Tim.

Mr. Mario Sergio: The guests are not here, but we have a delegation coming from sunny Sicily, from the city of Siracusa. They have the Archimedes exhibit and the conference on a writer called Vitaliano Brancati. They are Professoressa Giuseppina Ignacolo, the vice-president of the Consorzio Universitario di Siracusa; Professore Giacinto Taibi, University of Catania; Professoressa Rita Valenti; Professoressa Mariangela Liuzzo; Sebastiano Minardi; Edgardo Bandiera, president of the council of the municipal city of Siracusa; Franco Formica, vice-president; Giancarlo Garozzo, councillor; Fabio Rodante, councillor; Angelo Aliffi; Sebastiano Cimino. Four of their hosts are here as well: Roberto Bandiera, Maria Bandiera, Enzo Di Mauro and Connie Di Mauro.

I hope they all get here soon; otherwise, they will still be recorded as being here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANNE BRAYLEY
AND LESLIE FREEMAN

Mr. Frank Klees: I welcome to the Legislature today two accomplished Ontarians. Toronto residents Anne Brayley and Leslie Freeman have been competitive squash players in both singles and doubles for more than 25 years and have represented our province and our country with distinction.

This year, in January, they played together as a team and won the Ontario provincial women's veterans doubles championship. They went on in April to win the Canadian national women's over-50 doubles championship.

Over their squash careers, both have been multiple-time doubles champions. Anne has four Ontario and three Canadian championships to her credit. Leslie has won 12 Ontario and 10 Canadian championships, one US championship and three world championships.

Two years ago, they both represented Team Canada in the first Can-Am Cup doubles challenge held in Boston, Massachusetts. Leslie was also the Canadian ladies' team captain. They will both be on the Canadian team again this weekend in the Can-Am Cup tournament which will be played here in Toronto.

On behalf of us all, I congratulate Anne and Leslie on their past accomplishments and wish them continued success.

WILLOWDALE UNITED CHURCH

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very happy to speak about a good-news story in Willowdale. On September 26, I attended a ribbon-cutting and ramp-unveiling ceremony to mark the accessibility improvements to the Willowdale United Church. This is a special church. It's 200 years old—it's been in Willowdale for 200 years—and it was founded by the original pioneers up in that part of the city. The upgrades were made possible through a \$38,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, along with very generous donations from church members.

On a more sad note, I'd like to remember a good friend of mine and long-time patron of the church, Betty Louise Crossley. She passed away shortly after the unveiling ceremony of the ramp, and she had a particular interest in that and in everything else in the church. She was active in the North York Historical Society. She was the church archivist and an example of an outstanding citizen. Kind, compassionate, loved by all, she will be deeply missed. She will be especially missed by the congregants of the Willowdale United Church.

MARGARET WILLIAMS

Mr. Steve Clark: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize Margaret Williams, who is retiring as CEO and chief librarian of the Brockville Public Library. A celebration of her remarkable 40-year career at the city library was held on October 20.

There was certainly much to celebrate in her four decades of service to the people of Brockville. She has been the public face of the library to generations of patrons. Margaret became a trusted source of knowledge, whether people were looking for the latest best-selling novel, a how-to book on home repairs, a bedtime story for their children or some last-minute material for a school project.

She joined the library staff in 1971 and was appointed CEO in 1994. Like the rest of society, much has changed in the library service since Margaret began her career, but her forward-thinking approach and ability to adapt to change kept the Brockville Public Library on the cutting edge as computers, the Internet and other technologies became more prominent.

As a former mayor of Brockville and a former library board member, I want to offer my personal thanks to Margaret Williams. Her professional and personal contri-

butions to the cultural fabric of our community have truly made Brockville a better place to live.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today with good news for our Ontario economy. Early this week, I received information from General Motors that the Oshawa assembly plant just added 600 jobs to the Chevrolet Equinox line on this week's Monday night shift. Production of the Equinox is increasing due to demand for the vehicle made in Durham region by workers in Durham region, including workers from my home riding of Ajax-Pickering.

This good news is a ripple effect of the CAMI automotive expansion in Ingersoll and their expanded capacity to produce GM vehicles right here in Ontario. Our provincial government has helped boost the economies of Ingersoll, Durham region and all of Ontario by being the first non-national jurisdiction in North America to stand up in support of GM's workers during their financial challenges in 2008.

This brings me to a point that deserves to be highlighted: Our province has recovered almost 76% of the jobs that were lost in the global recession. While I know that there are still many people unemployed in this province, our government has a plan, the open end—sorry, that's what we are—the Open Ontario plan to continue boosting our economy, creating more jobs and investing in the people of Ontario.

1310

HOLLAND MARSH SOUPFEST

Mrs. Julia Munro: Last Saturday, I was very pleased to serve as a judge during the Holland Marsh Soupfest, joining with thousands of tasters. Soupfest is sponsored by the Holland Marsh Growers' Association, the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury and King township. The chief requirement at Soupfest is that each soup's primary ingredients must have been produced in the Holland Marsh.

As a judge, I can tell you that it was a difficult choice to pick the winners. But here are the best soups in each category:

—farm fresh or homemade: Outstanding Oxtail by Dingo Farms;

—restaurant or caterers: Roasted Corn by Amaya the Indian Room;

—educational and community groups: Potato Leek by Muskoka and District Chefs Association;

—honourable mention: Split Pea and Ham by Beretta Organics;

—most creative or unique: Organic Tomato and Scallion Consommé by the Club at Bond Head;

—best texture: Beer and Onion by Georgian College.

I encourage everyone to come out to the Holland Marsh at this time of year next year and enjoy Soupfest. I

must also say that I had tasted almost 30 kinds of soup. It was quite a challenge.

Thank you to all of the sponsors, organizers and participants for a great event.

BEACHES LIONS CLUB

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand today to talk about the Beaches Lions Club. It's a mainstay in the Beach. It was founded in 1935, and this Saturday they are having their 75th anniversary celebration at Ted Reeve Community Arena.

If you live in or around the Beach in Toronto, you know of the wonderful work of this group. They have a seniors' home that's located in the Beach, they helped to found Applegrove community centre, and they helped to found Community Centre 55. The Balmy Beach Canoe Club got its start through the Beaches Lions, as did Beach Metro Community News, the venerable newspaper of the Beach.

As I said, they were founded in 1935. They are perhaps best known in our community for the annual Easter parade, the largest Easter parade in Canada, which has grown every year from its roots in 1967. But it also is known for its Christmas tree lighting at Kew Gardens, the annual Canada Day celebrations and the Terry Fox run.

This is an amazing group. It has held many people of very high esteem, including five former mayors of Toronto, who were all members of the Beaches Lions Club. They continue to do good work to this day, and they're hoping that people will come out on Saturday and over the course of the next few weeks to help them celebrate what has been a wonderful group in our community, doing good work, neighbour to neighbour.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Reza Moridi: The McGuinty government has made historic improvements to our energy system to ensure that Ontario delivers the reliable electricity that its people expect. We have been fixing the outdated, dirty and inefficient electricity grid left behind by the Harris-Hudak regime and have replaced it with modern, clean and reliable energy sources.

In 2003, under the Conservatives, 50 million people experienced the largest blackout in North American history. Since then, the Liberal government has made important energy investments to best serve the needs of Ontarians. Under the Harris-Hudak regime, demand increased at a time that generation capacity fell, and Ontario became a net importer of energy.

We have been honest in saying that modernizing our energy infrastructure requires investments, and we are doing our part to make sure that rates remain affordable. The northern Ontario energy credit will provide a yearly credit of up to \$200 per family. The northern industrial electricity rate program gives industry reliable price rebates of two cents per kilowatt hour, averaging a total

of \$150 million per year. This could reduce industrial facilities' electricity costs by up to 25%.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit could give homeowners—

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

The member from Beaches—East York on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Prue: I didn't want to interrupt the honourable member, but he twice referred to the Harris-Hudak regime. I think the Speaker ruled that out of order yesterday, and I don't think it should be part of the record, nor should it be part of a member's statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I do thank the honourable member. I did remind the House yesterday of the use of that term, and I would ask the honourable member to withdraw the use of that term.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I withdraw.

PENSION REFORM

Mr. Charles Sousa: The recent economic downturn has made it harder for Ontario families to save and prepare for retirement. The McGuinty government understands that after a life of hard work, Ontarians want to know their pensions are adequate and secure. That is why our government has committed itself to modernizing Ontario's pension system. The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, passed unanimously by this House, was a vital step toward achieving that goal. The Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, introduced to the House on Tuesday, would, if passed, be another significant step towards helping make sure Ontario's seniors and retirees are protected. But there is more that can and must be done. This is a challenge we must face, not just as Ontarians working together, but as Canadians.

That is why the Minister of Finance, on Monday, tabled a motion endorsing a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan. For all Ontarians, but especially the two thirds who have no workplace pensions, the CPP provides safe and defined benefits. But very few Ontarians qualify for the CPP's maximum benefits. We see an opportunity here to increase and improve the retirement incomes of Ontarians and all Canadians.

Our government is taking the steps necessary to ensure Ontario's seniors have a comfortable retirement. But we cannot do it alone, which is why we are calling on the federal government to join us in addressing this important challenge.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Bob Delaney: Across Ontario, people reject the scenario of publicly funded institutions, such as hospitals, using taxpayer funds to hire lobbyists to influence such taxpayer representatives as ministry staff and MPPs in order to obtain more taxpayer funds. This practice is going to stop. The Minister of Health has introduced a bill that, if passed, will eliminate lobbying, improve

accountability by mandating public disclosure of expenses online, expand the power of the Auditor General to investigate hospitals, school boards and universities, and expand freedom-of-information legislation.

Previous NDP and Conservative governments refused to ensure proper accountability in public institutions. Ontarians want the spending of public institutions to be transparent, and to ensure that taxpayer funds are used to deliver services and not to pay lobbyists. During the last Conservative government, some 150 lobbyists were hired by organizations that received Ontario government funds, including hospitals, universities, school boards and other organizations.

Ontario expects its government to set a high standard and to demand a higher standard of its institutions. This legislation delivers that higher standard.

VISITORS

Hon. Margaret R. Best: As the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, I too would like to take this opportunity to welcome Anne and Leslie to the Ontario Legislature today and to congratulate them on their tremendous success in sports, and to wish them much success in the future.

PETITIONS

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people—actually, it comes from all over Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas a company’s resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

“Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

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

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

1320

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have four petitions here, individually signed, and I will read them.

“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

at 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 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 will hand it to page Anika.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition that was presented to me by Chuck McEwan. He asked me to present it to the Legislature. It’s signed by hundreds of people, many of them from the great riding of Oxford, but they’re from all over the province. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for ‘loss of sponsor’ of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

“Whereas, in the present economic climate, the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high, with no relief in sight;

“Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

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

“To amend the PBA regulations to permit the Administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario ... to apply other options in the ‘loss of sponsor’ scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution.”

I’m proud to present this petition, and I will sign it, as I agree with the petition.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients.... ; and

“Whereas,” since “October 2009, insured PET scans” have been “performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

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

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

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition to save medical laboratory services in Stayner, Elmvalle and Tottenham.

“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.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury.

“Whereas people need teeth to stay healthy; and

“Whereas a lack of universal dental care has resulted in an epidemic of poor dental health, and many people are living and working with no teeth; and

“Whereas there is only very limited support for denture care for those on social assistance and no support at all for the working poor;

“Therefore, we call upon the government of Ontario to increase funding to assist people on social assistance and the working poor to access denture care.”

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

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: I continue to receive literally hundreds of these petitions on a daily basis. It's my pleasure to read into the record this petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at 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 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.

SERVICES DIAGNOSTIQUES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition des gens de Nickel Belt :

« Attendu que l'Ontario fait de la tomographie par émission de positons (TEP) un service de santé assuré par le régime public pour les patients atteints du cancer et de maladies cardiaques... ; et

« Attendu que » depuis octobre 2009, des TEP sont assurées et effectuées à Ottawa, à London, à Toronto, à Hamilton ainsi qu'à Thunder Bay; et

« Attendu que la ville du Grand Sudbury est une plaque tournante pour la santé dans le Nord-Est, qui compte l'Hôpital régional de Sudbury et son programme régional de cancer, de même que l'École de médecine du Nord de l'Ontario;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario d'offrir de la TEP par le biais de l'Hôpital régional de Sudbury, donnant ainsi un accès équitable aux résidents du Nord-Est ontarien. »

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais y ajouter ma signature et je demande à Emmett de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition that was sent to me by the town of New Tecumseth concerning the HST.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of 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 agree with that petition and I will sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario sent to me by Brian Grove from Ingersoll.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at 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 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."

1330

I affix my signature to this petition as I agree with its content.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just before we proceed to orders of the day, October 19 to October 26 is Sicilian Cultural Week here in the city of Toronto. There was a large delegation introduced earlier, and I just want to officially welcome the delegation to the chamber today. Some of those individuals are Roberto Meloni, Marcella Fichera, Giuseppina Ignaccolo, Giovanni Cannata and Edgardo Bandiera. Welcome to Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park. Have a wonderful visit to our province as you celebrate Sicilian Cultural Week.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MANDATING SPRINKLERS IN ALL ONTARIO RETIREMENT HOMES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'INSTALLATION OBLIGATOIRE D'EXTINCTEURS DANS TOUTES LES MAISONS DE RETRAITE DE L'ONTARIO

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

Bill 92, An Act to require automatic sprinklers in all Ontario retirement homes / Projet de loi 92, Loi exigeant l'installation d'extincteurs automatiques dans toutes les maisons de retraite de l'Ontario.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Today is the opportunity for this government to show that they really care for all of our seniors in Ontario. Today, we can move steps closer to mandating automatic sprinklers in every care facility in Ontario. Today, we can speak for those who have lost their lives because sprinklers weren't there to contain the fire and give them a chance to escape. Implementation of Bill 92 will eliminate the two-tiered level of fire safety in Ontario retirement homes.

Since 1980, there have been 44 retirement home deaths and countless injured seniors, causing devastation to their families. Seniors suffer injuries such as broken bones and ripped skin in the well-intentioned rush to get them away from the fire. There have been three coroner's inquests, all recommending mandatory automatic sprinkler systems in every Ontario retirement home. It's not just the fear of death, but the injuries caused to seniors who must be moved as quickly as physically possible—and the sprinkler systems add valuable minutes. All fire stakeholders in our province—the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs; the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association; the Firefighters Association of Ontario, representing volunteer firefighters; the National Fire Protection Association; and the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario—are on record supporting the retroactive installation of sprinklers in these facilities. All have strongly recommended mandatory sprinkler systems in every Ontario retirement home.

This government cannot ignore this anymore. This situation has been clear to every government for years, but this injustice has not been fixed or dealt with. We have the chance to fix it now. We can all stand together, each of us can finally represent our most vulnerable citizens and mandate automatic sprinkler systems in all care occupancies.

Many of you live or have lived in small communities where services are old, distant or non-existent. Seniors and their families who live in these communities have few, if any, options for elder care. You could send your parents and grandparents or elder family members to a newer retirement home, but that would mean visits maybe once a month, or possibly twice if the weather is good. The best option for elder care is the local retirement home, but it was built in 1995 and today does not require automatic sprinkler systems. So a longer distance with fewer visits or closer to home and familiarity, but less protection in the event of a fire: What decision do you make for your parents?

This should not be a question that any of us have to answer or ask. Every retirement home and long-term-care facility in Ontario should be mandated to install automatic sprinkler systems throughout their facilities. My

Bill 92, An Act to require automatic sprinklers in all Ontario retirement homes, would legislate this protection for our most vulnerable citizens.

Many small communities are years away from ever being able to afford a permanent fire department with the response times of even medium-sized urban centres. Mandatory sprinklers in all retirement homes will contain the flames and give firefighters those necessary extra minutes to reach the fire. Sprinklers will allow time to more safely evacuate our seniors and provide extra safety for our firefighters. With an automatic sprinkler system, the entire emergency operation is simplified. The water flowing from sprinklers will either put out the fire in its early stages or at least contain it. Well-trained retirement home staff would ensure the fire area is closed off, evacuate occupants and be prepared for the arrival of firefighters. The objective is to provide the best level of safety and reduce the possibility of injury and loss of life. It is beyond all comprehension that this necessary step has not been taken to date.

The Fire Safety Commission has recommended that the Office of the Fire Marshal introduce the necessary change to the Ontario fire code, part 9, retrofit, section 9.4, health care facilities, requiring the protection of all residential care homes and nursing homes with the installation of automatic fire sprinkler systems; also, that the government of Ontario find the political will to address the urgency of this matter and do the right thing to protect those who have spent their own lives making a significant contribution to the benefit of today's society and the citizens of Ontario.

As we know, most fatal care facility fires happen when staffing levels are low, in the night or in the early morning. Without sufficient staff to ensure efficient, safe evacuation of residents, the possibility of injury and death is significantly increased. When we consider the mobility issues with many seniors, some bedridden, in wheelchairs or using walkers and canes, it is obvious that every mechanism at our disposal must be implemented to help our vulnerable Ontarians escape a fire in a care facility.

It is unclear to me why the legislation that required automatic sprinklers in care occupancy built since 1997 did not extend to every care facility. Statistics prove that a combination of automatic sprinklers and smoke alarms can reduce the possibility of death by fire by 82%. This is borne out by the fact that there has never been a multiple-death fire in care occupancy with full automatic sprinkler systems. I repeat: There has never been a multiple-death fire in care occupancy with full automatic sprinkler systems in this province. What more proof do we need?

The Co-operators insurance company has written a letter fully supporting Bill 92. The letter in part states: "As an insurance company, the Co-operators deals on an all-too-regular basis with the tragic results of fires. It is especially distressing to see the devastation to lives and properties where simple measures could have prevented that outcome"—simple measures like mandatory automatic sprinkler systems.

Co-operators also states: “There is a preponderance of evidence showing the positive impact that sprinklers have on saving both lives and reducing property damage.” And: “Sprinklers are a proven technology that saves lives and the additional time they provide people to escape is even more important in retirement homes, where mobility can be an issue” for some seniors.

And further: “When sprinklers are not installed, the cost to repair fire structural damage will most often be more expensive than water damage caused by fire sprinklers. The argument that the cost of installation is exorbitant is a very weak argument, since it is not consistent with the facts when you consider the lives and property installed sprinklers will save.

“Too many people have died and seniors will continue to be at risk as long as retirement homes are not adequately protected.”

1340

I, of course, agree with this completely. This is a no-brainer. This should have been done years ago. Now is our chance.

From the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, we hear: “As important as sprinklers are to saving lives, their benefits go beyond that: Fire damage is reduced by 40%-70% in buildings equipped with automatic fire sprinklers. The one or two sprinkler heads that are triggered help contain the fire and prevent it from spreading. The result? Less fire and water damage overall.”

And the real result, the most important result: fewer deaths and injuries to seniors and our most vulnerable citizens.

This morning’s announcement by the government of a consultation process is welcomed, but let’s not be deterred from the immediate goal. Moving forward with my bill will get the process under way, and it is not contradictory to the consultation process that the government has announced; it’s more supportive than anything. In fact, Bill 92 is the beginning of the process. It’s the next logical step.

I’d like to thank everyone who has sent in their support for Bill 92 to me and my caucus colleagues, but also to other MPPs across this province. I look forward to working together with you all to take the steps necessary in getting Bill 92 through the committee process, on to third reading and, finally, royal assent.

This is an important issue. I can’t emphasize it enough. The media is involved, seniors’ organizations, the police, fire—everybody in this province wants this to go through. There isn’t anyone—the only ones who are concerned about it are concerned about the possible expense to homeowners, but that can be dealt with through amendments, and it can be amortized. It’s not necessarily that it has to be done tomorrow, but it certainly has to be done soon.

What we don’t want is another tragedy like Orillia, another one like Mississauga. We don’t want any more of our vulnerable seniors exposed to fire, possible death and serious injury. I certainly would like to feel that, if I put my mom into a home in a small town, she’s just as safe

as she would be in downtown Toronto, in that building, if it was built after 1998. We pride ourselves on fairness and fair play. Why is the senior in a home built before 1998 not allowed to have the same protection as a person in a home that was built after 1998? It makes no sense to me.

I can say that I’m sure that this House is going to do the right thing today and move on with this. I look forward to working with my colleagues across the floor and the official opposition, because I think we’re all on the same page.

Thank you, and I hope that my wishes come true.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: I’m very pleased to stand in the House this afternoon and speak in support of this bill that has been brought forward by my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I’d also like to acknowledge that the member from York West brought forward a bill similar to this recently.

