



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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BORDER SECURITY

April 6, 2006

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Yesterday, I was glad to attend the annual general meeting of Attractions Ontario at Dundurn Castle in Hamilton. The people attending this event were exceedingly disappointed that the McGuinty Liberal government, for all intents and purposes, ignored tourism in the provincial budget two weeks ago.

Months before that budget, tourism industry representatives had told the government that Ontario was challenged by a major decline in US visitors, reaching a 33-year low last year. Now it's likely to get even worse because it appears our American visitors may soon need a passport or a new identity document to get back home. We are already feeling the impact, as word continues to spread of new bureaucracy at the border.

Just today I spoke with a Toronto cab driver who used to get 40% of his fares in American currency. He told me he hasn't seen an American dollar in a month. Yesterday, in response to my questions on the challenge our tourism industry faces, the Premier of Ontario simply pointed a patronizing crooked finger at the federal government.

The truth is that Ontario is facing this enormous challenge, in part because of too many gratuitous anti-American statements by too many Liberals in recent years, which have received prominent media coverage in the United States. Instead of using up the time of this House with partisan nonsense, the government of Ontario should be pushing for a Canadian exemption or a security-upgraded driver's licence and extending the tight time frames that start in just eight months from now. We need to talk more about our friendship and free trade and we need action to protect jobs on both sides of the border. If we're not successful, the government must be ready with a contingency plan which includes a \$30-million marketing expenditure --