I believe that it is an extremely important issue that needs to be dealt with, and I was very pleased this morning when a statement was released, through a question in the House, regarding consultations about how to improve fire safety in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and other vulnerable Ontarians. I believe that that consultation process could be worked into the consultations which will take place on this bill as it moves forward, because we need to seek the advice from residents, their families and organizations who are directly involved in this. It is, as the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek said, an issue of safety, and I think it’s something that has to be dealt with.

My father was a firefighter for 32 years in the city of Winnipeg, and the importance of fire safety and preparedness was instilled upon us from a very early age. Short story: In 1983, my wife and I were in Montreal recording, staying in an apartment hotel residence—I think we were on the 16th floor—when the lobby caught on fire late one night. The alarms went off at about 3 in the morning, and we had to find our way down the stairways to get out. I know what it’s like to get out of a building that’s on fire and the panic that ensues. I was fairly young at that point in time. It’s an experience that I wouldn’t wish upon anyone. I can only imagine what it would be like in that situation if you have a disability or if you are aged and have slowed down. I believe that it’s so important that we do this.

However, I would like to raise a couple of issues that I’m sure we will be able to deal with through consultations on this. Specifically, in rural areas—in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, we have many of them. I’ve had many conversations about this issue with the city of Kawartha Lakes emergency services chief, Dave Guilbault, and we talked about the issues. If there’s an area where there is only one seniors’ residence in town, yes, this could put a burden on them if it was done immediately.

What I would propose, as this moves forward, is that we look at a way of phasing something like this in over a

period of time, which can be determined through the consultations, so that these residences wouldn't be put into a position where they would have to close because they couldn't afford to move forward. We would then be creating another problem—not as dangerous and not as serious, possibly, but still it would be a huge issue that we would have to deal with. This is about fire safety, and that is a priority.

I would like to congratulate the fire services across this province for the great job that they've done. In the past decade, statistically, we've seen fire death rates fall by 22% in this province, and I think that's a credit—there definitely have to be congratulations sent out to the members of our fire services and emergency services who do such a great job.

In closing, we all have a responsibility regarding fire safety, whether it's smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, escape plans or awareness of hazards. Our conversations today should serve as a loud reminder to all those responsible for the care of others that they are expected to carry out the responsibilities under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. It is so important that we do this, and all of us can contribute to safety. If the efforts that we're making here this afternoon will contribute to that as well and, ultimately, save lives, I think that's incredibly important to the people in this province. I congratulate the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his efforts in bring this forward.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek's bill, Bill 92, and support this legislation.

He already mentioned earlier in his comments the Orillia disaster two years ago this coming January, in fact, at the Muskoka Heights retirement home. People lost their lives and many people spent a lot of time in hospital. In the end, the management did face charges as a result of that fire. I know the management, and they were just overwhelmed. They were so upset about what had happened. It was a very, very sad situation for everybody. In the end, though, the fire chief of the city of Orillia, Ralph Dominelli, wanted to move forward, and he fully supports your resolution.

I think he would support the announcement that was made this morning by the government—I'm assuming it was made this morning—on a consultation process. It was coincidental to what happened today, but at the same time it did happen. We look forward to that consultation, because I think there's a number of retirement home operators who would like to get some input. We'd also need to get some of that same input from some of the advisers to the building code etc.

I can tell you that my mother-in-law, who's 94 years of age, lives in a retirement home in Waubaushe, Ontario. It's called Elim Homes. In the last couple of years they have actually put in a state-of-the-art sprinkler system. A very neat and tidy job: They worked around the old folks who were in the home, and they managed to

do a really good job of putting this in. They sensed the problem as well.

I did want to say that I talked to an owner of a company that has about 20 homes across the country. Many of them are brand new and have state-of-the-art sprinkler systems and all of the emergency equipment you would ever have or require. But they do have a few of the older retirement homes around that they know they want to upgrade.

1350

I think it's important. One of the things he mentioned to me in a phone call the other day was, "We can work this in. If you do just a straight sprinkler system, it's going to be about 2,000 bucks a unit. If you've got 50 units, it's \$100,000. If you've got 25 bedrooms, it's going to be roughly \$50,000."

That's not what bothers some of the retirement home operators. What they are concerned about—and I think this will come up in the consultations, and it will certainly come up also if this bill goes to committee, and I hope it will—is the fact that there are some grey areas in the building code around some of the classifications. That's what I'm understanding. They're saying that in some cases, if you put these full sprinkler systems in, you may have to change the stairwells and also the hallways, which in a lot of cases may reduce the number of units you would have. If you reduce the number of units, it may not be feasible to operate. They'd have to shut them down. So they're worried about if you put the sprinkler system into these homes we're talking about, built before 1985, whether or not that would in fact be a problem, if we in fact lost retirement home beds in the province. He was just flagging this for me.

He says that what he thinks would be required best would be a reclassification of those homes with the sprinkler systems in them. I'm just trying to understand the technicalities, what he explained to me, but I just wanted to point out that those are the types of things that may come up in the consultations during your committee hearings.

Besides that, though, it's important that we protect our senior citizens. That's what this bill is trying to do. We're trying to do something positive, and we're trying to do something that is not going to put the cost per month of that retirement home rent out of question for the resident to be able to afford. That's the one thing I wanted to put on the record, and I'm going to try to get a lot more clarification on the building code requirements around that. I just wanted to flag that, because I think it is a slight problem we may have.

However, we're legislators. We can legislate what is required, and we can try to accommodate and have a very, very balanced approach while still having the sprinkler systems installed in these retirement homes, because as the member has said, there has been no loss of lives in any home that has sprinkler systems in it. I understand that's what you are saying and that's what I've heard as well, so that alone should tell the general public that this should be a fairly positive thing in the

long run for our residents. It's going to save lives, and it's certainly going to save the insurance companies a liability that they didn't have before.

I've got to tell you that the disaster in Orillia was incredible, to watch what happened to the home. I'd been in it a number of times, delivering scrolls and at the official openings and stuff. It was an old, old home, but in the end, it burned to the ground. I believe there were four lives lost and a number of people were seriously injured. We're lucky we didn't lose a lot more that time, thanks to the Orillia fire service. They came through, and as a result of that, they have advocated strongly for the sprinkler systems to be installed. I know even just as recently as Fire Prevention Week, the fire service had a display at the local mall, with Home Depot and all the police cars and paramedics etc. that came out, and I can you, that was the number one priority, the number one concern on their minds, that we try to do something in this Legislature to make it mandatory to have some kind of a program to install sprinklers in these retirement homes that currently don't have them.

I think if we listen to the fire services and take their advice and the advice of the insurance companies, it would be a good opportunity and again a good decision to move forward and to pass this legislation, send it on to committee, and then, in conjunction with the consultation that the minister talked about this morning, hopefully we can do good things for the citizens of the province of Ontario, our senior citizens and some of our most vulnerable people.

Thank you very much. It was a pleasure to speak to this.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: New Democrats are very proud of the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and his many legislative initiatives in this House since he was elected three years ago, in particular Bill 92. It's common sense. It just plain makes sense.

It seems to me that objections are difficult to develop to the proposition. We've already talked about saving the lives of seniors in homes, who are at a higher risk because their mobility and their agility aren't what they would be were they 20, 30 years younger. It certainly saves firefighters from the risk of loss of life and damage due to personal injury health issues.

At the end of the day, it's the insurance industry. I can't for the life of me understand why the insurance industry isn't lined up outside the Premier's office, insisting that this bill promptly become law. It seems to me that the insurance industry has no hesitation asking Premier McGuinty for higher premiums—and he gets them; he gives them to them. The insurance industry has no hesitation asking Premier McGuinty for lower benefits packages—and the Premier gives it to them. Well, heck, why isn't the insurance industry lined up here, saying, "We insist that this bill become law because it's going to reduce our costs"? As a matter of fact, as has already been noted, if you want to talk about deferring or

defraying the cost of installation of these things, let the insurance industry give discounts to people who have got these sprinkler systems installed. Furthermore, let the government operate a campaign over the next three years of waiving the HST on the installation and supply of these automatic sprinkler systems in various homes.

Indeed, I have some concerns if there's a suggestion that there are certain properties being used for retirement homes that may not meet code, in terms of the width of hallways and the width of stairways. Perhaps we need a more vigorous and thorough review of the existing stock, especially of private sector, for-profit retirement homes, to ensure that they're safe not only with respect to fire safety, but in every other regard as well.

I applaud the author of this bill, Mr. Miller. We thank him for bringing this to the Legislature. I look forward to being able to vote in support of this, and I look forward even more so to Mr. Miller attending upon the Lieutenant Governor when the Lieutenant Governor gives assent to this bill after third reading.

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

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to stand in support of the bill placed in front of us by the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I think the bill speaks for itself in terms of the fact that we want to be able to provide adequate insurance to enable people, especially vulnerable people, to have the safety of living in their homes. But what is most reassuring for me is that, in fact, the member is building upon the good work that's been done by the member from Brampton–Springdale. For over seven years, she's been a really strong advocate for residential sprinklers. We have been debating this issue many times, so all you're doing is building on exactly what has been presented previously. So this is a good example of a coordinated approach to a very serious challenge we have in our community.

We're very fortunate. I know there's a lot of concern that's been expressed around cost and that this will have an impact on the community itself. But we are very fortunate, as I indicated, in that we have with us people in the know who can manage and make this the art of the possible. First of all, we have the firefighters themselves, the supervisors, the people who know about prevention and can help us to deal with this problem. We also have organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders' Association, BOMA, BILD and others that certainly can work with us in charrettes and look at how we can plan an integrated approach to dealing with putting in a sprinkler system.

It really is an opportunity. If the objective is to save a life—and that's the objective. The objective is to save the life of somebody in their home, and a retirement home is somebody's home. The objective is to save a life in somebody's nursing home. It is their home. I think what the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is trying to suggest is that all we're doing is taking the whole concept of what we want as safe in our own homes to be

safe in the homes of the people that we care most about and those who are most vulnerable.

1400

To think that you would be put in a position where you could not have means of escape is very concerning. For us, who are able-bodied or who have the capacity to walk, it may be easy to escape a burning building. But for those who do not have this capacity, then I think it's really important that we look to what are the options. What is that art of the possible, as they say, where we can provide for these individuals some safety net, some form of security?

As I said, I have great confidence in the work of the firefighters themselves, the work they have been doing, and the work that the member from Brampton–Springdale has certainly been doing for many years on bringing this information to the forefront on how we can positively move forward.

Again, today, I was really delighted to hear that our government is going to proceed with consultations on a very broad range of dealing with this whole issue of fire. We have aging stock, whether we like to admit it or not, and we need to be able to find a place, ways and means for people to feel safe in their own homes.

I congratulate Mr. Miller on building on the good work from the member from Brampton–Springdale, and I look forward to this going to committee and going to consultation so that we can in fact move forward.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly very pleased to join the debate on Bill 92, An Act to require automatic sprinklers in all Ontario retirement homes, which has been brought forward by the member of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. This bill, as we have heard pointed out now, would require retirement home operators to ensure that their home is equipped with automatic sprinklers that comply with any requirements that the minister may prescribe.

Certainly, I think it's evident that the House is probably going to be unanimous today in doing what it can to support this bill, because it is going to provide very, very important protection for vulnerable seniors who live in older retirement homes, and so there is a tremendous amount of merit and value to this bill. Hopefully, the bill can be supported today. I think it is complementary to the initiative and steps that have been taken by the government today to do some consultation on the whole issue of fire safety. Hopefully, after today, when we approve this bill, it could move into committee, where we would have a further opportunity to address some of the issues and some of the concerns that we know are going to be given very serious consideration, and where we would have the opportunity to listen first-hand to some of the stakeholders and organizations who we've heard are strong supporters of this bill.

This bill would have nothing but a very, very positive impact for the seniors who are living in retirement homes. Although the homes that have been built after

1997 are equipped with automatic sprinkler systems, the current Ontario fire code doesn't require the homes built before that time to have them. Unfortunately, we are well aware of the consequences and some of the tragic loss of life that has occurred in the homes where there are no sprinkler systems.

We know sprinklers slow the rate at which the fire spreads for many reasons. In retirement homes, this is important because we know that seniors take longer to respond to a fire alarm, and they take longer to get out of their chair or their bed and to evacuate a building. In fact, we've heard that residents of old age homes are more than five times more likely to die in a fire than other Canadians. Thus, it is up to us to keep our seniors who live in retirement homes safe and to reduce the morbidity.

The presence of sprinklers, we've heard from all of the associations, can have a significant impact on preventing tragic loss of life. With us today we have Tim Beckett, the fire chief, city of Kitchener, who is also president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. Certainly, they are strong supporters of the fire sprinkler systems in all care occupancies. They have pointed out that it can cut the risk of dying in a fire by 82%.

You've heard from my colleagues about some of the inquests that have been held by the coroners in the past into fire deaths in Ontario retirement homes. They have all recommended that automatic sprinklers be installed in all such facilities.

What we would be doing by passing this bill today would be simply living up to the recommendations that have gone before, and we would be taking steps to protect our seniors and the lives of those seniors.

I think that one tragedy that stands out in my mind was in 2008, when we had a fire at the Muskoka Heights retirement home in Orillia—I can well remember that—where four seniors died and six others had critical injuries.

What we need to do is remember that since 1980, 44 seniors have died. We need to take steps today to move this bill forward and ensure that there will be no other lives lost.

We have a responsibility to protect the lives of vulnerable people and Ontario seniors, and I'm pleased to support the bill.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise in support of Bill 92 and of my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

As has already been said today, this is one in a long line of bills that finally appears to have some fruition in this House.

There was the first bill, put forward by the Minister of Natural Resources, then in the guise of the member from Brampton–Springdale, asking for sprinklers in every house. That has languished for a long time. I'm hoping that the study that has been offered today will do something about that.

Then the member from Pickering–Scarborough East talked about having audible fire alarms. He has introduced that bill four times in this House, and nothing has ever come of it. But I'm hoping that today, with the announcement of the minister, something happens with that.

Then we had the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek; we're talking about his bill today.

And let it not be forgotten that I too, the member for Beaches–East York, have a bill talking about wooden fire escapes and having interconnected fire alarms, particularly in older buildings. That too has languished on the order paper in spite of the fact that it has been passed four times in this House.

The minister today says that he is going to hear them all. He's going to hear things and listen to people. But I would suggest that he not take a long period of time. Yes, it's important to listen to people, but we have court orders, we have coroners' reports, we have reports from learned people—fire chiefs and many, many people—on what needs to be done. They have been all but unanimous on these aspects, but the government has seen fit, in the seven years, not to do anything with them until today.

I welcome that, but I also have to question what caused this huge chain of events and this change of heart.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Chocolate.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, I don't think it was chocolate. I think it was two things. First of all, I think it was the arguments that have been made in this House in the last couple of weeks on similar matters, asking members of the government to stand up in their caucus and fight to get some of these good ideas through. I'm hoping that that at least took place, and was part of the government's change of heart.

The second one had to have been the court decision of just less than a month ago. I quote from an article in the *Globe and Mail* by Christie Blatchford entitled “Verdict in Seniors' Home Fire a Call to Action—but Will Anyone Listen?”

She writes: “In a nearly empty Ontario courtroom, with only a few relatives of the dead and a handful of fire chiefs in attendance, a little history was made on Friday—a nursing home and its administrator were convicted of violating the provincial fire code and fined.”

She goes on to write, later in the article: “It was the first time in Ontario that a home administrator has been convicted under the fire code, and one of the few occasions—outside of the leading-edge city of Niagara Falls, where recently seniors' homes have been successfully prosecuted for similar code violations—that a home has been convicted.”

1410

She went on to write and to quote prosecutor Paul Dray: “The owners of such facilities have a duty to be ‘more diligent,’ Mr. Dray said, noting that more must be done with a fire safety plan ‘than sticking it in a damn drawer.’”

I think what has happened here is that the government is finally listening to its backbenchers, but it also now has

the weight of a judge's ruling. Not only is this a coroner's inquest, not only is this many written and oral statements made by fire chiefs, but it is now a court document that will see people in the future in these homes be fined—and rightly so. The fine imposed here was substantial; I believe it was \$25,000 to one individual and \$15,000 to another. But it is only the first of many.

This government finally has to move, because the nursing homes in this province and the administrators will be under considerable risk. The only way around that risk is to either have an awful lot more staff on duty in the evening or to put in sprinkler systems.

I commend the government for finally waking up. I thank the courts for their actions. I thank the members opposite if they had any effect in their caucus. The time has finally come. We need to deal with all of these. The people of Ontario demand safety, and we have a special obligation to those who are unable to care for themselves and who rely upon the safety and the security offered by others.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: I would like to join the debate and congratulate the member for his persistence in bringing the bill again to the attention of the House for second reading. It's good to see that there is some consensus in the House with respect to the content of the bill.

Like the member says, this is an issue that is not going to go away, and rightly so. My bill was discussed for second reading last December 3. I know Mr. Craitor, the member from Niagara Falls, had a private member's bill himself—and others. The issue is there, and it's a real issue. They all surround providing safety at its maximum for our seniors in all homes—retirement homes, home care of any kind.

I remember during my previous submission that we have to stop having two tiers of protection: one for those homes seniors occupy built after 1998, and those prior to 1998 that do not have sprinklers and that are not required, as of now, to have sprinklers. Unfortunately, fires don't need any permission to start. They don't have to have any warning, and they don't have to get ready. They can come at any time. Fires, unfortunately, do occur at most precarious times—it could be overnight, it could be over weekends—when there is less staff available and cause more injuries and, often, death.

In Ontario, we have some 580 long-term-care facilities, senior facilities, with some 77,000 residents. I think it has been said before that by 2021, our senior population will represent some 18% of our own Ontario population. So we have to take all of that into consideration.

The fact is that the government, I'm pleased to see, I think, recognized the need to do something. I think that they are serious about it. During one of the conversations I had with some fire chiefs, they did say that sprinklers are not the only solution, and so be it. I think we should be looking at every solution—any new equipment, any

new ways, any new measure that may add protection to those homes.

I do laud the member for bringing this to the attention of the House. I hope it goes through today and that we can move it to public hearings, where, indeed, we can see what the experts, if you will—and I know there are plenty out there with respect to this issue—bring to our attention and what measures, other than sprinklers, they will bring to the table.

Ultimately, I think everyone in the House and the government is interested in seeing that the best is done and the most protection is provided for our seniors.

Even though certain improvements have been made to the act requiring a number of things, either more staff, more education and more details, this is an issue that indeed, unless we do the very best, if we leave something out—we wouldn't want to have another fire cause either death or serious injury.

I congratulate the member, and I hope that today we can move ahead with it.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is also my pleasure to add my voice to the good work that the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has done by tabling Bill 92, An Act to require automatic sprinklers in all Ontario retirement homes.

I would say the stats speak for themselves. Since 1990, we have had 44—count them: 44—people die in retirement homes in a fire. But those were in homes that did not have a sprinkler system.

The stats for homes that do have sprinkler systems: They have just as many fires as any other homes. The number of deaths? Zero.

If that's not proof enough for you, you don't have to rely solely on statistics. Take the word of all of the fire chiefs, all of the firefighters out there, all of the insurance companies. They will all tell you the same thing: Sprinklers save lives. It's as simple as that.

Since I was elected, I've asked this House to bring protection to residents of retirement homes. I've asked and I've asked, and finally, last spring, they brought forward legislation that is going to regulate retirement homes. To my horror, automatic sprinklers were not included in that bill. Neither was any provision for care. Neither was any of what the people out in the field, the families and the residents themselves, had been asking for.

So my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek came up to the front. He drafted the bill, introduced it, and this afternoon we have a chance to debate it.

In a retirement home, you have a critical mass of frail, elderly tenants. My husband is a firefighter. He will tell you that this is a five-alarm bell. When a fire is in one of those, this is what their worst nightmare is all about. You're talking frail elderly, a critical mass of them, with usually very few hands around to help out. It doesn't make for a good scenario.

Sprinklers change all this in a minute, and they're not that expensive to put in. Lots of retirement home tenants pay a lot of money. They deserve good-quality care, and that includes having sprinklers.

Il me fait extrêmement plaisir d'apporter ma voix au projet de loi 92, la Loi exigeant l'installation d'extincteurs automatiques dans toutes les maisons de retraite de l'Ontario.

Mon collègue de Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek a apporté ce projet de loi parce que les statistiques sont tellement claires et éloquents. Depuis 1990, 44 personnes, résidents de maisons de retraite, ont perdu la vie dans un incendie. Mais ce sont des maisons de retraite qui n'ont pas d'extincteurs automatiques. Si on regarde les maisons de retraite avec extincteurs automatiques : zéro. Il y a autant d'incendies dans les unes comme dans les autres, mais avec les extincteurs automatiques, on n'a pas de perte de vie. Pour moi, la décision est facile.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member, Mr. Miller, from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to start off by thanking the members from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Simcoe North, Etobicoke Centre, York West, Welland, Kitchener–Waterloo, Beaches–East York and Nickel Belt. By the participation today in this bill from all members of the House, I have a good feeling that we're all on the same page and this bill is moving in the right direction. I'd like to express my thanks to all members of the House for their non-partisan views on this. They're doing what is good for the people of Ontario. They're doing what is good for our seniors and our most vulnerable citizens.

This is a very important bill not only to our seniors and vulnerable citizens but also to our firefighters and our fire chiefs for their safety, which is put at the forefront of any situation that requires emergency services.

I commend the other member who had brought this bill forward on more than one occasion. She certainly has fought hard for this situation too. So hopefully we've got enough backing and the engine is there to push this over the top, because I think it's time for it. We certainly don't want to have any more deaths on the hands of our communities or our government because of the lack of proper safety installation.

I'm sure that this bill is going to go to third reading and I'm sure it's going to go to the Lieutenant Governor for royal assent. I'm very happy with the discussion today. It's a rare commodity at times, but it certainly shone through today.

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

PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Howard Hampton: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should take all necessary

steps to allow the Legislature to have equal and effective oversight over the spending decisions of all Ontario energy service agencies—including the Ontario Power Authority and the independent electricity operator of Ontario—and to hold energy officials to account for their decisions, including by calling these officials before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hampton moves private member's notice of motion 50. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Some incredible things are happening in Ontario today. We are in a situation where the Ontario Power Authority, by the latest statistics, has signed electricity purchase contracts to the tune of \$26 billion—electricity supply contracts that in some cases will bind the electricity consumers of the province for 30 years, and in some cases for up to 40 years. I think most people across Ontario would be surprised indeed—perhaps even “astounded” might be a better description—to learn of those kinds of figures, \$26 billion in contracts that will bind hydroelectricity consumers for up to 40 years.

Ordinarily, when a government agency—and the Ontario Power Authority is a government agency. It is a corporation 100% owned by the government of Ontario. Ordinarily, when a government agency embarks on spending decisions or other important decisions, that body can be called before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies from time to time to explain its decisions, to explain the different scenarios that have led to those decisions. Indeed, under the standing rules of the Legislature, there are over 200 Ontario boards, agencies and commissions that can be called before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies and their operations reviewed—over 200 of them.

Just to give you some examples: Hydro One can be called before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, and they have been called to explain some of their decisions. Ontario Power Generation can be called, and they have been called. The Law Society of Upper Canada, Legal Aid Ontario, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Realty Corp., the Ontario Clean Water Agency and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario can be called. The Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., the Ontario Securities Commission, Cancer Care Ontario, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board—these are all important government agencies which make decisions that can affect the lives of millions of Ontarians, and they can all be called before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies to explain their decisions and the scenarios that have led to their decisions. I think to most people across Ontario, that is as it should be. No body should be a power unto itself and be able to escape the review of us, the elected members of this Legislature.

The sad fact is that the Ontario Power Authority, which has signed electricity supply contracts with private

electricity suppliers for 13,785 megawatts of electricity that will cost more than \$26.2 billion and which contracts will bind Ontario electricity consumers for possibly 40 years—and many of these electricity contracts will pay more than 20 cents a kilowatt hour for the electricity produced. Some will pay upwards of 40 cents a kilowatt hour for electricity produced, and some will even pay up to \$100 per kilowatt hour under some of these contracts. I think people across Ontario would be astounded to learn that that agency cannot be brought before the government agencies committee.

So I'm really appealing to members of this Legislature that members of this Legislature should be empowered to do our jobs; that no agency should be allowed to engage in those kinds of spending decisions and those kinds of contractual commitments and escape the normal course by which agencies, boards and commissions are reviewed by members of this Legislature.

I suppose someone might argue that there might be another mechanism whereby they can be reviewed. Well, I checked on that. The Environmental Commissioner does have authority to comment on some of the conservation decisions of the Ontario Power Authority, but does not, under the legislation that exists, have the authority to review anything beyond that. It can simply comment on their conservation decisions or lack thereof. Similarly, the Ombudsman is not empowered to conduct a review. I suppose if the Auditor General received thousands of complaints, there might be a process whereby the Auditor General could look at this, but again, that seems to be a process that comes at this after the fact.

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I would submit that when an agency is signing contracts to the tune of \$26 billion that will bind electricity consumers for 30 and 40 years into the future, coming at this after the fact is far, far too late.

Someone could argue, I suppose, that you could use section 126 of the standing orders, but section 126 does not provide any certainty of review. Someone could perhaps argue that you could use section 111 of the standing orders, but again, that doesn't provide certainty of review either.

What is important about the Standing Committee on Government Agencies is that members of the government can simply propose agencies, commissions and boards to be reviewed; members of the official opposition set forward their list and priorities for agencies, boards and commissions to be reviewed; the third party can set forward their list of agencies, boards and commissions to be reviewed. And that's it. The agency then must come forward and be held accountable.

What I'm asking the government to do and what I'm asking the members of the Legislature to do—I recognize this is not a one-step process, but today is one step in getting there—is to support this resolution so that we can do our job of holding government agencies accountable for the decisions they make, so that we can inquire into the nature of some of the contracts, so that we can ask questions and we can ask expert advice to come forward

and comment upon these kinds of decisions. I think it's important for all of us.

Five or 10 years from now, if this goes off the rails and we find that some of these contracts were not wisely entered into, I wouldn't want the responsibility hanging on my head that we didn't do all that we could; that we didn't use the legitimate rules of the Legislature to ensure that these kinds of agencies, boards and commissions are held accountable.

That's the case that I make here today. I fully recognize that in supporting this resolution it will not accomplish everything that needs to be done from A to Z. But this is the starting point in holding a very important government agency to account for the decisions that it has made and for the spending of \$26 billion of hydro ratepayers' money. Indeed, you could conceptualize where this could easily become taxpayers' money, since it is an agency that is 100% owned by the government of Ontario.

I hope all members will put aside partisan interests and recognize that this is an important step in legislative accountability, not only for today but thinking 20 and perhaps 30 or 40 years into the future, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for—let's get this right—Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Sorry, sir.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thursday afternoons: They do get long, don't they?

It's a pleasure to join the debate on the resolution by Mr. Hampton, "that, in the opinion of this House, the government should take all necessary steps to allow the Legislature to have equal and effective oversight over the spending decisions of all Ontario energy service agencies—including the Ontario Power Authority and the independent electricity operator of Ontario—and to hold energy officials to account for their decisions, including by calling these officials before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies."

On the face of it, there is much legitimacy in the member from Kenora–Rainy River's motion to this House. Over the past seven years, since the creation of the Ontario Power Authority, for example, which he spent much of his time talking about—an agency, you might recall, Mr. Speaker, that was originally intended as a virtual agency. It started out with some 15 employees and has grown exponentially. In fact, it has grown in size and budget by 464%.

The number of six-figure salaries across the government as a whole has gone up 134% under the McGuinty mandate. But at the OPA, the number of people making \$100,000 a year or more has gone up 1,300%. So it is natural for people to ask themselves: Should the Legislature have more oversight of an agency that has grown to be so significant? As I said, this was originally intended to be a virtual agency that basically was a shell of an agency.

We have to go back and think about why the government did this. The government did this, and it has mani-

festated itself in the way that the OPA has been used over the past seven years. They created OPA, a so-called virtual agency, to act as their buffer and their shield so that there would be some kind of shock absorber to absorb the blow that should be inflicted on the government but is instead inflicted on the Ontario Power Authority for decisions made by this government. That in itself raises the question of who is making the decisions, and if those decisions that are purported to be OPA decisions are actually the result of government directives, then I think the people want to know that and want to be able to hold accountable the proper authorities. That, in most cases, should be the Minister of Energy.

I don't want to single out any particular Minister of Energy under this regime, but let's talk about the original Minister of Energy, the member from Windsor—I'm not sure if it's Windsor–Tecumseh or Windsor West, but we know which member from the Windsor area was the energy minister. He was the one who created the OPA with Bill 100. He created this monster, but he doesn't want to be answerable for it.

It's interesting that in the early days of the OPA—I shouldn't say "the early days"; even until a couple of years back when Jan Carr was CEO of the OPA, I, as the energy critic—I was not always the energy critic, obviously; I wasn't the energy critic when the OPA was started, but I have been the energy critic for a few years now—met with him on a number of occasions. He initiated the meetings because he felt it was important for the opposition energy critic to have some information as to what was going on at the Ontario Power Authority.

Well, Jan Carr retired and was replaced by Colin Anderson, the current CEO of the OPA. I have never received a call—not one—from the current CEO of the Ontario Power Authority. Not once. I met him at a couple of functions and had a cursory greeting, but I have never been asked to sit down with the current CEO of the OPA to discuss business, and as I said, Jan Carr initiated all those other meetings himself.

So you have to ask yourself: When they took Colin Anderson out of finance and put him in the OPA, did he get his marching orders too: "Don't talk to the opposition, don't co-operate, don't answer questions, avoid meetings"? I don't know. But we do know one thing: More and more, the government agencies in the electricity sector are being operated by ministerial directive, and they have neutered to much degree the leadership at those agencies themselves.

I want to speak for a minute about the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, which was brought in by the Bill Davis Conservative government many, many years ago and was to act as the consumer protector in the energy field, to ensure that consumers were always protected and that their interests were paramount when considering energy decisions here in the province of Ontario.

Recently, the head of the OEB, one of the best people in the industry, Howard Wetston, jumped ship and has gone to the Ontario Securities Commission. Why? You'd have to talk to Mr. Wetston to get his version of it, and

he's such a diplomat and a wonderful person that he would be very circumspect in his answer, but one has to speculate that perhaps Mr. Wetston, who was a fine chair at the OEB, just couldn't take the interference anymore: the interference from this government so that the agencies were being run by directives. That's not protecting consumers; it's not protecting consumers at all.

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So there is the challenge. We need to have these agencies accountable—and I respect and understand the view of my friend from Kenora–Rainy River that in all matters of government the people reign supreme, and the people are represented by this legislative body. So the body, on behalf of the people, must be the supreme arbiter when it comes to decisions in this province—or the making of laws. We understand that the courts will always be the supreme arbiter should we step out of line. But there has to be the ability for the Legislature to ensure that these agencies are functioning in the best interests of the people.

I have a real challenge with the member's motion because I understand what he is trying to accomplish here, but at the same time, our leader, Tim Hudak, has made it very clear that should we form the government post-October, should we be honoured with government after October 6, 2011, one of the first things we will do is restore the Ontario Energy Board's ability to act in the best interests of the consumer. In fact, we will create a dedicated consumer advocate at the OEB to ensure that the consumer is first when energy decisions respecting the needs and the ability of the consumer to pay are made. That's a commitment our leader has made because of the mismanagement that has become obvious at the Ministry of Energy level under the McGuinty government.

But you also have to accept that, once an energy policy is in place and once we have the agencies—and the mandates have to be prescribed properly so that people do come first. But once a plan is in place, we also have to ensure that government stops interfering, and that's the problem today. This government has so politicized the energy file that they can't keep their fingers out of the pie. They can't stop from interfering because everything is being run on a political basis, not on what is in the best interests of the consumer or the energy industry here in the province of Ontario.

We've also taken the position that, should we be honoured with government after the next provincial election on October 6, 2011, we will allow those agencies with the proper mandate to conduct and follow through with policy that respects, protects and enhances the electricity system here in the province of Ontario without constant, daily political interference on behalf of the party in power. That's not the way you run an electricity system. Those boards have to be accountable, those agencies have to be accountable, but government has to be accountable as well, and government can't put out an order and a mandate to an agency with a goal in mind and then constantly interfere just because the winds of politics blow in a particular direction.

We see that happening in this government on a daily basis, whether it's interference in the pricing of electricity, whether it's interference in the carrying out of time-of-use pricing, whether it's interference in whether or not a new energy plan will even be brought forth to the people of Ontario, which has been promised on several occasions. In fact, they're in contravention of their own law in this province right now, because the mandate of the OPA was to bring in a new energy plan every three years, which they have failed to do. But how do you do it when you're constantly being interfered with by the Premier or the Minister of Energy?

The mother of all Ministers of Energy, who is responsible for so much of this mess, thankfully is not the Minister of Energy anymore. George Smitherman is gone. His fingerprints are all over the mess that is energy today, and hopefully at some point we can clean this up.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm here to support my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River and a resolution that in my mind is very, very practical and reasonable, something that I would think the majority of Liberals here today would support. The reason I think the majority of Liberals here today would support it is because the Minister of Health has stood in this House over the last couple of days saying, "We have had enough."

By the way, she agrees with New Democrats, because we've been pointing out for the last couple of weeks that universities and hospitals are spending millions of dollars hiring consultants to lobby the ministers. We think it's insane that public dollars should be used in that way when all they have to do is call themselves, reach the minister or the Premier or the MPP, and they've got a meeting. Instead they pay millions of dollars to consult some of whom are very close to them, some of whom may not be that close, in order to have a little sit-down and talk about a few things that connect to the universities or the hospitals. It speaks to the culture of inadequacy of funding; that's really what it speaks to. The point is, they should not be spending dollars that ought to be spent to help students, that have to be spent to help patients, in order to lobby the government.

We New Democrats felt it was wrong, and the Minister of Health says, "We agree. We have introduced a bill that's going to be debated that says, 'Enough is enough.'" We agree with the minister, because that old cow is getting tired. You can only milk that cow for so long before the government, too, says, "Oh, my God, it's been seven long years. It's time to stop this practice and move ahead and move on and make sure money is spent wisely for the purposes for which it was intended." So I think it was a great idea.

I want to praise the government for introducing a bill—seven long years; I know it takes time. They've finally come forward with a bill that deals with it. God bless. That's okay.

You say to yourself, given that they want to do that with consultants who are overpaid and need not be there,

surely a resolution of this type would be welcomed by Liberals who are present here today. But I wait to see, because I have a sense that somehow they don't want this matter to be dealt with in the legislative committee of government agencies. You know sometimes when you have that visceral sense of what Liberals will do or will not do? I have an inkling that they may not support this very practical, reasonable suggestion that the member from Kenora–Rainy River is making. I don't know why I feel that way, but it remains to be seen, at 4 o'clock when we vote.

Why do I think the Ontario Power Authority and electricity operator of Ontario ought to be reviewed? Why do I believe there should be some oversight? Why do I believe that people like my colleague and friend from Kenora–Rainy River should have the opportunity to ask them questions about how \$26 billion is going to be spent by these two corporations in order to make capital investments, in order to be able to purchase electricity from private producers? We're not talking about \$26 million; we're talking about \$26 billion. Surely, good Liberal members who worry about the citizens and the taxpayers and the fact that they're tired and the fact that they don't have money to make ends meet—surely, most of you would want to make sure that the correct questions are asked. Then why is it that we give so much money to some of these producers to purchase their electricity? Why is it? Maybe there are good reasons for it, but we should be asking some serious questions.

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We should be asking the question: Why is it that these corporations need to have \$26 million—\$21 million or \$20 million; how much is it?—\$21 million for professionals and consultants? Why do they need \$21 million for consultants? To do what? We're talking \$21 million for professionals and consultants to do what? To talk to the minister, to talk to the Premier, to talk to the opposition parties? These are dollars that we citizens, that the taxpayers ought to be able to keep in their pockets as opposed to giving it away to people who just don't need our money.

Most of you probably don't know—and I've had the good luck of looking at this report that came to the government agencies committee that makes that figure abundantly clear. I'm not making it up, members of the rump, other members on the other side. I'm not making it up. It's in the report, on page 3 of this report that was written for the members of government agencies. If I was making it up you could say, "Ah, Marchese's making it up"—

Mr. Charles Sousa: No, no, no. Never.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right. That's exactly it. It's because I make reference to the page, right? Page 3 at the bottom of that report, just in case you have doubts about that.

You've got the Minister of Health saying we're ending that practice, yet these fine corporations—well paid, to boot, by the way. A lot of these officers make more than the Premier of Ontario. Can you believe that, Howard?

Mr. Howard Hampton: A lot more.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A lot of these folks who work for these two agencies, these two corporations, they make a lot more than the Premier, who gets slapped around—as you noticed, Sergeant—day in and day out. He gets slapped around, and these men, good men and women who work in these corporations, they're hidden from our view and the view of taxpayers and citizens, making good money. God bless them.

They're going to be dishing out \$21 million for consultants, but the Minister of Health says it's time we stop that practice. She said that today. She said that yesterday, the day before, and she said that last week. If you want to stop it, members of the rump and you fine people of the Liberal Party on the other side, this is the time to do it. Stop that practice. Bring this agency, bring this corporation to the committee of government agencies and let's do a review.

By the way, I say to many of the Liberal friends, we've done some good work, Minister, in committees where we collectively, all three political parties, have tried to work together in so many instances. We've done that. Why can't we do this today? Why can't we do it? I tell you this: If we can't do it today, it's because you fine people have something to hide. I'm serious. It could be that some friends of mine don't have anything to hide; it could be. But I suspect that if most of you do not vote for this, then you all have got something political to hide.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I admit it's harsh, but I suggest to most of you that if you vote against this resolution, you have been told to vote against this resolution, and you are not independent, as you normally might be. And I want to leave room for doubt in that regard, because from time to time, some of you are independent and some of you act without being told how to act, which is a good thing, to be an MPP. It's not like you're kids, necessarily.

I want to believe today that some of you are going to break ranks and that you will find this resolution reasonable, that we ought to have the power—three political parties, government members and two opposition parties—to be able to have oversight and review and to ask the tough questions about how our \$26 billion are going to be spent over the next 40 years. There's nothing more reasonable than that. And I'm looking to the various ministers that are here and the Minister of Health to come in this Legislature and vote in favour of this resolution, given what she has said in the last couple of weeks.

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

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm pleased to rise and debate this bill and to remind this House that the government does take steps to provide oversight for spending decisions of Ontario's energy service agencies and does hold energy officials to account for their decisions.

This government has already demonstrated a strong commitment to transparency and accountability in the

areas addressed in this motion. In fact, the two agencies referenced by the member for Kenora–Rainy River were included in the list of the 22 largest Ontario agencies when the McGuinty government legislated new accountability directives in the fall of 2009.

Ontario energy agencies are already held to account by the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, which has the power to review and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations on the operation of all agencies.

The PC Party actually changed the freedom-of-information act to exclude Ontario Hydro One and the OLG in 1999, a move they said was to secure their competitiveness.

Yet, strangely, on the subject of accountability and waste, the NDP actually voted against the McGuinty government's ban on public funds for partisan advertising.

Successive McGuinty government Ministers of Energy have been working to implement the recommendations of the independent Agency Review Panel, resulting in major adjustments in the compensation structures and leading to improvements in agency efficiency.

The fact is, the agency review process proves that the system is working to provide accountability within the energy agencies to the minister while maintaining their independence and arm's-length nature.

The relationship between the ministry and each of the agencies is described in a memorandum of understanding which outlines the reporting requirements of each agency.

Let's review the Agency Review Panel, phase 1.

The Agency Review Panel's work was to recommend new criteria and a new model for determining future compensation arrangements for top executives at Ontario's energy agencies.

The minister at the time, Minister Duncan, accepted the phase 1 recommendations and wrote to the chairs of the boards of all the agencies, advising them to implement the panel's recommendations. This has led to a reduction in remuneration paid to senior executives at the energy agencies.

In phase 2 of the Agency Review Panel, their work examined the five provincial energy agencies to assess potential overlaps, with a view to identifying areas for efficiency improvements.

The panel's report indicated that the system was working and that the structure and organizations in place were appropriate in the ongoing development of our electricity system.

While the report pointed out that there was some overlap in the functions of the OPA, the IESO and the ministry with respect to conservation and demand management programs, these issues have been addressed, to a great extent, through increased coordination among the agencies and the ministry.

Following the release of the phase 2 report, under "Overlap and Duplication," Minister Phillips agreed with the panel on the need for stability and that it was not the right time to implement institutional change in the sector.

As a result, no changes then were made to the role of the OPA. However, under the terms of the Green Energy Act, the position of chief energy conservation officer was eliminated and its functions transferred to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

Regarding the approvals process, the report called on the government to enact legislation that would create a single integrated approvals process for electricity projects. Subsequently, the Green Energy Act included measures to streamline the approvals process for renewable energy projects and associated transmission projects.

Regarding the role of the OPG, the report called on the Minister of Energy to provide greater clarity. As Minister Phillips noted at the time, the 2005 memorandum of agreement between OPG and the government defined OPG's role in the hybrid market.

The report also called for provincial policies to facilitate the consolidations of local distribution companies. The transfer tax exemption for public consolidation activity has been made permanent.

The report also called on Hydro One and the IESO to work together to develop a uniform approach for connections assessments. Hydro One and the IESO have subsequently signed an MOU on connections assessments for renewable generation applicants.

Let me now highlight the relationship with the ministry and the memorandum of understanding with the agencies.

The MOUs include business planning, annual reporting requirements, and matters relating to executive compensation. Through the MOU process, the ministry works with the agencies on an ongoing basis to ensure alignment between the agencies' work plans and the government's priorities, and to press the agencies to find ongoing cost efficiencies in the work that they do.

For example, the OEB's MOU states that "board staff and senior officials of the ministry shall discuss the contents of the business plan during the drafting of the business plan in respect to the alignment of key initiatives with government policy directions, performance standards, and compliance with the AEAD."

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The agencies are now also required to adhere to the new travel, meal and hospitality expense directive, effective April 1, 2010, and the new procurement directive, effective July 2009. In addition, the OEB must comply with the revised agency establishment and accountability directive that came into effect on January 26, 2010. This directive details the accountability framework in which ministries and agencies operate.

In regard to travel, meal and hospitality expenses, the McGuinty government has introduced a new summary of guidelines that boils down 25 pages to two pages. These simplified guidelines apply to all employees at Ontario agencies, boards and commissions, and expenses for senior executives at Ontario's 22 largest agencies are now posted online.

The Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009, gives Ontario's Integrity Commissioner the legal authority to

review the expense claims of senior officials who are employed by or appointed to the province's largest agencies, boards and commissions. The legislation requires employees in government agencies to abide by the same level of accountability and oversight that cabinet ministers and political staff must follow under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act.

Hydro One, the IESO, the Ontario Energy Board, the Ontario Power Authority and Ontario Power Generation are designated as "other included entities" under the procurement directive, 2009, and are required to comply with the directive.

Let's not forget also the expanded sunshine list. The Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act applies to the Ontario Power Authority, Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One, the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board and their subsidiaries.

When dealing with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the McGuinty government brought in regulations under FIPPA that ensure that the activities of Hydro One and OPG are subject to provisions of the act. As well, the requirements of the Audit Statute Law Amendment Act, 2003, must be adhered to.

The member's resolution speaks to agency transparency, but let me reaffirm that the government has demonstrated a strong commitment to transparency and accountability and has made many changes. Unlike the Conservatives, we brought the following under FIPPA: publicly funded universities, Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and local public utilities.

Let me remind this House again that our government broadened the powers of the Auditor General to review public sector organizations. It's important to note that the Auditor General must also approve our financial books before an election so we can't hide a deficit, as was done in 2003.

The McGuinty government has already taken steps to protect public dollars to improve transparency. We've eliminated any sole-source contracts. All new Ontario government consulting contracts must follow a competitive hiring process, regardless of dollar value, and consultants will no longer be able to bill for hospitality, food, expenses and incidental costs. All employees at Ontario's largest agencies, boards and commissions will be required to have their expenses reviewed by Ontario's Integrity Commissioner.

In all, we're making expenses and the rules more simple and effective. We're posting expenses online for everyone to see. This will hold employees to the same standard as cabinet ministers and staff.

Let's not forget that the Conservatives removed Hydro One from freedom-of-information laws and then used Hydro One as an expense account for Conservative insiders, allowing dozens of untendered contracts and forcing taxpayers to cover the bill for posh expense accounts. The McGuinty government has taken the steps required to make sure that these types of abuses can't happen again.

Yesterday, our government introduced powerful legislation to raise the bar of accountability and transparency in the health sector as well as the broader public sector, and unlike previous governments that refused to make advancements in accountability, our government continues to expand accountability and transparency mechanisms as we strive to ensure that taxpayer dollars are protected.

Bottom line: This government has taken steps to implement the necessary oversight of spending by Ontario's energy services agencies and holds officials to account for their decisions.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to commend my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River for his motion.

Let's talk about accountability. Let's talk about the bill that the government brought forward on good governance that's come out. The Ontario government has direct or indirect jurisdiction over agencies, boards, commissions, councils, tribunals, foundations, associations and municipalities. That takes up a lot of space. My colleague did his homework. He's got a list here of 196—there are probably more—agencies, boards and commissions that the Ontario government oversees. As we've witnessed with the eHealth scandal, the OLG scandal—and now there are some concerns that have been brought out by a Spectator investigation into university CEOs and their expenses.

The government certainly is making a move to correct this situation, but they blame former governments, the NDP and the Conservatives before them. But they've had seven years to correct this problem. Why wasn't it done? They got caught with all these problems with accountability, and that's why they're moving now, through media pressure, public pressure and embarrassment. I guess the bottom line is, if you live in a glass house, don't throw a rock. They've had plenty of time in two terms to correct this problem—and it seems to be getting worse. I can assure you that before election time next year, there will be more scandals coming out on expenditures and wasted money on consultants. It's just unbelievable.

Take eHealth alone: They got about \$100 million worth of hardware, software and programs out of that \$388 million they spent in five years for the electronic health cards, and they still haven't got it right. About \$288 million of that went to Liberal-friendly consultants; two thirds of the budget went to consultants. That's just one ministry. Can you imagine how much more is out there?

There's more to come. Stay tuned, because it's going to get worse.

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

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to enter the discussion on the motion put forward by the honourable member from Kenora–Rainy River.

My colleague the honourable member from Mississauga South explained in some detail the work that our government has done over the past seven years in relation to bringing accountability and transparency to the agencies under the government of Ontario.

I would like to take my colleagues through where we were before 2003 and where we are now. Of course, we know where we are now, but maybe we have forgotten where we were before 2003.

The previous Conservative government removed Hydro One from the freedom-of-information act and created, basically, a situation where some of the expenses were meant to be paid to Conservative insiders through Hydro One. Former Premier Mike Harris, when he left office, actually collected \$20,000 in consulting fees from Hydro One. Nobody knew what work he did for Hydro One. One of the senior Conservative insiders, Paul Rhodes, was contracted by the previous government for over \$335,000 for strategic communications advice. This was just before Mike Harris's re-election. Rhodes was also paid \$15,000 a month, for a total of \$225,000, to produce a report, again on strategic communications. Apparently, he prepared a 10-page report, so each page cost \$22,500—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member from Kenora–Rainy River, Mr. Hampton, has two minutes for his response.

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Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank my honourable colleagues for their contributions to the debate.

In summarizing, I want to go over some of the points that I made earlier. I think it's right and proper that Hydro One should be reviewable by the government agencies committee. I think it's right and proper for the Ontario Power Generation corporation, because they too can spend hundreds of millions of dollars; the Alcohol and Gaming Commission; the Ontario Trillium Foundation; and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. Again, many of these organizations can spend billions of dollars a year or, through their operations, can contribute billions of dollars a year to the government and to Ontario society.

But if it is right and proper for these organizations to be held accountable before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, then I think it's very difficult to justify an organization which has already signed contracts worth over \$26 billion, contracts which will bind hydroelectricity consumers in this province for 30 and 40 years, contracts which ultimately could also affect the taxpayers of this province for 30 or 40 years—I think that most reasonable people would expect that that kind of agency would, as a matter of obligation, be reviewable by the very committee of the Legislature whose mandate and purpose is to review these kinds of agencies.

I think the people of Ontario have a right to demand this, and we, as legislators, should do all that we can today to make sure it happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Hampton's resolution in about 50 minutes.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health should immediately approve the planning grant requested by the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in the township of Centre Wellington, allowing it to proceed to the next stage of planning for a new hospital; and should also immediately approve a small project capital grant for the Georgetown Hospital in the town of Halton Hills, allowing it to proceed with its needed emergency room addition and diagnostic imaging renovation project.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Arnott moves private member's notice of motion number 49. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I begin my remarks this afternoon by quoting from an article in today's Toronto Star, in a column written by Jim Coyle, where the Minister of Health of the province of Ontario was quoted as having said, "Our MPPs are more than willing to act as lobbyists. I urge the hospitals to make use of the best lobbyists they have and that's their MPPs." I couldn't agree more with that statement.

Privileged to serve in this Legislature, members of provincial Parliament must always bear in mind why we are here: We are here to serve the people. We are here to provide leadership, yes, but also to give voice to the views and aspirations of the people. Perhaps most importantly, we are responsible for addressing their genuine needs. It is in that spirit that I tabled this private member's resolution in support of our hospitals in Wellington–Halton Hills.

The Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Centre Wellington and the Georgetown Hospital in Halton Hills are the hospitals located within the boundaries of my riding. Both are centres of excellence in local health care, and are the hubs of health care delivery in their communities and the larger catchment areas that they serve. But they not only have to address the health care needs of today, which they are doing very well; they must also plan for future needs. To do that, they need the government to come forward with a long-term plan for hospital projects, a plan we are all anxiously awaiting.

But I first want to focus on the good work our hospitals are already doing in their respective communities. Groves Memorial Community Hospital, located in Fergus, serves a community that is geographically very large. Its catchment area includes, in addition to my riding of Wellington–Halton Hills, the riding of Guelph and the riding of Perth–Wellington. Founded by Dr. Abraham Groves, a visionary surgeon who has the historic distinction of having performed North America's first appendectomy, the hospital has a long history of innovation, excellence and integrity.

Continued growth, development and partnership of services reinforce the need to have appropriate facilities to promote wellness and opportunity to be creative in providing care. For Groves, this means continued investments in ongoing improvements, service, equipment

and people. But it also means planning and preparing for long-term projects like the new hospital development.

I want to outline just a few of the many reasons why Groves deserves that long-term investment. First of all, we are ready to go. Secondly, this hospital provides service to approximately 25,000 patients each year through the emergency department and thousands more through diagnostic, ambulatory care and in-patient services. For its success in addressing the health care needs of a relatively older, rural population, Groves was called a cornerstone in the community for rural residents to access health care in 2010.

Groves's exceptional and dedicated medical staff are top-notch. Since March 2007, Groves has provided educational training and support for 108 medical students and 27 residents, making Groves a leader as a pre-eminent rural teaching facility, training physicians all across the province.

Last year, Groves added a CT scanner, providing this essential diagnostic technology to patients, serving them closer to home. And yet, the hospital is also benefiting patients far beyond its catchment area because the Groves team knows how to form successful partnerships. This is one of their greatest strengths. They've led the implementation of the Upper Grand Family Health Team. They've formed the community oncology clinic with Grand River Hospital. They've shared services with Guelph General Hospital. They've formed an administrative alliance with North Wellington Health Care in order to maximize efficiencies between small, rural facilities for the last five years. They've done all of this and much, much more. Thanks to their aggressive action on emergency room wait times, Groves took its four-hour average wait time to nearly 2.5 hours for the average ER visit in just eight months.

They've done all this while exercising respect for tax dollars. While some hospitals, unfortunately, have had to run deficits, Groves over the last three years has had balanced budgets or surpluses. It's no wonder Groves enjoys such extraordinarily strong support from the community and it's no wonder that some 250 people choose to volunteer their time with this fine organization. In anticipation of the new hospital project, the volunteer association and the hospital foundation raised \$15 million from local residents and supporters. They've also raised \$2 million so far for the CT scanner.

I want to acknowledge the presence of a few people here today from Groves seated in the members' gallery and I want to thank them for their excellent work. Having made so much progress on so many fronts, Groves now needs the government to do its part. Allow us to move on to the functional program stage, which is the next stage of planning, for our new facility.

In the very same way, Georgetown Hospital also has every good reason to be proud. Here we have a hospital that is doing a tremendous job serving the residents of Halton Hills. This is true in a number of areas but most notably in its emergency department. Georgetown Hospital led the province in improvements to length of

time admitted patients spend waiting. The hospital beat expectations and achieved a 32% improvement. In fact, 84% of patients admitted to an in-patient bed from the emergency department spent less than eight hours in the ER. For that achievement, the Ministry of Health awarded a year-end financial bonus to assist the hospital in sharing its strategies for success.

The hospital's accolades don't stop there. Even the Recycling Council of Ontario has recognized the hospital for achievements resulting from its green program, through which it has achieved a 60% recycling rate. The hospital also holds a safety expo recognizing patient safety initiatives. In the last two years the Ontario Hospital Association has recognized the hospital for many of those initiatives.

Perhaps no recognition, however, is more meaningful to our health care providers than those coming from patients themselves. The Georgetown Hospital has achieved strong patient satisfaction results in all areas of the hospital. Improvements in pay-for-results metrics have shown improved satisfaction results in nearly every dimension measured.

But I want to return to that emergency room so central to the hospital's proposed improvement. The current emergency department was designed in size to accommodate 14,000 visits per year, yet in the last fiscal year, the hospital saw 32,800 visits, well over twice the number for which it was designed. Here's what they tell us: "The most important initiative is the [emergency department] pay-for-results program. It is difficult to describe the incredible results we have achieved and what a difference it has made in our ability to treat patients. The staff and physicians are totally engaged in the performance.... Everyone is engaged in making sure we meet our targets." So it's clear that Georgetown Hospital is doing a great deal to showcase the very best of our system, and for being here today, I want to thank representatives from Halton health care and the Georgetown Hospital, who have also joined us.

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I began working with them in 2007 when I picked up where our distinguished colleague from Halton left off, after a redistribution which added the town of Halton Hills to my riding. The very day after that election in 2007, I wrote to the Minister of Health to ask for an expeditious review of Georgetown Hospital's pending CT scanner application. The hospital now has received that approval. But now we need to move forward with this diagnostic imaging project and renovate our emergency department as well.

This past summer, on August 26, we had a meeting to discuss the project with hospital staff and senior Ministry of Health staff in the minister's boardroom here at Queen's Park. The ministry was clearly informed that the hospital would appreciate receiving a small capital grant to expedite the project. But in order to plan responsibly for the project, the hospital needs to know where it might be in the queue. We know that there are dozens of proposed hospital projects in dozens of communities across

Ontario. I have been asking for the whole list of projects through an order paper question, and more recently, through a freedom-of-information request. We're still waiting for it.

The outstanding community support for the Georgetown Hospital, like the community's confidence in Groves, should suggest that we need to move forward, but we must respectfully ask this government's help. They could send a positive signal today by supporting this motion.

I think it's important to state my firm belief that decisions on approvals for hospital projects should not be made on a partisan basis. It would be wrong for a government, any government, to show favouritism to the ridings that it holds at any given time when it comes to deciding which hospital projects will be seen as high priority and which ones will score as lower priority—wrong and short-sighted, for the provincial government must seek to govern for all the people. The process for determining which projects will go ahead first must be objective and transparent and explicitly non-partisan. Otherwise, in effect, the government opens itself up to the charge of punishing communities for their traditional voting patterns.

Any government doing this would show itself to be contemptuous of democracy itself, for inherent in our idea of democracy is the right of individual voters and communities to choose their representatives freely, without coercion and without intimidation. Any government that refused to approve a hospital project because of local politics would be beneath contempt and deserving of the defeat that would surely follow.

I should also point out that the catchment area for the Groves hospital, meaning the geographic boundaries of the area that it serves, includes communities outside of Centre Wellington. For example, many residents of the riding of Guelph use the Groves emergency department because they believe they may see a doctor faster if they present there than at Guelph General. Residents of Alma and Arthur and the surrounding areas in the riding of Perth-Wellington have always used Groves as their local hospital. When you look at it this way, Groves can look to three MPPs to advocate for them, two of whom are currently on the government side of the House.

I have been pleased to encourage the member for Guelph and the member for Perth-Middlesex to show their support for Groves, and I was glad to receive a written expression of support for the Groves project last December from the member for Guelph. Now that she serves as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, we hope she's in a position to follow up, and we would ask her to do the same for Georgetown.

When I'm in Georgetown, whether it's at the walk for the hospital in the fall or the annual golf tournament in the summer or the annual Christmas ball in December—all successful fundraisers organized by the hospital foundation—we often hear that it's never easy to raise money. Many people simply do not know that hospitals don't receive funding from the government for new

equipment. They assume, incorrectly as it turns out, that the Ministry of Health pays for equipment, which makes it harder for the fundraising efforts to be successful. It would be helpful if the Ministry of Health would develop a communications strategy in co-operation with the Ontario Hospital Association to support the work of our hospital foundations.

In closing, I look forward to the debate on this motion. I have tried to approach this in a non-partisan manner and have written all MPPs to seek their support. I know that many members have hospital projects in their riding, and I would encourage them to talk about their own hospital needs this afternoon. Let's work together across the partisan divide in the best interests of our constituents.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to commend my colleague for speaking up for his constituency and for speaking up for people—in this case, the community hospital in the township of Centre Wellington. I think it's important that all members do what they can to speak up for their constituencies. But I want to disagree with him in principle on a couple of things.

We have just witnessed, over the last couple of weeks, examples where hospital funding apparently is not being allocated on the basis of need; it's being allocated on the basis of who you know, who your consultant is and how close your consultant is to the Premier's office or the Minister of Health's office. That's a terrible way to make health care decisions. Equally, I think it would not be a good way to make health care decisions simply in terms of the lobbying we might do. I want to see better health care for the constituents in my constituency, but where a hospital should be placed and what kinds of services that hospital should provide I believe should be decided by people in the Ministry of Health whose business it is, whose work it is, whose dedicated task it is to look at the health care needs and to look at what can be provided and where it is best to be provided.

I think MPPs should play a role, certainly, in making the case and in arguing the case, but at the end of the day, the decisions should be made on the basis of health care need and on the basis of how to most cost-effectively and how to most efficiently provide those services. Just as it's wrong for a hospital board that has money to throw around to purchase the services of a consultant who claims to have the inside door to the minister's office or the Premier's office, just as it's not proper to have health care funding made on that basis and hospital funding made on that basis, it would be improper, in my view, for health care spending or health care investments in my riding to be made on the basis of who is closest to me.

MPPs should advocate; we should advocate on behalf of our constituencies. But at the end of the day, these decisions should be made according to a rational process, a process that looks at health care need, a process that looks at how to most efficiently and cost-effectively provide these services and ensure that the services provided are the services that people need.

I wish my colleague success with his resolution here today, but I wanted him to know the different lines that I draw in the decision-making process so that he is not taken by any surprise in this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I think very highly of the member from Wellington–Halton Hills and I consider him a friend. In that spirit, I'd like to follow on his debate and try to keep this to some of the issues.

The member is a good lobbyist and an effective member. I can say that across the floor. Firefighters know that: He's brought their case very effectively to the floor. But I have to ask: Is he lobbying the right people, is he lobbying at the right time and is he lobbying in the right place? Is the process being proposed by the member in this resolution indeed a rational process? Is it a responsible means of asking for something that I'd like to have if I were in his place? Is it a fair process?

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I'd have to say, in looking at the resolution, it's unfortunate that the word "immediately" has been put in, because "immediately" makes it very clear that his needs supersede that of every other region in the province, and it also requires the government, if the will of the House is to be heeded, to overturn any decision made outside this chamber, made for reasons that we here don't know. It's unfortunate that that word was put in because it constrains the debate on what I think is a very worthwhile resolution.

So I would ask the member to think carefully: Does he really and truly want this decision to be made on the floor of the Legislature? One of the reasons I say that is because here in the greater Toronto area, the GTA, for about the last 35 years running, in terms of growth, we have done the equivalent of building the city of Kingston every year—all of its people, all of its infrastructure, all of its support services and facilities. Every year in the GTA, we build the equivalent of a city the size of Kingston.

The member is asking us not to balance the needs of high-growth regions and communities such as York region, Peel region and cities like Vaughan, Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville with some of the needs of the communities that he's in. I ask him again: Is this process rational, is it responsible, and is it fair in the circumstances?

He's pointed out some things with which I very much agree. Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus received base funding of more than \$15 million in 2009-10, which is an increase of \$3.3 million, or 28%, since our government was elected in 2003. It's a fine institution, and its performance shows. Halton Healthcare Services, of which Georgetown hospital is a part, received a more than \$77-million increase in base funding since 2003, a 72% increase. It, too, is a very fine health care facility. We join with its management and staff in celebrating its accomplishments. On the watch of his former government, that was a little different. Again, just to

ensure that we're talking about the same thing: Groves Memorial Community Hospital, on the watch of his party, sustained an \$834,140 cut, or about 9.29%. In the nearby community of Guelph, Guelph General: a cut of \$877,516, or about 3%. Halton Healthcare Services: a cut of about \$1.9 million, or 3.23%.

Since our government has been elected—let's talk about some of our record in the Wellington–Halton Hills area. There are three new family health teams in Wellington–Halton Hills. They've hired 50 doctors. They've hired 35 other health care professionals. They're providing care to 58,034 people and, indeed, 9,890 previously unattached patients have been enrolled.

In contrast, when the Leader of the Opposition served as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, they closed 28 hospitals, they fired some 6,200 nurses and they closed some 7,110 beds. The flip side: Since 2003, Ontario has built 18 new hospitals, hired more than 10,000 more nurses and more than 2,300 additional doctors.

I understand the member's request. Can he square it with his party's policy to cut \$3 billion from health care funding by eliminating the health care premium? And should they still choose to do that, how do they plan to fund the request that the member makes in the resolution that he's just brought forward?

Talking about the Georgetown Hospital emergency room: The hospital received ministry approval to acquire and operate a CT scanner at the Georgetown Hospital site in September 2009. The approval was provided with the understanding that an approval for an own-funds capital renovations project would be requested and undertaken by Halton Healthcare Services to accommodate the scanner. Due to the limitations of the existing building condition, the hospital is now proposing an addition to extend the emergency department, including purpose-built space for the new CT scanner and renovations to the diagnostic imaging department, with an early capital cost of \$10 million, including equipment.

In July 2010, the hospital wrote to the Health Capital Investment Branch, inquiring about the availability of small capital project grants to fund a proposed Georgetown Hospital emergency room expansion and CT scanner acquisition project. As I understand it, this is the essence of what the member's resolution is about.

In August of this year, the ministry met with the hospital and with the member for Waterloo–Wellington to discuss this proposal further and the new process, in light of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the LHIN joint capital review framework. The hospital has been advised, both in writing and at that August 2010 meeting, of the following: "The hospital must work with the LHIN to ensure that they obtain appropriate advice on the program and service elements of their capital proposal," which leads me back to my original question: Is this the appropriate time and place in which to bring this project forward?

"The ministry's small project allocation is under considerable pressure; therefore, there is little capacity to

explore small projects in 2010-11. The hospital is encouraged to explore alternate options for accommodating the CT scanner only, including an own-funds project, a phased approach or a scaled-back approach.”

Talking about the investments at Groves Memorial Community Hospital, they’ve had a more than \$3.6-million increase in base funding since 2003-04, nearly 30%; more than \$200,000 in total funding received from that first year, 2004-05, to 2010-11 to reduce wait times, which amounts to 202 more procedures, including general and pediatric surgeries.

Groves Memorial Community Hospital signed their two-year hospital service accountability agreement with the Waterloo Wellington LHIN in 2008. Is the member proposing to supersede that agreement? I don’t have that information as a legislator to make that type of an informed judgment based upon the resolution presented.

The hospital signed an amending agreement with the LHIN in 2010, thereby extending the agreement through 2010-11. I ask the member again: Are you sure you want to bring this measure to the floor of the Legislature rather than working with the LHIN?

Now, in terms of local hospital funding, the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus received base funding of more than \$15 million in 2009-10, which is a total increase of \$3.3 million, or 28%, since 2003.

Province-wide, the province has created more than 170 family health teams, teams of doctors, nurses and other health professionals working together. Three of those family health teams are in Wellington–Halton Hills where, as I said before, they’ve hired 50 doctors and 35 health care professionals, providing care to 58,034 people, and have enrolled 9,890 previously unattached patients.

In the Upper Grand Family Health Team, they’ve hired 22 doctors, 17 health care professionals, providing care to 25,776 people, with 3,876 previously unattached patients enrolled.

The Halton Hills Family Health Team hired 22 doctors, hired 13 health care professionals, providing care to 27,064 people, with 4,870 previously unattached patients enrolled.

In the East Wellington Family Health Team, they’ve hired six doctors, five health care professionals, providing care to 5,194 patients, with 1,144 previously unattached patients enrolled.

Now, it’s not as if Ontario has ignored the member’s area. Indeed, the member has done very well during a time in which many fundamental changes had to be made in order that health care, as we know it, would remain sustainable. All of us, particularly those of us who are in high-growth areas, understand the nature of what the member is proposing. We wish that the amount of funds available to all of us were infinite because nothing would please anybody more than to say, “You can all have everything that you need.” But in order to do that, I have to say to the member that we need to make those sacrifices. If we decide to do that, what does that do to the rates that we charge for taxation, for health care

premiums and for the other means by which we make the investments that we need to make in health care in the province of Ontario?

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In summary, while I have a great deal more information that I could discuss, I’m nearing the end of my time. I want to ask the member to consider and to address in his closing remarks whether he feels that this is indeed appropriate to bring to the floor of the Legislature; whether, as members, we have the information that we need to make an informed, fair, rational decision; and, to echo the comments of my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River, is the process the right process in the circumstances?

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think I want to begin my remarks by responding to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and just point out to him today the remarks of the Minister of Health in the paper, where she strongly encouraged MPPs to lobby on behalf of hospitals, because we are in an appropriate position to do so.

I also want to congratulate my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills, who has advocated very patiently, but very passionately and very strongly, on behalf of the two hospitals in his riding. He has done so and brought this motion forward today with the approval of the Minister of Health. She thought it was most appropriate, and that’s why we’re here.

We’re also here today because at one time, we did have a list of capital projects. We actually did know which hospitals were going to be receiving approval for what stage at what time. Unfortunately, over the period of the past seven years, we seem to have lost the list. In fact, some of the hospitals that were on the list have suddenly disappeared from the list. Hospitals that were in Liberal ridings, I might add, suddenly found themselves on the list. I think all the member is asking is, “Where’s the list? Where do my communities fit on the list?” He raises a question: “Are my communities not being informed about the status or non-status on the list because I am a Conservative?”

Do you know what? I hope we haven’t reached that point, because I want to tell you what happened when I was Minister of Health. We had the Health Services Restructuring Commission—and by the way, I hope the opposition starts to get the facts right—

Mr. Norm Miller: The opposition? The government.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The government. You will be in opposition next time if you continue to make some of the statements that you do.

But the reason that hospitals were closed was because we did amalgamations. We had a Health Services Restructuring Commission. We identified that there were needs in Mississauga that weren’t being addressed. You were being asked to travel to downtown Toronto. We had the commission and you, as a result, got cancer facilities, you got cardiac facilities, you got new emergency rooms, and you know what? There was progress made, but we

got rid of some of the small hospitals as a result of the commission recommendations. So for you to say repeatedly that we closed hospitals—we didn't. In fact, I'm going to tell you what happened, and your own members wanted it to happen. The other thing I'll tell you is, we hired 12,000 nurses. So for any statements to be made on an ongoing basis—they are not true, and you probably should take a look at the record.

I want to go back to what we did, because we were not partisan. We relied on the commission to make the recommendations as to what changes should be made to hospitals, which hospitals should close and which hospitals should become new state-of-the-art facilities. We built new hospitals.

But I want to tell you what happened when two of your colleagues approached Premier Harris and me. Lyn McLeod, the former leader of your party, and the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North came and said, when it came to Thunder Bay, “We don't like the recommendations of the commission.” The commission said they were going to close three hospitals and have two. They said, “No, we want you to close all five hospitals.” So you're probably including the five in whatever count you used on a daily basis. They said, “We want a new Thunder Bay regional health sciences centre.”

They also said to me—and I remember it so well—“But we won't get one because we're Liberals and Conservatives are never going to give a new hospital to Liberals.” I said, “Do you know what? If your community can demonstrate the need and is able to support one new, state-of-the-art, centrally located facility, I guarantee I will fight for you at the cabinet table and I guarantee that my Premier and my cabinet colleagues will approve your new hospital, because we're not interested in playing partisan games.”

Well, guess what? Much to the delight of Lyn McLeod and the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North, we approved the request from the community for which Lyn McLeod and the member Michael Gravelle advocated so strongly, and to their surprise they got the new hospital.

I hope—I ask the government today—that surely you will listen to my colleague who is here today, not representing himself, but representing the people from the two hospital communities who have recognized that they have an outstanding facility, but based on future needs, they need more. They're only asking to know, “Where are we on the list? When are we going to get the funding?” They need permission to move forward to the next stage of planning the Groves Fergus hospital. That's what they are looking for. At Georgetown, they want to put the CT scanner in place, but they can't, based on the facility that they have today.

All he's asking for today is, “Please tell us, where are we on the list? We have future needs. Our citizens deserve to have access to care that is required, but right now they do not know where they stand and they can't move forward. They're not getting any answers.”

I applaud my colleague. He has been professional. He has been passionate. He has taken every step necessary

trying to find out where these two hospitals stand in the queue. There have been no answers forthcoming, and that brings us to today. I hope this government will demonstrate the same type of concern for people in the province of Ontario, whether they live in government-held ridings or opposition ridings. I hope they'll carefully consider what's being asked for by these communities as indicated by my colleague. I applaud him for all he's done in such a professional manner.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: This is an interesting request. I must commend the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. He's doing his job as an MPP. He's representing his people, what they require in his community and probably what his local council has asked for. He's doing his job.

I personally can support this. I can't speak for my colleagues, but I do feel a bit uncomfortable voting for something that's out of my field of expertise without confirming it with the experts in the field. I would have liked to have seen a little more data. The member did send me some information on it, but I would have liked to have seen more.

1550

I have mixed feelings here. While I'm sympathetic to the community, hospital planning should not be done by this chamber, in my opinion. We all could use more health services in our communities. Hamilton has been very hard hit. We all need more facilities, especially for the aged, and more hospital beds opened up for serious things, and long-term care taken outside the hospital environment with the good facilities we need. I don't really think this should be decided by politicians, and I certainly don't favour going along party lines. I think this should be a non-partisan decision.

As for the comments of the former speaker, I wish he wouldn't rule us out. We may have to make a decision down the road. It's always between them and the official opposition, but you never know: The NDP might be making decisions, so don't rule us out.

Health dollars should flow to where they're needed. Health services are required in every community. Unfortunately, this government is a little tired. Its precious health dollars go to whichever organization hires the best lobbyists, in my opinion, with insider friends in the McGuinty government. That's not good.

It doesn't matter which politician is sitting in that riding or that constituency, the health dollars should go to the place that needs them the most, not because the person sitting there is Liberal or NDP or Conservative.

I'm not quite sure that those decisions are always made in this House or by the government. Unfortunately, party lines sometimes interfere with good decisions for our health care. I don't like that. That's not a good thing.

Instead of improving health care for Ontarians, the McGuinty government is shutting down emergency departments and cutting nursing hours. Hamilton closed emergency services at McMaster University, if you want to know where.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Fort Erie, Port Colborne.

Mr. Paul Miller: Port Colborne and Fort Erie. When they attack the official opposition, they're not exactly running a stellar program either, in my humble opinion. Once again, if you live in a glass house, don't throw rocks.

As has been witnessed in the last few weeks, we are squandering millions upon millions of dollars on insider consultants—absolutely atrocious.

I'll bring eHealth to the front again, the scandal last summer. In committee, I asked questions and other people asked questions about what we got for our dollar. They spent \$388 million on eHealth electronic health cards—studying, setting it up. I said, “What did you get for that?” They told me, after I pushed and asked for freedom of information, which we had to pay for, by the way. We're the government, but we still had to pay to get it; I can't figure that one out.

We got the information, and they told me, “Well, Mr. Miller, it looks like we got about \$100 million worth of hardware and software programs for eHealth cards.” I said, “What happened to the other \$288 million?” They weren't too anxious to answer, but it went to consultants. Sixty-six per cent of the budget over the five-year period went to consultants. That's a pretty scary figure.

That's one ministry. We have 22 major agencies that you've now decided to audit. I don't even want to think of how many billions of dollars have gone out the window. It's pretty hard for me to explain to a mother in Hamilton with two kids and nowhere to go because she can't pay her rent and can't pay her hydro that the government is spending \$2 million a day on consultants. What do I tell that mother? What do I tell the person waiting for a position in a long-term-care facility who can't get in because there's a waiting line—not enough facilities?

Really, there is so much to look at, so much to do, so many people who require health services, so many people who require new hospitals, new facilities. I don't blame this member for doing what he is supposed to do as their representative, and I don't have any problem. To me, it's not a motion that's going to hurt anybody; it may help some people in his community. I'd hope he would return the favour, if I was in the same boat.

To make a long story short—I could go on for hours about waste of money, but this is a good project, a new hospital for a community. I don't have a problem with that. I don't have a problem with a new hospital in anybody's community. So my personal vote will be with the member; I will support his motion. I don't have a problem with it.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to stand this afternoon in support of the resolution that's brought forward by my good friend and colleague the member from Wellington–Halton Hills with respect to his resolution to ask for the planning grant to be granted to Groves Memorial Community Hospital to allow them to

continue to plan for a new hospital and to the Georgetown Hospital for the hospital redevelopment project.

I would like to point out again how tirelessly the member has worked on behalf of his community for this. He's asked in all of the proper ways to do that. He's written to the minister, he's gone through all the proper channels, but he's been stymied at every turn. I think the members of the community have been extremely patient up until now, but naturally their patience is starting to wear thin. They have raised over \$15 million in order to start this capital project, as we expect all communities to do. But, frankly, if that's the expectation in communities across Ontario and you never know where you are in the lineup, it starts to cool people off. People figure, “What's the point of trying to raise this money?” If you want to sustain that momentum, you have to know where you are in the line. I think that's really what this resolution is aimed at: It's to have a clear, open, transparent and rational process for determining the priority of capital projects like hospitals in the province of Ontario.

There are dozens of projects across the province, and I'm sure the members of the communities who are represented here aren't asking for special favours. They're not asking to jump the queue. They're not asking to be given priority as far as anyone else is concerned. What they are asking is, “If I take a number, tell me where to take the number and tell me where the line is.” But they don't know. It's out there.

That's what we really need, and I can certainly speak to that from my own community, coming from Whitby–Oshawa. We have a huge, growing population; it's one of the fastest growth areas in southern Ontario. And we're just waiting to have our own little hospital reopened. It was closed July 2, 2007, as the result of an electrical fire, and we had to wait for two years, until the end of September 2009, to hear from the Minister of Health that money would even be coming to repair the work that needed to be done in order to reopen the hospital, never mind even thinking about asking for a new hospital, which we so desperately need. But we know that until—we are waiting. I don't even know when it's going to be, some time next spring, I hear, before this hospital is going to be reopening. We need that, just to sustain what we have as well.

I know this is happening in places all across the province of Ontario. What we really need is a plan. We need to know where the lineup is for capital projects. We also need to have a 10-year health strategy, which I know my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has been mentioning on many occasions. We don't have a 10-year plan for health care in the province of Ontario. We're starting to see our health care breaking down at the seams, with the huge pressures on our emergency rooms, emergency rooms that are closing down in various parts of the province, with those incredible increases in the number of ALC patients, people who can't find nursing homes, who can't find the home care they need in their own communities.

What we really need from this government is a plan, a thought, instead of ad hoc gestures here and there. We

need a plan for long-term care and health in the province of Ontario. We need to have a capital projects list so that communities across the province can know where they are, so they can plan for it. If they are going to be 10th in line, they know that they have that time period in order to do the fundraising that they need to do. But you have to give people a reasonable expectation of time; that's all that is being asked for here. I think that's all the members of this community that are here to support their member and the wonderful advocacy that he has done—I think this is something the government should certainly support as well.

1600

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I think Mr. Arnott is going to find that the New Democrats are supporting him in this effort today. Of course, this isn't the place, here on the floor of the chamber, where you should be doing hospital planning. But, hell's bells, when you have LHINs that are political hacks—political appointees—that are doing the government's bidding in a very political way; when you have LHINs that are unelected, unaccountable and oftentimes irresponsible, and certainly anonymous; and when you have hospital boards that are hand-picked people and where there's no democratic or open or public process, no transparency whatsoever—I commend the member for his diligence.

Let me tell the government: Its sophistry in response to Mr. Arnott's motion will end up biting them on the britches, being too cute by far in somehow dodging the issue here. You know what this is about. This is about either letting the folks in the communities that the member for Wellington–Halton Hills represents know that the government is with them or that the government is against them. Mr. Arnott is doing a very effective job at demonstrating that today. He's shedding some light on some health care needs down in his community. He's doing the job he's supposed to be doing; good for him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Wellington–Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank you very much and the members who have spoken to this resolution this afternoon. I want to thank the member for Kenora–Rainy River, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member for Whitby–Oshawa and also the member for Welland.

I say to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, who spoke on behalf of the government—who was a last-minute fill-in, it appears, for the member for Oakville, who apparently was called away to an important meeting at the last minute, even though he was apparently scheduled to speak—and who asked the rhetorical question: “Is this a rational and responsible and fair way to approach it?” I would say that your Minister of Health would say yes to all three questions. Again, the quote in the Toronto Star today: “Our MPPs are more than willing to act as lobbyists. I urge the hospitals to make use of the best lobbyists they have, and that's their MPPs.”

I again reiterate to the member that I spoke to the Minister of Health before I even tabled the resolution that we're debating today. I informed her of it, and I said to her, “I'm going to try to take a non-partisan approach to this, as non-partisan as possible, because I'm trying to sincerely bring forward the needs of my community.” Her response was, “But Ted, you have to do your job.” In other words, she understands that this has to happen. I've spoken to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, the member for Guelph, three or four times to make sure that she's aware of what we're doing here today. She has already written in support of the project with respect to Groves. In fact, I have a letter in writing from her from December of last year where she expresses support.

The LHIN in Waterloo–Wellington has expressed support for the Groves project to move forward to the next stage of planning. Again, I would urge the government to support this motion in that regard. The Georgetown Hospital, given the fact that I was informed of their project a few months ago, and my opportunity to raise a private member's resolution—I obviously wanted to include them in it too. That's why a reference to their project is in the motion as well. Theirs is just as important as Groves, obviously, in their need. I want to represent both communities equally. That's why I'm bringing this forward today.

I've tried to do it in as non-partisan a manner as possible. I'm concerned about the partisanship of the remarks of Mississauga–Streetsville. I accept the fact that he was asked to speak on short notice, but the fact is that our communities need the approval to go ahead with these projects. I again urge the Minister of Health to show that they're not going to put partisan politics ahead of the patient needs in my riding, and I would urge all members of this House to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business is now expired.

MANDATING SPRINKLERS
IN ALL ONTARIO RETIREMENT HOMES
ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'INSTALLATION
OBLIGATOIRE D'EXTINCTEURS
DANS TOUTES LES MAISONS
DE RETRAITE DE L'ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll first deal with ballot item number 40, standing in the name of Mr. Miller, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 92, An Act to require automatic sprinklers in all Ontario retirement homes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Miller?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to express my thanks to all members of this House. It's nice to see—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Which committee would you like the bill sent to, if any?

Mr. Paul Miller: The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed? So ordered.

PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 41.

Mr. Hampton has moved private members' notice of motion number 50. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll call in the members after we deal with the next ballot item.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 42.

Mr. Arnott has moved private members' notice of motion number 49. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1606 to 1611.

PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hampton has moved private members' notice of motion number 50.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed will stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Delaney, Bob	Johnson, Rick	Sergio, Mario
Dhillon, Vic	Kular, Kuldip	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	Mangat, Amrit	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 8; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will open the doors for 30 seconds.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Arnott has moved private members' notice of motion number 49.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Kular, Kuldip	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Moridi, Reza	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 22.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters related to private members' public business have now been completed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 20, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 110. It goes by the name of

the Good Government Act, but I find it a very strange name for a bill when this government had the potential for many other names. It's a rather paradoxical title. How can a government that has passed so many bad bills recently and made so many poor decisions from which they've had to backtrack pass a bill with that name? It really doesn't make a lot of sense.

Also, if we take a look at the bill, it actually has nothing whatsoever to do with good government. It is merely a collection of minor revisions to numerous pieces of unrelated legislation. These changes certainly do not amount to good government, and if that's what this government thinks these changes are all about, maybe that's why they've lost their way as they continue to introduce bad bills, provide bad government—certainly not government bills that are in the best interests of people in the province of Ontario. So I really don't think, based on the fact that it's merely a collection of minor revisions to numerous pieces of unrelated legislation, that it warrants such a grandiose title.

I'd just like to share with the House some examples of why this government has not earned the right to introduce what they say is a good government bill.

Yesterday, I had the privilege of meeting with representatives from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the RNAO and the Ontario Lung Association. These are people who have a genuine concern for the environment and a concern about the impact of the environment on human health. They asked us to support them on a number of environmental issues that they believe are critical in resolving some of the adverse environmental effects on human health today. Of course, the one issue that came up for discussion was the whole issue of the coal plants. They asked that we support the closing of Ontario's four remaining coal plants. Well, we have said since about 2001 or 2002 that we did support the closing of the coal plants. We also said at that time that it really was not going to be possible until about 2014 or 2015, because you have to take into consideration that you need a plan. You need a plan to make sure you can replace that energy with an affordable supply of energy and an adequate supply of energy. You obviously need to have a plan to mothball the coal plants. You need a comprehensive plan. You need a strategy. You need to provide leadership. Well, we haven't seen any of this from this government. In the election of 2003 they unthinkingly, to try to gain the votes of the public, said, "We're going to close all the coal plants by 2007," and they didn't even have a plan to do it. Of course, they weren't able. In fact, the only government that's been able to close a coal plant is the government that was headed up by Premier Davis—no, not Premier Davis, Premier Harris; both great Premiers. Premier Harris did oversee the closure of the coal plant at Lakeview. In fact, I was the Minister of the Environment.

1620

When I signed the regulation in 2001, we knew that it was going to take four years to decommission that plant,

and so it was very irresponsible of this government to have made a promise in 2003 to say they could close them all by 2007, when certainly anything that we had been presented with by Ministry of the Environment staff indicated it wasn't going to be possible to realistically do that until 2014 or 2015.

This government, of course, broke the promise to close the coal plants in 2007, and then they said, "We're going to do it in 2010." But again, this government had no plan. In fact, this government never has a plan. We never see timelines; we never see an implementation plan; we never see anything that resembles, "We need to do this by this time, and if we do, we need to achieve these objectives each year. This is how we're going to do it and this is how much money it's going to cost. These are going to be some of the consequences and challenges that we face, and this is how we're prepared to overcome them." This government just never has a plan. They never have any strategy. They just continue to provide poor government and make promises that they are never able to keep.

So we are here today, and who knows when any of the coal plants are going to close? That's why this coalition was meeting with us, because they recognized there are problems to human health and they're looking to see what they can do. This government just isn't providing the public with any information.

Right now we have no idea what they're going to do when it comes to energy. All we know is that anything they have done thus far, including introducing the HST and the additional amount of money that we now see on our hydro bills, and the passage of the Green Energy Act, has done one thing: We have seen skyrocketing electricity prices. Every day in this province we have seniors coming to our MPP constituency offices, pleading for help with the increased energy costs. Some of them recognize they may well have to sell their homes. They're on fixed incomes and pensions and cannot afford the skyrocketing electricity prices that we're seeing today. They are paying the brunt today of this government's poor planning.

This government has been establishing its energy and environmental policy on an ad hoc basis, and unfortunately the people in Ontario are paying the price. So I would submit to you that to name this a good government bill when all we're seeing is a government that is unreliable, can't be depended upon and makes irresponsible promises makes no sense. This government has serious problems that should be addressed, and instead of addressing those problems, we are now spending over seven hours debating a bill that makes minor revisions to legislation.

I know the member for Beaches—East York suggested that we rename this bill the much ado about nothing act, and probably that is a more appropriate title, because most of what's contained herein is routine housekeeping. It does nothing to improve the dire economic situation we are facing in the province of Ontario, which has seen skyrocketing energy prices. We've seen the impact of the

HST on families in this province. We've seen this government attempt to introduce an eco tax, which they then had to withdraw. So much is happening that is having a negative impact, and yet they choose to devote seven hours to a bill to accomplish nothing more than routine housekeeping.

Then they come up with other ideas. Yesterday, we heard in the morning that the Minister of Health Promotion stated they were going to consider reviewing whether they should ban a chicken sandwich from KFC. Well, of course, as they've done on so many occasions recently, they backtracked, like they did on eco taxes and so many other things. In the afternoon, I guess because the Premier was concerned about being labelled one more time as Premier Dad, someone stated on his behalf that they weren't going to do any more of this social engineering.

Let me simply conclude by saying that this is not a bill about good government. This is a bill that focuses on some very minor issues. It's regrettable that the government didn't introduce a bill that actually was going to improve the economy in the province of Ontario, that was going to demonstrate for the first time that they were actually doing some good planning when it comes to energy. So we won't be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the comments of the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I hadn't heard that my colleague from Beaches–East York had referred to this as the much ado about nothing bill, but it's not bad. I had thought the odds and ends bill or the miscellaneous changes and amendments act, 2010. There are a variety of terms one can use for a bill that really does a little bit of housekeeping.

One shouldn't be averse to a bill that does some housekeeping, but to call it the Good Government Act is quite an extraordinary leap of writing skill. It shows imagination on the part of legislative counsel and the minister that I hadn't understood was there previously.

This bill, given a fairly big chunk of legislative time, is an odd thing to put forward in a period, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has said, when we are facing very substantial problems in the province of Ontario around economy, around energy policy, around health care, with just in the last 48 hours more news about the waste of health care dollars going to very high-priced, well-connected lobbyists. Those are the issues that need broader, more substantive debate in this House.

The simple reality is that for us in the NDP, and I imagine in the opposition, the debate we want to carry on is about those more substantial matters, really talking about good government issues in Ontario, making sure that people do have jobs, making sure that people have electricity and other energy at prices that are affordable.

When a government loses its way and spends its time on miscellaneous amendments, you know that the end of that government is near.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's my pleasure to speak to this bill. There's been a lot of talk about the name of this bill, and the name has almost become an issue on this. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Toronto–Danforth spoke. This type of legislation isn't flashy, but it's our job. It's legislation to keep current with the times, remain current, and it's about reviewing what we do.

In my past elected position as a school board chair, we spent a great part of our time reviewing policies. We set in process a process where every five years we reviewed policies at the board level. We found a number of our policies which were out of date, things like if you bring your horse to school, the board must water and feed it. Those were the types of things that came up as being a little out of date.

This is about creating accountability in the system, reviewing what we're doing going forward. This bill includes approximately 70 amendments to legislation from seven different ministries. Most of the provisions are technical, but they change, exact and modernize it and bring it up to speed.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about electricity rates for some reason in this as part of it. I'd just like to remind her that when hydro was sold off by the last government, they sold off the part of hydro that made money, which has created difficulties. We've been spending a lot of money investing in that.

1630

The other day a press release was released in my riding about the 407 and where it will proceed. It is being built and it is moving along. Had it not been sold off by the previous government, the profits wouldn't be sitting in Spain right now. They would have been used to finish the highway.

The other thing is that this bill is about respecting the process. I remember the first budget I got to attend, before I was a member here. I got to go to Magna and witness a budget that had absolutely no respect for this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I enjoyed the speech by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo with regard to Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. As she pointed out, it has been suggested that it be renamed the much ado about nothing act, which would be more representative of what it actually achieves.

She was talking about how this government has demonstrated they aren't a good government. She gave examples of the energy sector, which is an absolute mess at this stage. We saw the very political statement in the 2003 election that they were going to close coal-fired electricity generating plants by 2007. Talk about an irresponsible commitment by the government. Of course, as we know, no coal-fired generating plants have been closed, and it's now 2010. The only coal-fired generating plant that has been closed was closed by the member

from Kitchener–Waterloo when she was Minister of the Environment, and that was the Lakeview generating plant.

This government has not shown that they have a plan in the energy field, for sure. It always seems to be about optics. They want to look green, so they have the Green Energy Act. The one thing that act has done is drive up energy prices. In the energy field generally, they've been very successful at driving up energy prices, but they haven't really dealt with the basic problem of baseload power. They've been elected for seven years, and they haven't made a decision on new nuclear generation. They've talked about shutting down coal, but they haven't found a replacement for that baseload power.

It certainly is not good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: These good government acts, as the members know full well, are housekeeping acts that enable governments to clean up a lot of legislation that, as my colleague mentioned, contains some out-of-date clauses.

But if they insist on bringing up some of these embarrassing things, let's just quickly go over some of the things that happened on the Conservative watch, for which they remain unrepentant, and we must assume that this would be their intent again.

In the last full year of the Harris-Eves government, close to half of Ontario's government ministries blew their budget.

Former MPP Chris Stockwell charged Ontario Power Generation up to \$10,000 in travel expenses for a family vacation to Europe.

Paul Rhodes, Leslie Noble, Tom Long and Michael Gourley shared \$5.9 million in untendered contracts from Hydro One for everything from communications advice to training programs. In many cases, Hydro One couldn't provide evidence of any work having been done.

The 2003 budget, to which my colleague made reference, not only left the taxpayers of Ontario with a \$5.5-billion hidden deficit, but also cost the same taxpayers \$206,000 to put it on at the Magna plant in Brampton. This included \$98,500 to a private production company for putting on the show and \$2,752 to transport members of the media on a secure bus instead of having them walk into this legislative chamber.

It would be a lot more helpful if, on these housekeeping bills, we simply debated the essence of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to thank the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Toronto–Danforth and, of course, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

I think what I was trying to point out is the fact that this government has chosen to, I think in many ways, mislead the public in calling it a Good Government Act—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I withdraw.

We're basically dealing with a bill that is providing some housekeeping amendments to current legislation, and so there's nothing in here that resembles anything about good government.

I guess I would also say—the member from Mississauga–Streetsville chose to bring up the whole issue of lobbyists. We've had the eHealth billion-dollar boondoggle scandal, and then yesterday we had the office of the Auditor General of Ontario bring forth another condemnation of this government. One of the things that I think was most shocking for people was the fact that there was a consultant who actually received contracts totalling \$608,000, and none of the invoices that were necessary were provided to justify detailed receipts for the \$170,000 in expenses that he claimed or she claimed, and as a result of the audit that was undertaken, when the hospital asked the consultant for additional details regarding these expenses, the hospital didn't get them because the consultant intended to charge a \$3,000 service fee for providing them.

This is absolutely unbelievable. We've seen that most of these consultants are Liberal-friendly. We've seen that many of them were the same ones who benefited from eHealth. So this is not a bill about good government.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Starting off, I appreciate the commentary of the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock that this bill is what we do, and he raised the whole issue of the title of the bill. I'm going to talk about more substantial issues, but I just want to say that when you bring forward a bill that is entitled the Good Government Act, in standard English one would think that you would have a somewhat more expansive goal. Having a title "an act to deal with miscellaneous amendments to a variety of acts" would have perhaps given us, as opposition, less ammunition to go after the government with.

Having commented on that, I will move on to my larger concerns. This very thin bill, which really does deal with a number of minor amendments to acts, is not, in and of itself, a really bad bill; it's just that it misses the point. In Ontario, we are in a situation where people are very desperate in looking for work, and my guess is that it's true in ridings across this province. Certainly in my riding, people come into my constituency office on a regular basis asking for assistance in finding work. They have gone through university, they have training or they have worked for a decade or two decades in a variety of situations and find that they cannot get employment. That is a huge and pressing issue in this province.

In Ontario, if you have a full-time job and a decent salary, you can live a pretty good life, but if you don't have either of those two things, then life can be extraordinarily difficult. So I think that if you're going to bring forward a bill that deals with good government,

that deals with the larger issues that we face here, it is incumbent upon the government to actually look out for the population as a whole and look out to ensure that there are good jobs for everyone, that people can get work, decent work, well-paid work, so that they can live a life of some dignity and a life of some joy.

In Ontario, we lost 350,000 jobs in the last recession. We've gained back perhaps 140,000 of those. Ontario lost 27,000 jobs last month alone. There is, in fact, a jobs crisis in Ontario that we see in the statistics and we see in the faces of the people who come to see us in our constituency office. It is a real issue. It is one that cannot be ignored. It has substantial consequences.

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This bill talking about good government doesn't address that very central question that we face in Ontario today. Ontario's manufacturing and resource regions remain devastated. I don't have to tell anyone in this chamber how important manufacturing and resource jobs are to the people of this province. Those jobs are not just important because manufacturing jobs pay an average of \$2.50 an hour more than the average hourly wage in this province. These jobs are not just important because, in addition to paying better, these jobs also generally come with pensions and good benefits. All this is important, but there's another reason why maintaining and strengthening Ontario's manufacturing and resource sector is crucial.

Dalton McGuinty likes to pretend that the current jobs crisis is limited only to manufacturing and forestry, but anyone who knows anything about the Ontario economy knows that manufacturing and resources represent the foundations on which Ontario's service economy rests. If you have problems in the manufacturing and resource sectors, you will eventually have problems in the retail, financial services and other areas of the service economy.

I remember a story told by the member from Welland, Mr. Kormos, about a year ago about going to a shopping mall in his riding and talking to small business owners, all of whom had for decades been running small, prosperous businesses, serving the needs, serving the requirements of the population in his riding. Those stores continue to be well run, continue to have people in charge of them who are knowledgeable about their products, about their customers, about business itself, but because of the undermining of the manufacturing economy in Welland and the Niagara peninsula, they had no customers. They couldn't sell to each other; that's not enough to keep a store open. They needed that manufacturing base for the economy of their area so that people could live decently and so that they could be customers for those small businesses. That's a fundamental issue for the whole of the economy of this province.

In the end, if you don't ensure that you have a healthy manufacturing and resource sector, then you have a small and diminishing service sector surrounded by a no-growth economy. It means that working people in this province are facing challenges that they have not faced in the past. Actually, I should amend that: People have

faced unemployment before; what they have not faced in many ways is the threat, the fear that in fact that unemployment will not be corrected by a return of the economy, by a rushing back in of the tide of a boom, but that in fact they're facing long-term, perhaps permanent, structural unemployment.

There are fundamental changes taking place in our economy that require innovative, activist government now. Due to the global financial crisis and failed federal and provincial policies, Ontario's economic foundation is threatening to crumble, and I and other New Democrats believe that government must respond. The NDP believes that the government has to play an active role in protecting good-paying jobs and, when those jobs can't be saved, making sure that workers who have committed a lifetime to an employer are treated fairly and are given every opportunity to return to the labour force in comparable jobs.

The McGuinty government doesn't believe in activist government. Mr. McGuinty has stood on the sidelines, showing absolutely no leadership while factories and mills downsize and close, costing hundreds of thousands of workers their jobs. I repeat: Ontario's economy is bouncing along the bottom because during Dalton McGuinty's watch, quite frankly, Liberals think the market must always be the final arbiter of what jobs survive and what jobs disappear. Well, I'm here to tell you that the NDP doesn't see things that way. We believe that sometimes the market works and sometimes it doesn't. When it doesn't—and this is one of those times in Ontario's economic history when the market definitely isn't working—then government needs to step in on behalf of hard-working men and women and set things right.

Here are just some of the policies the NDP has been fighting for over the past couple of years:

- a buy-Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs;

- tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing, in addition to longer advance notice and enhanced mandated severance;

- expansion of severance eligibility and an increase in advanced notice in mass layoff situations;

- pension and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they're owed from their employer when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy;

- the elimination of the HST on hydro, which would allow \$500 million to be put back into the economy to put people back to work.

Those are just some of the constructive ideas we've put forward in the past few years to deal with Ontario's jobs crisis. Every last one of them has been rejected by the McGuinty government.

I'm not saying that those ideas are the whole story; I think there are a variety of strategies that one can put into

place. But I think that for Ontario today, a government that is not, in fact, actively going out to implement those kinds of policies is selling short the people of Ontario and putting their futures in jeopardy. That is what we need to be debating in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I always enjoy hearing the member for Toronto–Danforth. He made a number of statements with which I must take issue, particularly with regard to the manufacturing sector. No sector has benefited more from the government's sweeping reforms in taxation than the manufacturing sector.

Let's go into some of those ways. Their income taxes are down and their corporate income taxes are reduced. Your personal income taxes are down and down to stay—permanent cuts to your income taxes. The manufacturing sector has seen its small business surtax completely eliminated. Ontario is the only province in Canada to do so. Not even Alberta has done that.

If you're in manufacturing, your paperwork burden has been cut through the complete abolition of the most regressive, obsolete, expensive and cumbersome tax that remained in Ontario, the provincial sales tax, and it has been eliminated, repealed, abolished, gone. It's history; it's over. It won't come back.

Your business costs are down through flowing-through of the input tax credits, and the net result for people in manufacturing these days is sustainable profits, even on the same volume of business and, most importantly, lower prices to you in manufacturing and lower prices to the people who buy from you.

Have you seen all the ads these days in both print and on the radio where people say, "We pay the HST"? Well, that's retail-price-speak for "We have cut your prices." The HST benefit is starting to flow through.

Just to sum up, the member says that the market must be the final arbiter, and actually, we more or less accept that. I'll pick this up at a future time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Toronto–Danforth for his presentation, but I just can't resist responding to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville suggesting that the provincial sales tax is gone. It grew into the massive HST that everyone is paying and everyone is complaining about, and he talks about how the people think it's gone. I can assure the member that he'd better go out and talk to the public and listen to what he's hearing in his local community. There is no one, including small business, talking about the PST being gone. They're all talking about this massive burden of the HST that has fallen upon them.

I do want to say that I find it interesting that this bill is being called the Good Government Act. In fact, it changes a lot of regulations and so forth in 70 items at seven different ministries, and that's supposed to improve government. If that was true, I think we'd all say that was a good idea. Obviously, this government has a

lot of room for improvement, and if there's anything they could bring forward that would do some of that, that would be helpful.

1650

I'm just going through it and looking at some of the things the government has been doing that I thought I would see in this bill; that would be corrected. One was, in the Green Energy Act, taking away the planning authority from municipalities. This was supposedly, according to them, making good government, but the only reason they say it's good government is because they don't trust municipalities to make planning decisions in their own communities when it comes to where they want the green energy. They say, "Oh, the municipalities wanted that because they want to have some expedience here. We want to get it done with none of this NIMBY stuff. We know better than the municipalities." But every municipality that looked at it passed a resolution opposing what the government was doing.

I don't think it's creating better government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I wanted to support the comments made by my friend from Toronto–Danforth. I also wanted to commend the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, because he is the chief stentorian for the Liberal Party. He is the ultimate cheerleader for the Liberals. He's a real trouper. In fact, he's a prime candidate for watching mixed martial arts, as I see it—and the Liberals are about to introduce that, so God bless; you're going to be enjoying it a whole lot.

Back to the member from Toronto–Danforth: He's speaking to the fears of every working man and woman in Ontario. There's nothing good about this bill, and there's not much good about this good government. What the member from Toronto–Danforth is talking about is expressing the worries about how close working men and women are to losing that paycheque and, as a result, losing their homes. That's how close people are. People are worried sick about not being able to make ends meet, and you have got chief cheerleaders of the Liberal Party here today talking about all the great things you're doing. Yet you have got extremes here in Ontario, from the very wealthy to the majority of everybody else, profoundly worried that they can't make ends meet. What the member from Toronto–Danforth is talking about is something Liberals should be wary of and be afraid of and should be thinking about as they introduce legislation that addresses those fears, as opposed to this housekeeping bill that does absolutely nothing. Why would you call it the Good Government Act when there's nothing in it for anyone?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Toronto–Danforth has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Oxford and Trinity–Spadina for speaking up.

I want to make sure that the record is very clear. I don't believe that the market must be the final arbiter

when it comes to employment. We cannot rest everything on the tender mercies of the market if we want to have a civilized nation. It's as simple as that. I think there was some confusion. Maybe my friend who is operating the microphone systems blurred for just a moment as a way of giving comfort to the Liberal government; I don't know. But it was misheard. I want to make it very clear: The market cannot be the final arbiter of the decisions that are made in this society if we want to have a civilized society.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville talked about the removal of a provincial sales tax from industry and the benefit it gives to manufacturing. Well, I'm not sure if he was there at estimates—he may well have been—but I actually had an opportunity to go through all of the sectors of the economy that got a boost, if you will, from the tax cut they received when the PST, the provincial sales tax, was removed. Manufacturing got the smallest, or pretty close to the smallest. So if you're talking about manufacturing in this province, the HST, for it, was a side note. What manufacturers need is the ability to invest in new equipment so that they can be more productive. The HST introduction didn't help them that way. What it did, in fact, was undermine the confidence of people who are going out and buying goods in this province. It undermined consumers' confidence. No one should be surprised that it had a negative impact on economic growth in this province.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts.

As some of the other speakers have said, we do question the naming of this bill, calling it the good government bill, particularly when we look at the record of the McGuinty government.

Let's take a look at their record for good government. Is it good government this year, in the financial year we've just gone through, to be running a \$19.3-billion deficit in 2009-10? That's what the deficit ended up being. It did change a lot as we went through the year. It started out at \$14 billion, went to \$18 billion, then up to \$24 billion, then down to \$21.3 billion, and finally, they were pleased to see that it was only \$19.3 billion. Is that good government, to be spending that much more money than you actually are taking in?

In addition to that deficit, the government actually borrowed \$35.2 billion this past year—\$35.2 billion was the addition to the debt. Of course, the government's on track to more than double the debt by 2012-13.

They don't have a credible plan to balance the budget. The plan is to balance the budget by 2017. That's beyond two elections. I don't think that's good government, to be burdening the pages and young people of this province with all this additional debt. Future taxes is what that debt is going to be.

Let's look at what's going on in England right now. They put off some tough decisions, so now they're looking at a 20% cut in their budgets. They're looking at

firing some 180,000 public servants. Is that what we want to wait to get to in the province of Ontario before the McGuinty government actually acts to deal with the situation they're creating?

Let's also realize that the situation here in Ontario is not so much that we don't have revenue; we've got lots of revenue. In fact, this year, the year we're in right now, 2009-10, the projected revenues are \$107 billion, and that's a record. The problem is that the government's looking at spending \$127 billion, so they're going to add another \$20 billion to the debt in addition to whatever capital spending they do as well.

Do we need to get to the point of Greece, which is essentially bankrupt, and have protests on the streets before we deal with this situation we have in the province of Ontario? The longer the government waits to start to try to be responsible and tackle the problem, the worse it gets.

As I tend to do first thing in the morning, this morning I again was listening to Michael Hlinka, the CBC business commentator. He was talking about England and Ontario and saying that a responsible government would look at starting to reduce salaries, he suggested, by 2% for the province of Ontario. Frankly, half the budget is salaries, so unless you're willing to start to look at that, you're not being responsible.

What has this government done? They have rewarded virtually all the negotiating groups with increases of 2%, 3%, 4%. I've seen some offers of over 5% this year, for one year. Is that responsible when you have a \$20-billion deficit? I do not think so. But that is what this government is doing and has done. As I say, half the Ontario budget is wages, so that is just simply not responsible when you have the situation that we find ourselves in, with a \$20-billion deficit.

1700

Look at what was in the news today and yesterday. You'd think the government would have learned from the eHealth situation, where a lot of money has been spent—up to \$1 billion—with very little to show for it. The shame with that—it was in our election campaign, actually—is that electronic health records can make a real difference in the health system, in terms of making the system more efficient and getting more efficient use of dollars so that people get the care they need. But this government has wasted a lot of money on consultants with very little to show for it on eHealth. That was documented a year ago by the Auditor General in his report on eHealth.

Yesterday, we had the Auditor General doing his report, which I have before me: Special Report, October 2010, Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations. I note that Karen Howlett of the Globe and Mail, writing about it in today's paper, points out:

“The auditor's findings, released on Wednesday, demonstrate that Premier Dalton McGuinty has failed to impose an era of restraint within the public sector....

“In his report, Mr. McCarter cites examples where consultants billed hospitals for a business trip to Singapore at a cost of \$700 a night for a hotel room, \$7,800 in

airfare for a personal vacation in Japan, and a \$350 dinner in Toronto for three people. One consultant even tried to bill a hospital a service fee of \$3,000 when the auditor asked for receipts to support expenses totalling \$170,000.”

This is outrageous, and this is after eHealth; this is a year after. She goes on to say in her article:

“The findings, he said, are reminiscent of eHealth Ontario, which awarded contracts totalling hundreds of millions of dollars to consultants without competitive tenders. The eHealth scandal dominated media coverage of Ontario politics in the summer of 2009 and led Health Minister David Caplan to resign from cabinet.”

A quote from Mr. McCarter, the Auditor General: “‘I was a bit surprised that eHealth had not been a wakeup call for hospitals to tighten up their procedures,’ Mr. McCarter told reporters.”

It points out that there’s been very, very little oversight by the government, despite having wasted so much money on the eHealth scandal. I would really like to know—and I’m sure we’ll eventually find out through freedom of information—just who the consultant was who had the gall to do this. I’ll read from the report:

“Another hospital awarded a consultant three single-sourced contracts and three follow-on contracts from 2007 to 2009, totalling \$608,000, to review the hospital’s finances in order to address a budget shortfall and implement recommendations made in the consultant’s earlier work. None of the invoices we sampled from this consultant included detailed receipts or justification for the \$170,000 in expenses claimed. As a result of our audit, the hospital asked the consultant for additional details regarding these expenses. The hospital did not get the receipts because the consultant intended to charge a \$3,000 service fee for providing them.”

That is outrageous. They had \$170,000 in expenses and wouldn’t provide any receipts. Then, when they’re asked for receipts, they want to charge \$3,000. I would really like to know who this consultant is. They aren’t named in the report, but I would be very interested to see—and I’m sure we’ll be making a request through freedom of information to find out—who this consultant was, because that is absolutely outrageous.

We have another situation: “In April 2006, a hospital single-sourced the engagement of a consulting firm to develop and implement a health information management system. During the first three years, the firm was paid \$398 per hour—\$2.6 million in total—and no fixed ceiling price or specific project deliverables were established. The invoices provided no detail on services rendered or any project accomplishments.”

That is a shocking lack of oversight.

The sad part of this is that this is money, when we have scarce health care dollars, that should be going to front-line services. In my riding, Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has a deficit situation now. They’ve done all kinds of paring down. Closing the cafeteria was the most recent thing they did. They shut down the Burk’s Falls health centre. There have been all sorts of cutbacks, but they still have a big deficit. This money could have been

going toward real health services, toward nurses and doctors, toward that deficit so that no more cuts have to happen. Instead, there’s been a shocking lack of oversight and very little to see—and I would recommend that everyone read this special report of the Auditor General. But it certainly demonstrates that this government has not been doing a good job. It has not been providing good government, so the name of this bill, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts—it’s certainly something we would like to rename, because it does not demonstrate what the bill is truly about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to support everything that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has said. He makes reference to the Auditor General for good reasons, because the Auditor General has exposed the fact that this government has wasted so much of the public’s money. And how have they wasted the public’s money? By not having adequate oversight over the very institutions that they should have oversight of: those institutions that get public dollars and that have been spending millions of dollars on lobbyists to lobby government—for what? What does that get them, except—if you’re a friend of the Liberal government, you get to have a meeting, and the lobbyists get to say to the hospital board, “Yeah, I got you a meeting.” And you’ve got to pay big bucks for that kind of stuff. What’s that about? Why would the government let this go on for seven painful, long years?

When the member from Kenora–Rainy River introduces a resolution today that says that we should have oversight and we should be able to ask questions of the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator of Ontario—because they’re going to be spending \$26 billion over the next 40 years and we don’t have a clue how they’re going to be spending that money. We can’t even ask them questions. When he raises that point and brings forth a resolution—supported by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, I would add, and not supported by any Liberal—when we bring forth such suggestions and offer the possibility, the opportunity, to the Liberals to support a resolution that, in my mind, was very practical and reasonable, they all opposed it. Not even one Liberal supported a resolution that would say, “Yeah, we’re a good government and we want transparency.” Not one Liberal supported the member from Kenora–Rainy River when he called for transparency and accountability. It’s not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: There’s one aspect of the plus seven hours of debate that I can agree with the two opposition parties on, and that’s that we could rightly move on to a more substantive piece of legislation for debate. But it seems that the opposition wants to spend plus seven hours, for the most part, maligning the current government, and that’s fine. That’s okay. But if you want to move on to substantive debate, then you have to move

on to substantive debate. You can't stand up for over seven hours and say that the bill has nothing in it and that we should be doing something else and then continue to stand to debate a bill that, to your preference, has nothing in it.

There are 70 amendments to seven different acts. If you took 10 minutes for each one or six minutes for each one, you've used up the seven hours—the point being that I think many of us in this place are ready to vote on the Good Government Act and move on from there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his presentation on the bill that's before us here. Obviously, it isn't the fluff in the bill that we want to talk about; it's the inability of the government to become a good government by using this bill. You've got to do a lot more than this bill will do to turn what you've been doing into good government, and I think that's really what I'm trying to say.

I think it's rather interesting, because good government—if you're changing from where you are to good government—would imply that the government is going to do a little better at their job. Now, this bill was all ready for debate when the auditor's report came out yesterday; it was already here. What it points out is that the government really does need to improve.

When the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care got this report about the hospitals and the LHINs, she said, "Oh, my gosh. That's just unacceptable. I didn't know it was going on." Well, wait a minute. Aren't they both responsible to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care? Good government would mean that she knew what was happening in the ministry. It's been going on for the seven years that this government has been there. As was suggested, it's likely been there longer than that, but it has been there before. The minister said, "I didn't know it was going on."

1710

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned a number of issues. One I found that was very interesting is that the LHIN, the local health integration network, "also made a payment of over \$23,000 to a consultant in March 2009, before any work was commenced. Although the payment had been made in anticipation of the completion of the work before the end of the same month, no work had been completed at the time of our visit, nine months later. Subsequently the LHIN cancelled the project and initiated efforts to recover the payment." However, as of July, no recovery had been made.

So all of a sudden, we've just totally forgotten about money we paid in advance of any work being done. That's not what you call good government, or good business for that matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's always a delight to listen to the contribution by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka to debates of this type. I listened carefully to his comments today, and he's spot on, bang on.

The Liberal government seems a little tired; they want to go home. It's 5 o'clock and it's Thursday. Jeez. Why do they have to stay here? Gosh. Because this is what you get paid to do, for Pete's sake. They're your constituents. You, the Liberal backbenchers, your constituents should know why you support this good government bill.

I say to the member from Barrie, why aren't you explaining to your constituents here in the chamber why you support this bill? I say to the member from Willowdale, why don't you, right here in the chamber, speak to this bill and explain why you're supporting it? I say to the member for Guelph that she surely should be standing here in the chamber and explaining to people why she supports the bill. I say to the member for Sault Ste. Marie, surely you should be standing up in this chamber and explaining why you support this bill. I say to the member for Ottawa–Orléans, surely you should be standing up in this chamber and explaining why you support this bill. I say to the member for Oakville, surely he would want to participate in this debate and explain to his folks why he supports this bill. I say to the member for Brampton West, surely you would want to stand up in this chamber.

You were elected to come here to debate these issues. Your government put forward this bill, calling it a good government bill. Surely, I say to the member for Niagara Falls, he should be standing up in this chamber and explaining to the people of Niagara Falls why he supports this bill, and I assume if he doesn't support it, say so.

The thing we do know is that people don't support you, the Liberals. Eighty-six per cent of Ontarians, almost nine out of 10—it doesn't get much bigger than that—say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago, and 76% of Ontarians think it's time to have another party in power.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to respond to the members who commented: the member from Trinity–Spadina, the member from Pickering–Scarborough East, the member from Oxford and the member from Welland.

The member from Trinity–Spadina was talking about the Auditor General's report. It brings back memories of another Auditor General's report, and that is the one he did on the OLG and expenses at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., which was just as shocking. You'd think by now the government would be learning, because in that report, I think one of the most shocking things was again the lack of oversight. The OLG actually asked the minister responsible if the expense rules applied to them, and the minister never responded. So the OLG took that to mean that the expense rules didn't apply to them.

As his report in that case pointed out, they had \$60,000 automobiles that were leased when the government limit is about \$30,000. They had their conference in-house. They hired a consultant for a three-day conference at \$150,000 to host a conference at one of their own facilities. It went on and on and on with all kinds of

broken expense rules, but that was just another example of a shocking lack of oversight.

We saw here this afternoon an example of the member from Wellington–Halton Hills speaking up for his constituents and lobbying here, as the Minister of Health recommended, instead of using paid consultants, which was the focus of the Auditor General's report. But then the government members vote down his resolution to try to support his local hospitals. That seems to be a message that, yes, you do need these paid lobbyists, because they aren't listening to the MPPs as recommended by the Minister of Health.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to speak to G110, the Good Government Act. I remember a time when a former government that shall remain nameless used to have the best bill titles, but the Liberals compete. You guys compete really well.

Mr. Norm Miller: What's a better name for this bill?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There is. Let me suggest to you what the better name would have been. Had they named it differently, I would have had a hard time making fun of this bill. If they had named it the housekeeping amendment act, I would have had no problem with it. Member from Ajax–Pickering?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Yes, can I help you?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He's too busy. Oh, you're here? There you are. Where do we have him? Pickering–Scarborough East. That's where he is.

Mr. Joe Dickson: That's right beside my riding.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're close.

Mr. Joe Dickson: We're tight, like this.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly. If you guys had called this the housekeeping amendment bill, it would have been easy. I think we would have—

Mr. Jim Brownell: No, you still would have had something to say about it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're right. We would have attacked it, but with less humour. I would have had a hard time making fun of you. But when you call this bill the Good Government Act, it appeals to me a great deal because then I need to have some fun.

What's good about it? What is good about this bill? Other than your calling it good, there's nothing good in it.

What's a good government? Let me try to explain what I think a good government is.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Willowdale, he's going to throw you out. You're always being threatened to be thrown out. You've got to be careful.

Member from Willowdale, what's a good government?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'm just going to remind the honourable member before this goes too far to direct your comments through the Chair, please.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Through you, of course. Sorry for not looking at you when I said that. I always mean to, but it's just hard sometimes, because you want to speak directly to the members. But I understand, Mr. Speaker.

Good government, in my mind, is not having a big lineup at the food banks. That would be good government. Food banks have grown under a Liberal regime. How could that be? Member from Willowdale, how could you be happy about it? Does that warm your heart? Does it warm your heart to have long lineups at the food banks, more and more people using food banks than ever before? How do you sleep at night? How can you call yourself a good government? You'd believe that if you were a good government—better than the previous one that you want to attack from now until the next election—surely you would do something about that. But you haven't.

You have done absolutely nothing except appeal to more and more people out there, the good citizens, to give more and more to charity. There's the United Way appeal every year. They're raising more and more money. And Liberals are happy to praise volunteers who are raising more money. Liberals are happy to give them trophies for donating their time and donating more and more money, because the more and more people give, the less governments give. The more people volunteer—three million or more—the less governments have to do.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What does it have to do with this bill? It's the good government bill. That's the point. If you hadn't called it the good government bill, I wouldn't have been able to talk about it. But when you talk about good government, in my mind, what would be a good government? It would be that we have fewer people lining up at the food banks. More and more people who are going to food banks are not just people with a mental illness, not just real people with real poverty issues, but you've got a whole lot of middle-income people slipping through the cracks, who are having to rely on the goodness of people who give them some charity. No longer can we go and rely on governments to give anymore; we have to go and rely on the kindness of strangers.

1720

Oh, yes, we give them a charitable tax receipt so that 30% of their money goes back into their pocket through the kindness of governments, but that's about all they get. They have to go through charity; they have to beg for food. While some politicians attack them for, of course, being on social assistance, they have to go begging for food. There's nothing good about this government when it allows that. When 140,000 people are waiting for housing because they can't afford the rents in rental buildings, because they can't afford to buy condominiums, when 140,000 people in Ontario are still waiting for support from the government to build good housing that they can live in, that they can afford, it's not a good government.

That's why if you called it a housekeeping amendment act, it would have been fine and easy. But it makes people like me talk about why you're not such a great government, why you are not so good.

When students have tuition debt of \$25,000 a year, it's not a good government. When those debts keep going up and up and up, it's not good. When to be a lawyer, you have to have \$100,000 in debts, it's not a good government. When you want to be doctor, and your total debt at the end of it is probably \$100,000 to \$120,000, it's not a good government. It makes it possible for the wealthy to continue being doctors and lawyers, but for those who would aspire to be a lawyer or a doctor and whose incomes are not very high and who are afraid of debt and know that they won't be able to pay it off that easily, and you're shutting them out of those possibilities, that's not a good government.

When you introduce a harmonized sales tax that whacks, badly and hard, middle-class men and women and families—

Mr. Charles Sousa: Creates jobs.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —in a way that it's just a big weight on their shoulders, it's not a good government.

The member from Mississauga South and other Liberals claim that it creates jobs when they know the GST did nothing of the sort, and they know that it will not create those jobs except to rely on some fabricated evidence from some economist that they didn't like and that they now like, who says to them they are going to create 650,000 jobs. Then they say, "Yeah, that's okay."

A lot of Liberals fought against the GST until Chrétien got into power and said, "No, the GST is okay now." But they knew it would hurt a whole lot of Canadians, and it did. A whole lot of jobs got lost. You would think that with the GST—the member from Mississauga South, the former banker, loves it. You would think that with the GST having been introduced—and the total cost, the total income to government, is about 30 billion bucks. You would presume that this would be a big benefit to business, and as such, because of the savings for business, you would think there would be thousands and thousands of jobs in perpetuity in Ontario and the rest of Canada, and yet unemployment has been steadily high—under Liberals to boot; high under Conservatives—with a GST regime that the member from Mississauga South said is going to create jobs. Okay.

Yeah, we've been seeing a whole lot of jobs in Canada since the GST, and we're going to, oh, yes, see a whole lot of jobs with the HST. That's okay for those of us who earn over \$100,000. It's okay for bankers whose income is \$1 million, \$1.5 million, plus cozy houses and cozy cars and cozy shares in their banks, but it's not good for middle-income families that earn \$40,000 or \$35,000 or \$50,000 or \$60,000; it's not good for them. There is absolutely nothing good in this bill—nothing.

This is not a good government. I want to remind my progressive friends: This is not a good government. They might be nicer than the previous regime, but there's nothing good about this government, nothing that I can

say—at least, that comes to mind—that I could praise you for—not much.

You've got to rename this bill if you want me to support it. Otherwise, I'm going to make fun of you for as long as I can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to add a couple of minutes' comments to my good friend from Trinity–Spadina. But before I go there, I just want to comment that the member from Welland, his colleague, stood up a few minutes ago, pointing out people who should be here debating this bill, and he's quite right.

The fact is, I think I've been here a good part of the seven-or-so hours that we've been debating—not all the time—and I'm not sure any of the members from the opposition talked about the bill. They didn't talk about the bill, about how this is a way to streamline government, how this is way to do those things to make sure that we get up to today's standards.

The member from Trinity–Spadina spoke, and I want to make a couple of comments on what he spoke about. He talked about the unemployment rate under this government; he talked about the unemployment rate under the previous regime, the Conservatives. He didn't talk about the unemployment under his regime, which doesn't exist anymore. That doesn't exist anymore.

I do, though, want to give him credit. I think the member from Welland would say that I should give him credit. I will give him credit that he did say this regime is better than the previous regime. I want to thank you for that. I want to compliment you.

I think we debated the bill—the bill is very technical in nature—to talk about things that we're trying to improve.

Laughter.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: To the members opposite that might be funny, and that's fine; that's the way they take it. But I'm not sure that many of them talked about the content of the bill. That's what is disheartening. I just hope, at the end of the day, they will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have a chance to respond briefly to the member for Trinity–Spadina, and I want to compliment him on his remarks. They were interesting, thoughtful and lively, as always, and theatrical too. He does a great job of representing his constituents. I probably should take this opportunity to thank the New Democrats for their support of my private member's resolution this afternoon.

It's interesting we're talking about a bill called the Good Government Act. We saw this afternoon a very interesting display of anything but good government, I thought. Again, and I've read this into the House a couple of times, I don't know if any of the government members have read the Toronto Star today, perhaps, but in the clippings today there's an article by Jim Coyle where the Minister of Health is quoted as saying, "Our MPPs are more than willing to act as lobbyists. I urge the

hospitals to make use of the best lobbyists they have, and that's their MPPs."

This afternoon, I had an opportunity to bring forward my private member's resolution—perhaps the last one I'll have before the election, because the election is expected in October of next year. I thought, given the fact that I've been working for years to try to advocate for the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus, and more recently, when I was informed of the needs of the Georgetown Hospital, I put the two together and asked for the support of this Legislature for the hospital projects that we need.

Interestingly, on the very day of the debate of the resolution and the vote in the House, the minister is quoted as saying that that's our role as MPPs. Our role is to advocate for our constituents, to advocate for our hospitals. Then we come into the House this afternoon and the government member speaks to the motion and starts complaining about process. It's just unbelievable.

For the government to take an approach in this House this afternoon to bring forward—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member is not in his seat so he can't raise a point of order from there. Thank you.

The honourable member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: —incredible amount of gall. I can't believe they'd bring forward this bill this afternoon with a straight face.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: This is a sad moment, because here's a government that's trying to pull the wool over people's eyes. Here's a government that's trying to have its way with people.

They're shutting down emergency rooms down in Fort Erie and Port Colborne. They're telling seniors that they've got to pay HST on their electricity and on all sorts of services that these folk never had to pay taxes on before. They're telling workers that they're going to have to trade in their good jobs, the 300,000 of them that have been lost through the McGuinty government years, for \$10-an-hour jobs. You don't send kids to college or university for \$10 an hour.

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New Democrats are going to make sure this bill goes to committee. I suspect it's going to go to a vote tonight.

The reality is that opposition members have been prepared to debate this; government members haven't. The government says, "Seven hours." Seven hours? You've got 107 members here. This is supposed to be a place of discourse, of exchange, of debate. The government members want nothing to do with discourse, exchange and debate. They adopt tactics that are akin to totalitarian in nature. They expect bills simply to proceed through here because, well, Liberals wrote them. The people of Ontario know better. Why, 76% of Ontarians know better, because 76% of Ontarians believe they would like to see another party in power—somebody other than the Liberals—and 86% of Ontarians know

better because, you see, 86% of Ontarians say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago.

Good government doesn't have darned near nine out of 10 people saying, "You've made my life harder. You've made my life more miserable. You've made my life more difficult." That's what people are saying about Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals, and they know it. Almost nine out of 10: Think about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to take a couple of moments and just speak to the good government bill, because, in fact, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't a good government.

A couple of things have been mentioned over the course of the day and prior to that. Affordable housing was one. We're trying to catch up from the good old days of another party. I can tell you, in Durham region there are five projects under way right now, one of them across from my constituency office: 84 new units which will be for those most in need and, of course, for a large proportion of seniors.

I must tell you, fellow members, that my colleague from Pickering—Scarborough East and the Premier and I were on a tour a week ago Monday. One of the spots we went to was in Whitby, the riding of one of our good members. We went to a plant called ASC Signal. This corporation, which is part of a worldwide conglomerate, did something unique. We've been talking about lost jobs and we've been talking about revenue. We've been talking about a lack of jobs. This corporation, because their number one priority was to have a government with HST, a combined tax, a savings on tax, a refund on corporate tax—they have acquired that location, they have maintained the business, they have maintained all of the employees, and they have gone to Mexico and brought back a production line to Ontario. I'll tell you, there's something special about our employees, something special about a lot of things, when we're now bringing jobs from other countries back to Ontario because of our good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Trinity—Spadina has two minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My thanks to my good friends, including the members from Ajax—Pickering and Northumberland—Quinte West.

Just to continue with my theme, would a good government have a \$20-billion deficit? I remember a time when Liberals were here and would say, "Oh, they hit the debt wall. Ontario is about to disappear under the weight of its debt." There was a time when Liberals used to say that, but now that they have a \$20-billion debt, "Well, it's a recession." I see.

Would a good government allow the loss of 350,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs, most of them unionized, that made it possible for men and women to live a middle-class life that many aspire to? Would a good government allow that? That's under a Liberal regime.

Would a good government allow more and more people who need home care, as more and more people

become old and infirm—would a good government allow more and more of them not be able to access the home care that they desperately need to stay at home, something Liberals say they want? Yet more and more seniors are getting less and less support from this fine Liberal good government.

Would a good government allow hydro rates to go through the roof as middle-class men and women are finding it harder and harder to be able to pay the bills, as our leader, Andrea Horwath, constantly makes reference to—to people across the land who are saying, “We can’t afford those rates”? It’s not a good government.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise to speak to Bill 110, the so-called Good Government Act. When I first saw the bill introduced, I saw the title and I thought they must be repealing the fixed election dates to give the people in Ontario a say in whether we should have the HST or not. But then, of course, it was another one of those disappointments as I look at what this government does. That wasn’t part of the bill.

The omnibus bill affects about 70 items of legislation from seven different ministries. The government talks about this bill being introduced to enhance the Open for Business legislation that was introduced lately and to enhance jobs and growth in Ontario. If only that were true. But I think we have to kind of pause and look at the bill to see if that’s actually what it does.

Whether it is forcing industrial wind farms in rural communities or banning chocolate milk in school cafeterias, this government is expanding its Dalton-knows-best approach throughout Ontario. They’re not looking for better government; they’re looking for greater government control of everything that happens in our province.

This morning I had the opportunity to speak to another piece of legislation that fits in this series of these types of bills, the Open for Business legislation. I spoke to the agriculture part of it for a reason. Being the critic for agriculture, I thought it was appropriate to look at what impact that bill would have on it. It changes the Live-stock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act, and the government used this bill to create the situation where they no longer have to pay for predator damage, livestock damage by wildlife.

The minister says, “No, no, but that’s not what we’re doing. What we’re really doing is, we’re going to be able to set the price, so when the farmers want more money, we can just raise the price without changing any regulations, because we will control the actual payout.” It used to say that the minister “shall” make the payout, and now the act says that the minister “may” make a payout, and we all know that when they’re looking to reduce the cost of the ministry budget, if they may, they likely won’t. If they wanted to, they would leave the word “shall.”

One of the more concerning elements of this legislation—again, it deals with the one this morning—is the abandonment of cabinet scrutiny. If you look at the legislation, you find there’s a great emphasis on taking

away the Lieutenant Governor’s authority to pass regulations and passing that to the minister. If you look at the bill, in schedule 5, the act is amended—and I just want to read a part; this is under the Ministry of Government Services. I just wanted to also point out that we haven’t heard much debate about the bill because there really hasn’t been much in the bill to debate, so we’ve seen quite general comments about what is not good about the government. But I do want to focus a little bit on what’s actually in the bill:

“The act is amended to transfer seven regulation-making powers from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the minister. The act is also amended to provide the minister with regulation-making powers to prescribe documents that are required to accompany articles and applications under the act, and to prescribe requirements for the execution of certain documents filed with the director under the act. The regulation-making power of the minister to prescribe forms and provide for their use is transferred to the director.”

So now we have taken it away from cabinet, first the Lieutenant Governor of cabinet to the minister, the minister to the deputy minister, and now it is down to the director, where they’re going to make all the change.

The reason I point this out is that we see, in this report that we got from the Auditor General yesterday, that the big problem is that the minister’s oversight was insufficient to know what was going on in the ministry. At least, the auditor didn’t say she didn’t have oversight; the minister said she didn’t have oversight. The auditor said it has been going on for some time and there’s a lot of money disappearing for things that are not provable and there are no receipts for, and the minister said, “Oh, I didn’t know that was going on.” So this takes away even more of that and gives that power further down the line.

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The Business Corporations Act currently permits the minister to delegate his or her duties and powers under the act to public servants in the ministry. I would think that would be enough delegation, but the act is “amended to allow the minister to delegate these duties or powers to any public servant employed under part III of the Public Service of Ontario Act.” Now we’ve gone from cabinet to the Lieutenant Governor to the minister to the deputy minister, down to the director, and now the director can pass it on to anyone in the province who works for the province. I just don’t think that’s what you call good government, to abdicate one’s responsibilities. I suppose the next time an auditor’s report comes out like this one—and obviously they’re doing very little to change that. They didn’t change it when they had the eHealth problem. They aren’t likely to change it when the same problem comes out this year. But the next time it comes out, the minister won’t have to say, “Oh, I didn’t know that.” She will be able to say, “No, but that was delegated to the person working in the office in Woodstock, and they must have delegated it somewhat differently than I had hoped they would, so we’ll speak to them. If you want to hold someone responsible, that’s the person you should be holding responsible.”

It goes further, as I said, about the director under the Extra-Provincial Corporations Act: “The act currently permits the director under the act to delegate his or her duties or powers under the act to any public servant in the ministry. The act is amended to allow the director to delegate these duties or powers to any public servant employed” under the public service act. They don’t even have to delegate it to their own ministry. At some point in time, I suppose we could direct it all to one person and then send them on vacation and there would be absolutely nobody left to be responsible for the problems that occurred.

So I think it’s very important that we look at the fact that the government seems to want to take away their responsibility to make any decisions at all. It still gives them the power to make decisions, but they always have a finger to point at someone else.

Of course, all this delegation allows the red tape and the problems that industry has been telling us all along there’s too much of. If there’s one problem, when you talk to the community and the small business sector, it’s always the amount of red tape. This will allow red tape to be created by everybody in the system, and they can have their own regulations as they think they need it.

One of the other things that the delegation does is, as I said this morning to the Minister of Agriculture—and I appreciate that she was here to listen to my presentation about the Open for Business Act. It comes out that under this change, she will be able to delegate authority down to other people. When the farmers come forward and say, “We need this, this and this,” the minister will say, “Well, you’ll have to speak to so-and-so because they now have the power to do that”—again, no responsibility to them.

The other thing that I think is very important, and the Premier did this himself just a few weeks ago—on July 1 when the HST came in place, we’ll all remember there was also an extra charge, an eco tax, added on to some 9,000 purchases, if you wanted to make them all that day. We go back to the delegation: The first thing that was said by the government was, “We didn’t know that was happening. What are these people doing? It’s not a tax; it’s a fee. It’s someone at arm’s length from the government that’s doing this.” It was rather strange when it didn’t go over very well. It got so bad that in fact the retailers refused to collect it. Then the Premier said, “Oh, this must be going wrong. We’d better suspend it for a while to see what’s going on.” One would have to question: If they didn’t have any authority and didn’t know what was being put in place, then how did they have the ability to suspend it? Well, obviously they had authority to put it in, and it turns out now, from reports I’ve heard, that in fact the Premier was the one who suggested that this is what should happen and this is how we should pay for the recycling process in the province of Ontario. That didn’t go over very well and that didn’t point toward good government, so they decided that maybe what they should do is just put it all on the backs of municipalities and they will then, in turn, see if they can get some other way to fund their blue box program.

I just want to point out that it’s things like the eco tax and the HST—people speak loudly and clearly that that’s not what they want. The government first tried to do it with the bill, to say, “It’s not what you think it is. It’s all optics. You just think it’s bad for you. We will pass the bill and call it the good government bill, and then you will all be happy with us.”

The truth of the matter is that they can’t make good government by passing a bill. They have to do things differently and listen to the people when they do things. Don’t implement something and then look at the collateral damage, shall we say. They should look at it all and see what the good and bad of it is, and make decisions in a way that will improve our economy and improve the confidence of our consumers, and not just having to put things in place just so tomorrow we have to change them. That’s no way to run a government. It doesn’t matter how many bills of good government you pass; if that’s the way you’re going to conduct your business, the people will not see that as a good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Oxford makes a strong point, one that has been made by opposition members during the course of this debate. It is that this Bill 110 incorporates that growing trend for a government to distance itself from decision-making and, more importantly, to entirely eliminate any safeguards that could possibly be there in the process of decision-making.

For example, taking the power away from the Lieutenant Governor in Council and giving it to the minister himself or herself: At the very least, when it’s with the Lieutenant Governor in Council—regulation-making power, for instance—there are a number of cabinet ministers sitting at the table. Presumably, or at least in theory, one or two could caution his or her colleagues and say, “This is a dangerous course to travel,” or “It’s a slippery slope.” Lord knows it didn’t happen with the whacky G20 regulation, did it? Not a single cabinet minister warned his or her colleagues that this was going to come back to bite them in the britches and that all hell was going to break loose. You want to hear a report? Man, wait until you get André Marin’s report on that G20 regulation—you know, the one that the government embraced so warmly when he applied for his second term, the one that at the end of the day, the government House leader—I believe she had tears in her eyes when he was sitting up in the Speaker’s gallery. I presume they were tears of joy, when Marin’s reappointment was announced here in the chamber.

Wait until that Ombudsman’s report comes forward, over the course of the next few weeks, about the mystery around the G20 regulation, the regulation that misled police officers, misled the public and misled, certainly, members of the Legislature; the one that resulted in hundreds of people getting arrested, most of them with no charges, and when there were charges, most of those charges are now being dropped in the first or second instance of court appearances. What a mess.

That's not good government; that's not good government at all. Passing Bill 110 ain't going to change the colour of that bill from white to black or black to white.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I am struck by the PCs' note of faultlessness in their comments this afternoon as they portray themselves as the guardians of good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I just ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mr. David Zimmer: I withdraw that.

I'm reminded of two quotes: "Methinks the lady doth protest too much," said Shakespeare; and a second: "People living in glass houses should not throw stones."

When the member from Oxford was the Minister of Agriculture, he gave a consulting contract to Mariposa Communications. Their principal was a major PC donor and the contract was \$465,000.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo, when she was at education in 2002: \$257,000 to Decima Research and a known Conservative principal, Allan Gregg. Again, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, when she was at environment in 2000: \$63,000 to Dillon Consulting, a prominent PC firm. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo, again, two years later at environment: \$188,000 to Knowles consulting. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo, again, in 2000: \$113,000 to Rhodes Consulting and none other than Paul Rhodes, a PC Party insider. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo, again, a couple of years later, 2002, at environment: \$216,000 to Shore Consulting. And finally, in 1998, \$66,000 to Veritas Communications, a major PC Party donor.

1750

Not to be outdone, the former member from Leeds–Grenville, who has since left this place and has now been elevated to a Progressive Conservative senator in Ottawa: When he was at public safety and correctional services in 2002, \$166,000 went to Andersen Consulting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the speech by the member for Oxford on Bill 110. I have to start out by saying, on the member from Willowdale's comment, I didn't know Allan Gregg was a Conservative, but I guess he knows that. That's interesting.

Returning to the member from Oxford's comments, he was looking at the bill and actually commenting about aspects of the bill, in particular concerns about the changing authority, the fact that the bill would be delegating authority from the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is cabinet, to the minister, and then the minister, in fact, could pass it down the food chain to the director and members, even if they aren't within the same ministry. He was talking about a part of that.

Obviously, with this government's record of lack of oversight, as demonstrated over and over again, most recently in the report by the Auditor General yesterday on consultant use in selected health organizations, and a year ago, of course, in the report on eHealth, and prior to

that, the report on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.—there have been many examples.

The member from Oxford gave us an example of the poor government of the McGuinty Liberals, the eco tax. Boy, that certainly is an example of a new measure that just was not very well thought out. It was introduced quietly, sneakily, on July 1, the same day that the HST was coming in, without any promotion about it. In fact, people just started going to Canadian Tire and buying things and wondering what this new charge was on their bill. The problem was that it had nothing to do with actually improving the environment. There was no communication about this fee and no connection to it actually making a difference in terms of diverting toxic substances from landfill sites. So we had this tax. They bungled virtually every aspect of it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased just to add a few comments and to congratulate my colleague on his comments regarding this legislation that we're currently debating. We've come to the conclusion, I think, on the opposition side, that instead of the good government bill, it should probably be entitled the much ado about nothing bill.

I was interested to hear the comments from the member opposite. Now I'm going to have to do a little research and see if all these people have maybe Liberal connections. I sure wasn't aware of the fact that they all had Conservative connections. But anyway, thank you for raising our awareness of all those issues.

You know what? I think some of the comments that are being made in this House are a reflection of the fact that we're dealing with a bill that we've had seven hours to debate. Because the bill really doesn't amount to much more than housekeeping and perhaps a few minor changes, it truly doesn't warrant the time that has been set aside for it. I think personally that there are many people in this province who are experiencing a tremendous amount of hardship, who continue to look for jobs and are not able to find them, who continue to need training programs, and certainly support in literacy and numeracy, and who really would like to provide for themselves and their families, but they just aren't able to get the support or get entry into the program.

I think our time probably could be better spent focusing on issues that really matter to people in the province of Ontario and the quality of life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Oxford has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Welland, Willowdale, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Kitchener–Waterloo for their kind comments.

To the member from Willowdale, I don't remember in my presentation—if that was a comment to it—that I was talking about this report and all the money that went to consultants. If I was, it wasn't me who was saying that. It was the Auditor General who said there was a problem with all this money going to consultants. I would just

point out to him that it's very important as to how that got before us.

The other thing that was mentioned earlier by a member from the opposite side was that they couldn't understand why we were all here debating this bill this afternoon. I want to point out for anyone watching, and I'm sure everyone in this House knows, that it's not the opposition that gets to choose what we're going to debate Thursday afternoon. Thursday afternoon is a sitting day for the government, and it's the government that came forward with this bill. I would think that they likely would have more important things to debate. When the member opposite made the comment that we shouldn't be debating it, he was talking about going home so he wouldn't have to be here at all. I think that's a different story than saying that there are more important things to do. I agree. I would rather have been debating a better bill here.

The other thing I just wanted to very quickly touch on was that my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned the eco tax and the fact that even though they flip-flopped on it rather quickly, there was a time in there when all the businesses were collecting tax on this thing, and now the Premier says, “We're not going to do that program. We're not going to collect it.” If we had good government, we'd have somebody looking at where that money is and where it's going to go from here on in because that belongs to the people who should never have been charged it. I think somebody should be dealing with that. I would think that, instead of passing fluff bills like this, they would have somebody from good government—

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: It appears I have less than five minutes because, of course, at 6 o'clock the Legislature will conclude its deliberations for the week, so I really only have five minutes to make a few points about good government. Of course, that's the subject of this particular bill, according to the government side, Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts.

This bill has been debated quite extensively now, and we've heard some interesting comments from the government—of course, the usual line of what a wonderful job they're doing. On our side of the House, we've pointed out some objections, but of course, with the trouble the government's been in in the last few weeks—the last few months actually, perhaps going back to May as the starting point—for the government to come into the House with a bill entitled the Good Government Act is absolutely ridiculous. It's absurd. It's humorous, if it wasn't so sad.

The fact is, this government has not been providing good government for the people of Ontario. I hear it. I know that the government members opposite must hear it in their communities. Again, going back to May, people started to come up to me in significant numbers, in droves, saying to me, “When is the next election? We have to get rid of the Premier and his government.” That

is what I'm hearing consistently in my community, and have been for many months now.

When you look back at what perhaps was the triggering factor—I don't know what it was. Perhaps it was the fact that the HST was going to be clicking in or perhaps it's the fact that a significant number of people are starting to tune in as to what's going on here, having ignored it for some time. Perhaps people recognize the concerns that exist in the economy and they're looking to government for answers. They're looking for government to do something in terms of the economy and come forward with meaningful solutions to the economic anxiety that they face.

But of course, instead, the government's program consists of a new tax, the HST, and the eco fees that they first introduced by stealth on Canada Day but then withdrew, or say they withdrew. You can go through a whole litany and list of things, especially in the last few weeks, where the government has lost its moorings, where the government is panicking, where the government seems to have no coherent plan whatsoever, except to make a policy statement and then withdraw it 24 hours later or 48 hours later because they really don't know what they should do.

I would submit that our member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, when he suggested there needs to be an election now, is right. The people in my riding want to see an election now, because they want to see leadership; they want to see good government in this province. They want to see a government that's responding to their concerns, their needs, providing hope and responding to their aspirations and the needs of their community.

This government is not capable of doing it. They're out of gas; they're out of time. And they are completely out of touch with what's happening in their communities if they don't hear what I'm hearing in my constituency, and I suspect many of them are.

You can see it in the House during question period. Quite often, the only people who are clapping for the Premier are the cabinet ministers. The backbenchers are sitting around—there are usually about 30 of them missing, but the ones who are here are not clapping for the Premier. They're not responding to his cues. There is obviously a great deal of despondency over there and concern about the future of their political prospects. There's no question that that's happening. I've seen it happen before, and it's happening over there on that side.

I would suggest to you and submit to you, Mr. Speaker, the election isn't until October. The people of Ontario expect us to be working together towards the resolution of these concerns. Certainly, that's what I tried to do this afternoon with my private member's resolution when I brought forward, in a non-partisan way, the needs of my community, and did everything in a non-partisan way as best I could.

Unfortunately, I couldn't—I still can't believe the response of the government was to just shoot it down because it was coming from the opposite side of the House: not looking at the merits of the argument, not

looking at the needs of my community, but ignoring that entirely. Just shoot it down, because that's what the notes say. I would have expected better this afternoon, and I'm exceedingly disappointed.

On that note, I note that it is 6 o'clock and would suggest that I'll see you next week, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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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
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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	
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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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

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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
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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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Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
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